



## Transcript of Crutches and Spice Podcast Episode 2: Ableism in Dating with Marina Carlos

- Imani Barbarin: Hello everyone, my name is Imani Barbarin and welcome to the Crutches and Spice Podcast. I'm sitting here with Marina Carlos, you know her from the Make my Lemonade campaign, as well as several disability advocacy tweets on Twitter. You can find her at @marinaCpom. Thank you Marina for joining me, how are you my friend?
- Marina Carlos: I'm so happy to be here Imani, thank you for the invite. I'm so excited.
- Imani Barbarin: Me too. So we...
- Marina Carlos: What a lovely introduction.
- Imani Barbarin: Of course, I had to. I have to tell everybody about your accoutrements and all of your things going on. You're also writing a book right, on disability?
- Marina Carlos: I am. I've been working on it for a year and a half now. The writing part is done and now I'm working with an illustrator who is going to, well, illustrate my book. So I'm really excited and we're finishing the illustration part. I truly hope it can come out in 2020.
- Imani Barbarin: Can you give us a little bit of brief explanation about what your book is about?
- Marina Carlos: Yes, so here in France, ableism is a term that isn't really known. Disabled people's rights, activism, is also really not well known. So I just wanted to in a

really accessible way, explain what ableism was and is, sorry, and how it impacts the lives of disabled people.

Marina Carlos: So I talk about politics, I talk about representation, I explain what ableism is and I also try to incorporate disabled activists that inspire me and what they bring in the conversation. So I talk about Mia Mingus, for example, because there's concepts like first intimacy, which I think are really important, and so I try to translate them. Because in France there's many people who don't necessarily speak English, so they don't have access to a lot of studies and concepts and theories, and so I wanted to make a little book to really explain what ableism is and how it introduced itself in our lives and how it impacts negatively, disabled peoples' lives.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, I'm very excited for it, I've seen some of the illustrations and it's so... I love it so much because it's so accessible just from a cognizance example, like you can really grasp what's going on. But listen, we are not talking about advocacy taking the lead today. We are talking about ableism in a whole different arena. We're talking about it in dating. Woo!

Marina Carlos: Woo!

Imani Barbarin: It's the topic that haunts disabled peoples' nightmares. No. So for those that don't know, Marina and I know each other because I lived in Paris for about two years, and she tweeted me that we should get dinner and hang out.

Marina Carlos: Imani came to my house, it was like winter time so we had this little romantic set up, when I made some hot chocolate and marshmallows and it was quite enjoyable, and we existentially matched, because we already really like each other on Twitter and we really liked our personalities, but just seeing each other for the first time, it's like then we clicked and it was a really great encounter.

Imani Barbarin: It was so much fun, it was so romantic, she made me hot chocolate, and then she put marshmallows in it too, like little French marshmallows.

Marina Carlos: I wanted the first introduction to be perfect.

Imani Barbarin: I was so about...

Marina Carlos: Imagining me serving?

Imani Barbarin: Yes it was our meeting story, that's our meet cue. So we met and then we hung out all the time when we were in Paris, and we'd go to your place a lot and just talk really, which was a lot of fun.

Marina Carlos: Imani even met my father.

Imani Barbarin: Yes, your dad was so nice, he came to my birthday party.

Marina Carlos: And Imani was so cute with her French accent, I loved it, I melted right there.

Imani Barbarin: I speak French, Marina always makes fun of my French accent, because she said I sound like a mouse, because I go, "Oh, Je [00:04:23 foreign language]" and she says, "You sound so cute." So we talked a lot, especially about dating, which is always very difficult, and I found culturally it was so different in Paris, than it was in the U.S.

Marina Carlos: I think that during our first meeting we talked a lot about dating, that's true. We had our mutual stories, so we were getting to know each other we also, of course, talked about our relationships, and so that was a big conversation and big theme for our first meeting.

Imani Barbarin: Yes.

Marina Carlos: I forgot about that, how...

Imani Barbarin: We dove right in, we were like, "We're just going to do it, we're just going to talk about this." Because it sucks.

Marina Carlos: Let's go in.

Imani Barbarin: Exactly, let's dive in. So can you tell me a little bit about your dating story? What has it been like in Paris? Because you're not just Parisian, you're also Portuguese. I don't know if you've dated anybody in Portugal? But...

Marina Carlos: I did meet a guy when I was little, who was from my parents' village over there, so it was like this summer crush, and it was my first boyfriend actually. And that was when I was able bodied, because just for context, if people doesn't know, I'm paraplegic. I had an accident when I was 16 years old and therefore I can't move my legs and so I use a wheelchair all the time.

Marina Carlos: So my first boyfriend was before I became disabled, and since I became disabled, I had two serious relationships, lasting for four years, each one. And so the last one ended in 2016 and since then I've been dating, just dating, I'm not in a serious relationship, and it's been an adventure, to say the least.

Imani Barbarin: An adventure, that's a nice way of putting it. What is the hard things you have to go through in your relationships? Do you tell them up front that you use a wheelchair or do you meet them in person first? How does that go?

Marina Carlos: Okay, so now we are diving into the dating apps world?

Imani Barbarin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Marina Carlos: Of course friends, when they saw me and I was getting over my ex, and being just more confident and better, they were, "Okay, you have to try dating apps

now." And I was a little reluctant about it, because I actually read experiences of disabled people who had really bad things happening to them, like intimate questions, how people just being assholes, or really rude. So I was a little skeptical, like, "Okay, do I really want to do that or no?" And I was, "Whatever, let's just meet people and let's just see how it goes."

Marina Carlos: So the first question, and I think that's the first question every disabled people goes through, is do I present my disability? So do I talk about it in my bio, or do I maybe talk later when I'm actually with someone and tell them? And so I have a pretty difficult disability, so I can't really hide it. But I didn't want to put an explanation, or phrase in my bio saying, "So, I'm a paraplegic and I use a wheelchair," and in my social media, my profile picture is just me in my wheelchair in front of a blank white wall. So I was, well, "A picture speaks louder than words." So I'm just going to put that, you know, I'm just going to put this picture and just one close up with my face, because the one I put - which is on my social media - is like two years old, and even more than that.

Marina Carlos: But I love that picture because, I think, it really just sums up who I am. And I feel really confident in this picture. And the thing is, I try to do the same pose since then, but I can't seem to have that resting bitch face, that really nice resting bitch face, and the pose, I think the picture is really nice but I can't seem to do it again more recently. So what I do is I put this picture, and another close up more recent.

Imani Barbarin: Because you're all smiles now, that's why. You're always smiling. But you bring up a good point, I don't understand, because I could never tell when I was creating my dating profiles, do I just do the waist up? Do I not put my crutches? Do I just do the face? And it feels like, it's up to the individual person, but also it feels so disingenuous and then you're setting yourself up to fail when you meet them in person sometimes. Because then they'll see the whole thing, you can't really hide a physical disability.

Marina Carlos: Exactly, it's the whole package.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah.

Marina Carlos: Yeah, and so I was thinking, "Okay, this picture is basically me." So I went to put it up, because with that picture I'm saying, "Okay, so this is what you are going to meet if we ever meet, so this is what you are going to see." And I think it was better this way than to just try to explain words. Worst of all, I don't really know what I will write, and if you just say, "I'm paraplegic", people don't know about it, which is normal because it is a specific disability. And I didn't want to put a whole essay about what my disability really was. So I just started with the photo, and I think it has worked really well for me on dating apps.

Imani Barbarin: You live in Paris itself, you live in the eleventh, so do you find that you'd explain to people, "We may not be able to go to this restaurant, or that restaurant, or hang out here or there?"

Marina Carlos: Yes, the thing is, in Paris, and I'm pretty sure it's the same in a lot of towns and cities et cetera, most of the social places, which is like coffee shops, restaurants, clubs, are not accessible. So just the fact to go to a place to meet people, you can't access it, which is already an obstacle, for disabled people to just meet people, you know?

Imani Barbarin: Right.

Marina Carlos: Fortunately, around me I have two or three cafes, so if I meet someone I can go there to meet them and I can come back to my house alone. So that is really reassuring, because you also don't want people to just come to your house, pick you up, you know. And also, other wheelchair users, putting your trust in someone that even you know, can be a little risky, because you never know how good people are with wheelchairs, and to navigate on sidewalks et cetera. But to meet someone and ask him, "Can I put my whole life in your hands please?"

Imani Barbarin: That's terrifying. And then like-

Marina Carlos: And I understand the same thing for me but also for the person who will do that. Because even my friends, sometimes are scared, because I don't know if the city's too dark, or there's just too many obstacles, so they are always a little like, "I don't want to hurt you, I don't want to make you fall." You know? So even with people you already know, it's kind of like, "Eh?" But even with a person you want to date, or you're interested in, you don't want to be like at first, "Can you come pick me up and help me with my wheelchair?" So I'm pretty fortunate about that, to just be able to go autonomously to a place and come back if the date doesn't go well. There's also that fact.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, I loved walking around your neighborhood, because it was fairly accessible, it was more accessible than the rest of Paris, I felt like. And it's just really hard, because I remember going out with other disabled people in Paris, and people would always be like, "Oh, I can lift you if it's not accessible." And I was like, "No, I don't want you to lift me or touch me, I want to be able to do this on my own." Do you find that? You said people get nervous about it? But do you find that people just flat out refuse to help if you're going out with them?

Marina Carlos: I mean, I never was in that case at all. I'm always, when I go out with friends or whatever, they always want to help, so I never have a flat out, "No." But I think on dating apps, the fact that you're up front about it, it's already a filter, so if people don't want to, they're just not going to talk to you.

Imani Barbarin: That's true.

Marina Carlos: You are not losing anything, because there's people that don't really want to, I would say, dig in that. So there's like a filter. But for me, I never flat out had someone say, "I'm not going to help you." You know, like in a friendship or romantic way.

Imani Barbarin: Yes, and it can be very difficult. I remember the attitudes in Paris were very different towards disability. It wasn't necessarily that you saw a lot of disabled people in Paris, because I remember for the first six months, I could count on one hand how many disabled people I saw, or physically disabled, who I saw in Paris.

Marina Carlos: Six for me?

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, I'm like, "Where are..."? Statistically in your mind, you're like, "I know there's more, but why are there so few?" And it was unnerving, but it's just because the city's inaccessible.

Marina Carlos: Yeah, and one time I was having lunch with a friend in the street there, in Le Terrace. And there were three persons in a wheelchair who passed through us, and I was like, "There's definitely something happening here, because three people in wheelchairs just coming through, like in our..."

Imani Barbarin: Right, and I remember being on a bus, and this woman fell over in her wheelchair, and nobody moved to help her, they were just like angry with her for holding up the bus moving. Like what?

Marina Carlos: You know Paris is like the type of city where everything moves really fast. And Parisians in France are really known of being rude. And not having any patience, so that's clearly like a representation of how Parisians can be rude. And even like me, in France, in Paris, the subway isn't accessible at all, there is like one line which is accessible, and when I take the bus, which is a little more accessible on paper, because practically the thing, sometimes the driver doesn't stop, sometimes the ramp doesn't work, sometimes the bus is full and nobody lets you in. And even myself, I had experiences where I wanted to go on a bus and you explain this things, but the thing is, the ramp it's like 30 seconds to come down and there's like a big noise from an alarm, which is like, "Beep, beep, beep." Which is exactly the sound of the ramp coming down, and even with that, people still don't move.

Marina Carlos: It's like they're with a stroller, and they don't move until you're in front of them, and you're like, "Excuse me." You just aren't a thing like, "Please." [crosstalk 00:16:39].

Imani Barbarin: And they get mad.

Marina Carlos: So yes, that's kind of difficult. And so when you're on a romantic night, it's just exhausting, for yourself, and it's also like a little ruin the moment, because you

just want things to be easy-breezy and just like a little stroll, in a romantic way, and there's just those kind of things that happen that can take a toll on anybody else.

Imani Barbarin: And I feel, like you said, it takes you out of the moment, and that person, even if they weren't thinking about ableism, or thinking about disability in a relationship, like they were just, "Oh this is a girl I'm dating who uses a wheelchair," that ableism kinds of snaps them to, and it's like, "Oh, this is something I'm going to have to deal with, with this person. And it makes it harder to get people to stay because they're constantly in the battle with you, and they weren't prepared for it.

Marina Carlos: Yes, and it can also take a toll on yourself. Because you're like, "This is all coming because of me. I'm the one that needs this, I'm the one that has to do all this organization, because places aren't accessible." So, even if you know that it's not your fault, I mean, it's really difficult to not feel that little bit guilty, and to not have the thing in your mind like, "Oh, if it wasn't for me it would be so much easier."

Imani Barbarin: Yes, I know, and it makes you feel like you're the burden, and it just reinforces that whole stereotype that we're burdens and that we make life harder, but really...

Marina Carlos: Yes,[inaudible 00:18:23] life ever leaves the room.

Imani Barbarin: I know, it's so much fun, I'm sorry, go ahead.

Marina Carlos: No, it's okay. So I have a funny story about safety, I must tell you. I'm fortunate to have restaurants and coffee shops nearby, but my first Tinder date actually was a guy from L.A. he was here for holidays and the next day he was going back to the U.S. and so we were planning to see each other, he had been with his sister, and the thing is that here, the restaurants close really early. So if you want to have a late night drink, you can't just stay in the bar until 1.00 am because they close at 10:30, 11:00. And the thing is, I didn't want the guy to come to my house, because I didn't feel safe, I thought he was going to be awkward.

Marina Carlos: Because when you're in a public space for coffee, there's animation around, so you can always pick something up and talk about that. But when you're in my house, there's not much happening here, so you're just like the table, and the sofa, I mean, it's really awkward and even more for a first date. So I was thinking, because I really liked this guy, and I wanted to do something fun, so it can seem really cheesy and not fun at all, but we met in May and the weather's still pretty nice, even at night. And there's not a lot of people in the streets, on the roads, because in May you have a lot of holidays in Paris, in France.

Imani Barbarin: Yes, you do.

Marina Carlos: So I actually told him, "Do you want to go for a ride?"

Imani Barbarin: Oh my God!

Marina Carlos: So I was in my car and I drove him in a Paris by night thing.

Imani Barbarin: That's so cute.

Marina Carlos: Yeah, and it was a really great idea. I was really excited about it and it went really well, and so after that we came to my house and we had a great night. But the thing is, when I recounted the date to my friend, I actually realized that I didn't want the guy to come to my house because it wasn't quite really safe, but I actually brought him to my car, which is an even more little space, which the guy could have made anything he wanted, you know what I mean?

Imani Barbarin: Yeah.

Marina Carlos: I felt in control because it was my car, my town, I was driving, but when you think about it, it could have been really dangerous, and so I was like, "Wait a minute, why did I do that? Who does that?" Well apparently me, I do that. But I will never do that again...

Imani Barbarin: That's a true-

Marina Carlos: ... even just in the spur of the moment.

Imani Barbarin: It's a true chaotic disability moment, and that's one of the things that people won't talk about, is that different aspects to accessibility sometimes means inviting complete strangers into your own space.

Marina Carlos: Exactly, yeah.

Imani Barbarin: Like I would date these guys, and I would be like, "Come over my place. Because first of all I'm tired, my back hurts and I don't feel like walking four blocks to meet you." And reflecting on that now, I probably shouldn't have done that as many times as I did. But it was also that. And also in Paris, the culture, is it's very rare that you go outside of your place for a first date, unless you want to date non seriously. Which is very strange. I feel like there's a lot of hook-up culture in Paris, which means you just automatically go to that person's place, or...

Marina Carlos: I don't know about that? I mean, not that I have like a really expended dating life, but I feel like people always meet for drink first.

Imani Barbarin: Then it was just me.

Marina Carlos: You meet too many.

Imani Barbarin: I don't know why I'm... well I really-

Marina Carlos: I actually understand what you say about inviting people over, because our houses are actually the places where we feel most comfortable and autonomous. So we feel more in control and we have less to ask people to help us with this or that. So it's better for us, but that's the old catch 21... catch 21 ?

Imani Barbarin: You were close, catch 22.

Marina Carlos: Catch 21, sorry. Catch 21, because you are comfortable and you can really be autonomous and you can do things yourself, but there's also all that safety questioning that comes into creation.

Imani Barbarin: Yes, I mean, I was doing a lot of, I guess, hooking up in Paris, but it was if I wanted to go over to a guy's place then it was more difficult, because it was like, "Is his place accessible, are there steps? There's always steps in Paris."

Marina Carlos: Exactly, and the elevators are so little that they have

Imani Barbarin: Exactly, the elevators are so tiny, why are they so small? What was the size of a suitcase? "I cannot origami myself into this elevator just to get a hook up, this doesn't make any sense." And then, "Is the hook up good enough that I want to climb up four flights of stairs?" That's not a thing I'm going to do. Like, "You come to my place and that's it." And that's dangerous, as a woman with a disability, that's dangerous, and I know it's wrong but it's like gambling. But yeah, it's very dangerous for us and you're just kind of hoping that nothing goes wrong with these strangers.

Marina Carlos: The thing is, so the woman layer, which is like of course as a woman, you always have to protect yourself and do precautions to feel safe in the dating environment, but if you also have the disability layer, it is even more things to worry about and to protect yourself from, you know?

Imani Barbarin: Yeah.

Marina Carlos: But sometimes you just can't protect yourself from, as you say, if nowhere is accessible, the only place you can actually have a date, where you feel comfortable, is your place. So what do you do, you know?

Imani Barbarin: Exactly, and then it's like, "Do I not date if I want to feel safe? Or do I actually want to do this and risk my safety?"

Marina Carlos: Exactly.

Imani Barbarin: So another aspect to your dating life is that you are also a queer woman.

Marina Carlos: I am, I'm in control, yeah.

Imani Barbarin: You are a bi baby. (Singing) bye, bye, bye.

Marina Carlos: So yeah, I came out not too long ago actually. Do you want to talk about that?

Imani Barbarin: Oh absolutely.

Marina Carlos: So, forever I've been dating always mans. And I've been attracted to girls, but it's always a question, like, "Are you just attracted because you appreciate women's bodies in looks? Or are you really interested in them?" And I never had that person where I was like, "Okay, I'm really having a crush and I would like to have a romantic relationship with her." And so I always look like I don't want to admit saying I'm bi, because I never had this click, you know that meeting that makes me be like, "Okay, now I know, it's confirmed." But a year ago I actually went on a dance where there was this person that I really had a crush on, and I realized, back story, like, "Okay, so now you have your answer." And it felt so natural just to have, "Okay, now I know, because that's what I felt like for boys, and now I'm clearly feeling that for another gender, and it's the same way." So clearly that means something.

Marina Carlos: And even if it felt obvious to me, so I came out pretty quickly to my family and friends, and I'm really fortunate to have a family that always supports me, and friends who weren't even that surprised actually.

Imani Barbarin: They were like, "Yes, thank you for updating us on things we already know."

Marina Carlos: "Wait, didn't you already told me that?"

Imani Barbarin: I think, "Uh?" And it's hard, as a disabled person who is bisexual as well, it kind of feels like a lot of these stereotypes between disability and dating and bisexuality go hand in hand. Like a lot of people see people who are bisexual as people who either can't choose or who have had nobody choose them. So they're looking for everybody.

Marina Carlos: Exactly.

Imani Barbarin: And when you're disabled and dating, it can feel like, "Is this reality? Am I just trying to open the doors for everybody, simply because I'm disabled and nobody will find me attractive, or desirable, or worthy of love?" But it's just like any sexuality, where you're attracted to who you're attracted to, you know? For me it's more like personalities, and then it was very strange because I felt like I was... I don't know if I was deeply, deeply attracted to these personalities? But I would be enchanted by these women.

Marina Carlos: Enchanted is a nice word.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, enchanted. I would be like, "What in God's name..." I would not be able to stop looking at them, or trying to be in their presence, but I don't want to say

anything, because it's like, "Am I really attracted to this person, or am I just thinking that this is a good "option"." But no, it's like, "I'm genuinely attracted to this woman, and I really, really like her." And for me it's more personality, it doesn't really go along the binary. I tell myself bisexual because that's what I choose to call myself, but I doesn't really go along that binary. It's like these people that I am drawn in by.

Marina Carlos: Yeah. I'm like that too, I'm not just attracted to women and men, I'm attracted by anyone. So when I say I'm bisexual I don't want people to think it's just women and men, I'm attracted to everyone.

Imani Barbarin: It's like, "Oh, okay." And to be clear, it's not like every single person, it's just the wide array of people that you're attracted to.

Marina Carlos: That's exactly, I'm not that desperate, okay.

Imani Barbarin: It's just like, "Can you just talk?" And it's so hard because then the ableism comes in that way too, because, "Do I talk to this person? Will they like me, or will they think that I'm weird and desperate, and just trying to find anybody, just anybody?"

Marina Carlos: And there's also the fact that when you're dating someone, an able person, people are like, "Oh my God, he's a saint." "You're so lucky." And there's the thing, when you find someone, even if he treats you like shit, people will be like, "He went past your disabilities, so you should be fine with it."

Imani Barbarin: Exactly.

Marina Carlos: And I'm like, "I'm still a person with feelings, so please. I really don't want to be treated like shit, I really want to be respected, thank you. So if I want to not stay with this person, I really can."

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, "What a hero." Which is funny, because I dated disable men, and it's always funny when we go out to restaurants, or outside, people can't tell which of us is the pity date. There's like, "He, wait... her... what's happening here? Which one of them is the hero in this equation?" It's like, "We're just going out we just want our tacos, leave us alone. We want some tacos and cheese, we want some queso, that's all we want, we don't want ableism as a side."

Marina Carlos: And what about, I'm coming back to the dating apps, with how do you present your bio? Do you put a picture without your crutches? Do you don't talk about it on your bio, do you wait? How did you...

Imani Barbarin: You know, sometimes it varies from site to site, depending on what the demographic is that uses it. Yeah.

Marina Carlos: Oh, okay.

Imani Barbarin: Like a good majority of my pictures are from the waist up, simply because those are my best pictures. And then also there are a couple, like one or two with me with crutches, and then I always get responses like, "Yo, is that like temporary?" I'm like, "No, it's a permanent thing," because these are not temporary crutches in the U.S. Or I get really sexualized messages-

Marina Carlos: Do you have temporary crutches?

Imani Barbarin: Yes, so in the U.S. Lofstrands are long-term crutches, there are the one's that are form ones, and then the underarm ones are generally for people who have injuries. So there's a difference.

Marina Carlos: It's just funny, talking about crutches, because when you came to Paris, you actually realize, and we had a conversations about that, that in Paris people use crutches for when they do something to their ankle, et cetera. But not really like when they have a disability.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, it's very strange. People give away crutches like candy, it's like candy form. In Paris it's like everybody has Lofstrand or form crutches, and so there are people who have like a sprained ankle using the same crutch as I do, but in the United States, the crutches that I use are mostly for people who have permanent or long-term disabilities that they need crutches for. So it was very strange. So when I was in Paris, the guys would be like, "Oh, did you break your ankle?"

Marina Carlos: Yeah, because when people see crutches they don't think like a permanent thing, they think, "Oh, you just had something happen to you and in three weeks you're going to be better."

Imani Barbarin: Exactly, and so it was very strange to be like, "No, this is permanent." And then they get confused, because I'm like, "No, this is a real thing that happens, 24/7"

Marina Carlos: Like a question that you only got in Paris? Like in U.S. nobody asks you that?

Imani Barbarin: No, in the U.S. nobody really asks me if my... well people do ask me if I've hurt myself or if I've gotten in a serious, serious accident. But they know that my crutches are permanent because of the way that they're so rare. But in Paris it was always different, they were always asking me when I was getting off of them, like, how I broke my ankle? "I did not break my ankle, duh." But yeah it was very strange. The treatment was different based on once they figured out it was a more permanent disability.

Marina Carlos: Yeah, you could already see the wall come down when you say that.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. I mean I would also vet them very, very carefully before they even got to my place, or before we even got out, and still there were things that had nothing to do with disability that disqualified them automatically. Like there was

one guy that kept showing me pictures of... he went to Ghana for a vacation, and he would show me pictures from his trip of slave ports, like where slaves were sold. And I'm like, "This is not a first date, this is a history lesson, I am sad now. I understand black lives matter, but can we not talk about this right now?" I'm like, "This is so depressing." There was one guy that would show me videos of Nigerian weddings, unprompted. I wouldn't ask to see these, and he would be like, "Well, can you see yourself doing this one day?"

Marina Carlos: The men must make a, "This is what I'm going to offer you, just be ready."

Imani Barbarin: And I was like, "I'm terrified, I do not want to get married." So he would do that, and there was just like weird other things going on that had nothing to do with disability. And I was like, "Yeah, I do have yes's and no's for me, I won't accept just anything."

Marina Carlos: Exactly, and that's such a prominent thing, that people just think that we're just going to accept everything. Even not just in dating life, but anywhere, you know?

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, accept any treatment.

Marina Carlos: Like when [crosstalk 00:35:34] crumbles, we just have to be so brutal about that.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. And people kind of tell us that we have to accept whatever treatment we get, or whatever... we should be lucky for people to be in our lives, and it's not true. Like there's genuinely horrible people. And sometimes the horribleness has nothing to do with any sort of diagnosis, it's just...

Marina Carlos: Exactly. You know that's like when people say, "Oh, this guy was really rude, but he was disabled so I didn't tell him anything."

Imani Barbarin: Right.

Marina Carlos: And then you think, "What makes you think we're not going to be assholes?" You know?

Imani Barbarin: Listen, news alert, disabled is not a personality type, there are jackasses with disabilities too. They can be anything they want to be, including a jackass.

Marina Carlos: On the other extreme, disabled people can be also really great and awesome, that's why they have friends and people romantically involved with them.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, like I don't understand how everything is a spectrum except for disabilities and personalities. There's a little bit more nuance than saying that every disabled person is the best disabled person, and a human angel, and heaven on earth, and... gross.

Marina Carlos: What's your overall experience with dating apps? Do you found that it's a good thing? Did you meet a lot of people there?

Imani Barbarin: Well I met a lot more people in Paris than in the U.S. I feel like in the U.S. funnily enough, it's more of an ableist society in terms of dating, even though it's super, super hard to date anywhere with a disability. It was especially hard for me to date here as opposed to Paris. Like there I would get people talking to me and engaging conversations, and wanting to meet up. But here it was like trying to coax them and trying to be like, "No, I'm actually a good "normal" person. I'm actually fun to hang out with." And then there's also the pitfalls of dating somebody that doesn't necessarily want to be in a relationship, and because they're the first person that's really nice to you, you latch on to them and you think that it's going to go far, but it just doesn't because they don't want a relationship.

Imani Barbarin: And you're disappointed because this is the first person that has treated you well, which is not the standard. But yeah, I think it was, funnily enough, on a dating app where I found by current boyfriend, it was Twitter. Because Twitter people show you [crosstalk 00:38:20].

Marina Carlos: It can be a dating app, it's like Instagram and everything, it does happen. It sounds like it's all becoming dating apps also.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, and Facebook is now a dating app too, which is so strange. People have been using Facebook as a dating app from its inception. It's like Mark Zuckerberg tried to use it as a dating app when he started it, that's the whole point of Facebook when he started it, an unsolicited dating app, by the way.

Marina Carlos: I think the internet has always been like a dating atmosphere, because they were like foreign, they were like, "Are you well?" All of it was to just...

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, just get-

Marina Carlos: [inaudible 00:38:58] nobody, we have relationships and friendships, so there has always been that link that internet was supposed to be [crosstalk 00:39:03].

Imani Barbarin: Well if it's on the internet, somebody will use it to try and smash ugly's. Like that's just it, people will always try to use whatever site is on the internet for hook-up app.

Marina Carlos: Oh totally.

Imani Barbarin: It's fine, like let people do what they're going to do, but I find it becomes problematic when a company tries to profit of of what people already do. It's just strange, and Zuckerberg, he ruined our democracy. Just kidding, I'm black and American, there's no democracy. You know, but yeah, thank you for talking

with me, is there anything you want to advertise or plug for yourself? Is there anything that you want to share with people before we go?

Marina Carlos: Well I think I share my book, so I just hope to have some good news to inform you all in the upcoming month.

Imani Barbarin: Yay!

Marina Carlos: And I will be in New York, normally in the end of March, beginning of April, and I will see shortly, and I'm sure we will do some things, and I'm really excited about it, I'm really, really excited, I can't wait. I just want Autumn and Winter to pass, and already be in 2020.

Imani Barbarin: I know, I'm so excited you're coming to New York, I'm going to go visit you, I'm going to hang out with you, I can't wait. We take the best pictures when we hang out, I'm just saying. It's amazing.

Marina Carlos: We do.

Imani Barbarin: Yes, so thank you for coming on, if anybody wants to follow me on Twitter, you can find me @Imani\_Barbarin, and this is the Crutches and Spice podcast about disability. Please subscribe to my page, this podcast is brought to you, by you, so please, please, please, encourage all your friends and family to subscribe, and to donate, and to pledge. Thank you, I will talk to you soon.

Marina Carlos: Thank you.