

# Redefining Health & Wellness

## #63

**Featured this episode:** Shohreh Davoodi & Jazmine Jarvis & Meagan Kimberly Smith

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**Shohreh Davoodi:** You are listening to episode number 63 of the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. As a mixed-race woman, I am delighted to introduce you to Jazmine Jarvis and Meagan Kimberly Smith, the co-founders of Mixed in America. Mixed in America is an organization dedicated to empowering the mixed community and healing the mixed identity. We chatted in depth about the unique experience of being mixed race, from feeling like you don't belong in any of the communities that make up your identity to being fetishized, and sexualized. We also talked about colorism and how mixed folx have to hold both pain and privilege at the same time. To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to [shohrehdavoodi.com/63](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/63). That's [shohrehdavoodi.com/63](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/63).

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[Music plays]

Welcome to the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. I'm your host and resident rainbow glitter bomb, Shohreh Davoodi. I started this project

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because I saw how black-and-white messaging about health harms everyone, and I wanted to paint a more honest and vibrant picture. This podcast is a space where we can reimagine health together by confronting limiting misconceptions, delving into aspects of well-being that are often ignored, and prioritizing conversations with marginalized individuals. I encourage you to take what you need and leave behind what you don't. Are you ready for this? Let's fucking go!

Jazmine and Meagan, it is such a treat to have you on the podcast. As most of my listeners know, I am mixed race, and when I discovered the Mixed in America community, I felt really seen and held by it, and I knew that I wanted to have a deeper conversation with y'all. So thank you for making time to be here.

**Jazmine Jarvis:** Thanks for having us. We're so excited that you found us and that we could connect with you.

**Meagan Kimberly:** Thank you so much, we're so excited to dive into all things mixed.

**Shohreh:** Yeah, this is gonna be super fun. So I think let's just start by having each of you introduce yourselves, tell us who you are and what you're about, and then maybe you can share the story of how Mixed in America came to be and what you're hoping to accomplish with it.

**Meagan:** Fantastic. I'll start us off. My name is Meagan Kimberly Smith. I'm an actress, a teaching artist, and I like to call myself an entrepreneur who heals. I am originally from Las Vegas, Nevada, which is where I met Jaz, but I went to college in North Carolina, and then lived in New York for five years, and I am now in Philadelphia [laughs], which has been a change.

**Jazmine:** And I'm Jazmine Jarvis, fellow co-founder of Mixed in America. I have a background in finance, I also am an astrologer and energy healer, and I am

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currently based in Vegas. Both Meagan and I grew up in Vegas actually, and we've known each other since first grade.

**Shohreh:** Oh my gosh, y'all go so far back.

**Jazmine:** Yeah, we go way back! [Laughs]

**Meagan:** Yeah, I think we were like, how old Jaz? You think like six?

**Jazmine:** How old are you in first grade? You're like six, yeah.

**Meagan:** Six or seven?

**Jazmine:** It's so funny, I just found an old picture of us at like a slumber party, and we have like face masks and cucumbers on our eyes [laughter]. We're like eight, just like [laughs], totally game.

**Shohreh:** Clearly that needs to go on the Instagram account for the world to see.

**Jazmine & Meagan:** Yeah, right? Yes!

**Jazmine:** It's ultimate throwback.

**Shohreh:** And then who wants to start by telling me about how Mixed in America came to be?

**Meagan:** I can take it away. So, basically, I made a very emo post on Instagram called Biracial Cries, which sounds kind of funny now, but I was really feeling so isolated and alone. So I really needed to kind of get this off my chest. And so I made this post about being biracial, and feeling super alone and misunderstood, and wondering why mixedness was not being talked about in America, especially considering that we had just had a biracial Black president. And that just really confused me and made me feel upset.

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So I said that and nobody really said anything, but Jazmine pounced on the post and was like, I so hear you, like, I'm experiencing the same thing, which was so affirming to hear when I was struggling in such an intense way in that moment. So we decided to hop on the phone together, and we talked for one call and decided that we were gonna go into business. It's kind of hilarious now to think about because we moved so fast, but when you know you know!

**Jazmine:** Right, it was literally one FaceTime and we were like, we need to create something, like, where's the community, where's the platform for mixed people? Yep, that was the birth of Mixed in America. 'Cause we were convinced that there was already a platform and a community. We're like searching for it, looking on Instagram, looking on the web, like where's this mixed community, and it was nowhere. So we were like, we have to create it. Selfishly for us, but also we knew that other people were feeling the same way. So we hopped right on it.

**Shohreh:** Right, I feel like some of the best ideas come about because you're like, I know that there's a need for this thing and like surely it's out there and I'm trying to find it, and then you're like, oh my god, how has no one done this yet?

**Jazmine:** Right.

**Shohreh:** It's hard to be the first ones to embark on that, but I love that y'all, it just felt right to you, and you were like, we're doing it.

**Meagan:** Totally. I mean it would have been so nice to grow up having a Mixed in America. I think that's something that really drives Jaz and I so much is, gosh, just to feel like I, as a kid or as a teen, had somewhere to go to feel embraced, to talk about what it means to live in a multi-racial body and to

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feel so different. But for nobody to have the tools to discuss this experience with you, not even your own parents, for most mixed people at least, it's like, you just feel so alone.

So it's not only healing for Jazmine and I to have Mixed in America, but also to talk to other mixed folx and to be building this community. It's healing for us every day as well.

**Shohreh:**

Something I love about this organization is that it provides a space for mixed people to share experiences and grapple with their identity, which is so important because it's extremely common for mixed folx to feel like they don't fit anywhere. Throughout my life, I've felt like I'm not Persian enough for Persian people and I'm not white enough for white people, and it's very othering and isolating to feel like you don't belong anywhere. So can y'all talk about your own experiences with similar feelings?

**Jazmine:**

Yeah, I mean you hit it right on the nail, that's like most mixed people, biracial people's experience. It's not feeling enough of either side and kind of doing this constant code-switching, and we're just like constantly adapting to the environment we're in—with white people I'm this way, if I'm with black people I'm this way. And it's not something that you consciously do as a mixed person, it's definitely something you just subconsciously do. You just learn to adapt and learn to try to fit in and try to be claimed. I think there's this deep need to be claimed. We're never claimed by either group, so that's what we really tried to provide with Mixed in America. Like, you are claimed, we see you, we feel you.

But growing up, you know, me and Meagan grew up in a very suburban, white neighborhood for the most part. And so a big part of my mixed journey was embracing my blackness, fully, because I feel like I kind of got shamed out of it just based on the environment I was in. And I felt like I

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needed to straighten my hair and stay out of the sun so I wasn't so tanned. And so, my journey has really been embracing my blackness, but also embracing my whiteness and not feeling like I need to be ashamed of that, which is a big thing that I think some people who are mixed with white feel as well. And how do I balance these two parts of me and feel like I can embrace them both fully and authentically? But it's a journey, a lifelong journey, for sure.

**Meagan:**

Yeah, I totally agree that it is definitely [laughs] a lifelong journey and that, at least for me, it's been an unraveling, an unfolding in front of me each day as I become bolder and braver to embrace my full, whole identity.

For me, I think one of the things that was really challenging was finding my voice and figuring out how to express authentically. Jazmine touched on code-switching, which has been a huge part of my journey. The way that I explain it best is like almost having all of these hats, you know, like sometimes I'm putting on the black girl hat and I'll change my voice and how I talk, or I'll put on like the Valley Girl hat and try to be really cool with the white people, or I'll just try to be super professional so I can be the model ethnic person or the model person of color. And I did that in college a ton.

But when I got to college, I realized that I didn't even know my own voice. Like I didn't even know how I spoke because my brain moves so fast. Like somebody will stand in front of me and it's like a million things are going on, and I'm like, okay, who is this person? What's their race? What do I think they'll think about my race? So I'm going to adjust and kind of like a chameleon become the most comfortable person for them to accept. And so that's what I was doing, basically my entire life, I learned how to do that to fit in with black people, to fit in with white people, to fit in with anybody.

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To become whoever that person needed so that they would be more comfortable.

And this has been a fantastic skill for me. I'm also an actress, so my job is to be a chameleon. But I kind of crashed in college and had this breakdown where I realized, oh my god, but who am I? If I'm always trying to be something for somebody else, where and when do I make space for my authentic expression? So then I kind of crumbled and had a meltdown, and through that meltdown realized I'm mixed, and the reason why I'm confused is because I'm putting myself in that box, but also the world wants me to constantly shift and be a version of myself, to be a fraction of myself, rather than to be a whole being, and to accept the nuance and the complexities that make me, me.

**Shohreh:**

It's interesting that y'all were using the word "code-switching" 'cause I have actually never thought of code-switching in the context of being mixed, and that just kind of like lit up my brain a little bit where I was like, oh shit. That really is, you know, what the expectation is of us. And what you just said too, Meagan, about, that you were doing this so that they would be more comfortable? Like that was just like, all the alarm bells in my head.

Because I think back to when I was kid, I also grew up in an extremely white suburb, and I started letting people pronounce my name wrong as young as second grade, because I wanted *them* to be more comfortable. And I let people say my name wrong until I graduated high school and went to college, and my mom begged me to please just say how you want your name pronounced and let people say it the right way. And before that point I was just like, it's easier for people, right? I can create a rhyme for it, other people can say it, like, it's embarrassing to have to correct people

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multiple times. Like why should I, the kid, have to correct the teacher/authority figure to say my name properly?

And so just this idea of trying to play up whatever you need to, like I'm also thinking again, for me, I'm Middle Eastern. So, I was in middle school when September 11<sup>th</sup> happened. And that teaches you as a kid that you wanna get as close to your whiteness as possible and as far away from your Middle-Eastern identity as possible, because people hated Middle Easterners at that time.

So, it's all these things that I'm still unpacking now as an adult, and the effects that those can have on you as a kid when you don't even know you're doing it.

**Meagan:**

Exactly. And we don't teach this, we don't talk about this. I love the example of your name. I think that's exactly what I mean. And I think especially when thinking about how to help mixed kids or really anybody struggling with any identity crises, we have the right to respectfully correct people and tell people how we identify. You know, and that goes for everything. That goes for race, gender, anything. Like, "Excuse me, I just wanna correct you here—this is how I say my name," or "Oh, actually, I think you were making an assumption about my racial identity or my background. Actually this is who I am."

And I think we can empower each other to do that more. That that is absolutely appropriate. Because the other option is that we end up sucking it up for them and nothing gets better, because people don't learn and do the research or change unless we take up that space and ask them to.

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**Shohreh:** Right, and I wanna honor too that that can be scary and that there can be consequences to that in the real world. Which isn't fair, and we shouldn't have to deal with that, but I think that's certainly one of the reasons that people are afraid to speak up and are afraid to correct people, especially when you're dealing with people who are in a position of power over you, where you're worried that they will retaliate and take it out on you because you don't fit into what they want you to be.

**Jazmine:** Absolutely, and I think going back to this lack of community, that community can give you the strength and the backing to stand up and correct people, and you feel like people to run to, that look like you, that go through the same things as you. And so, when mixed-race people growing up, you don't really have that, so you're kind of just kinda stuck in your trauma and no one else really understands. No one else really goes through what you go through. So you kind of just push it down, and you're like, "Ah, I don't know if I'm making this up. I don't know if this is a thing," because you don't really have that community to kind of turn to who can kind of hold you and support you in this very unique struggle.

**Shohreh:** Yeah.

**Meagan:** Totally.

**Shohreh:** Speaking of community, obviously we have three mixed people here as part of this conversation, so I'd love to talk about some common assumptions about mixed folx that y'all would like to push back on.  
[Laughter]

**Meagan:** Where to begin?

**Shohreh:** I know, there's just so many!

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**Meagan:**

We could talk all day. I guess the one that I'll bring up, and Jaz, I know you'll like to talk about this one as well, the quiet mixed girl. Well, maybe that's more of like, what we end up doing for fear of being stereotyped. So I'm mixed black and white, and I might be quieter with my black friends for fear of them calling me half-breed, or light-bright, or calling me out and saying I talk white or something. So I might just shift a little bit there and dim my light. Or for white people I might be scared to be too loud there as well for fear of being called sassy, or angry black woman, or something like that.

So I end up kind of dimming all of my actual authentic expression to fit in. Jaz and I have talked about that on Mixed in America. We've noticed that a lot of people resonate with this, yeah, I just end up being quiet because nobody is actually privy to my full experience. They're going to assume the part of me that they identify with, so they end up not being able to handle, or that's maybe the assumption we make, that they can't handle our full expression, so let me just be a fraction of my expression.

**Jazmine:**

Yeah, I think too, this kind of stems from the assumption that mixed people live this perfect life, this glamorous life, 'cause we're just mixed, and we've got the good hair, and we're just so exotic looking, and everyone loves us, and we don't have any problems. So this stereotype, and people think then, oh, we think we're better than other people, and they're not realizing the struggles that we were just talking about. That we do in fact experience our own unique set of trauma, of racial trauma.

And I think dismantling that assumption, that, like, we don't experience racial trauma, or comparing our struggle to our monoracial brothers and sisters, is a problem. And so we talk a lot about holding our privilege and our pain. We do acknowledge that we do have a certain privilege, at least

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me and Meagan because we're mixed Black, that we're lighter skinned and we do have some white features, and we do understand that in America those types of things can give us privilege. But at the same time, we have experienced racism. We also experience this isolation and being ostracized from our Black community.

And so, it's kind of teaching people really, and educating people on the multiracial experience and dismantling that assumption that we don't struggle [laughs] and that we're not just living this great life with our good hair and our lighter skin, you know? And so that is kind of what causes us to have this quiet stereotype, I think, because we're like, I don't want them to think that I think that I'm better than them because I don't, at all. But this is kind of the assumption that's put on mixed people and light-skinned people. So yeah, I think that's probably the number one assumption that we're really working to dismantle.

**Meagan:**

Another assumption that I'm kind of seeing more and more is that mixed people only identify as their race of color, which is not a lot of people's truth. And I think that I really want everyone to be, basically society to be careful with that and to really allow and make space for mixed people, or whatever word empowers you, whether it's mixed, multiracial, biracial, whatever the word is, that we acknowledge that everyone has the right to identify in a way that is truthful for them.

So Jaz and I have gotten kind of backed into a lot of corners with people think, kind of damned if you do, damned if you don't. Where for someone like me who is white-assuming, to identify as Black would absolutely offend people, but also to identify as mixed has also really upset people and made people feel like I'm trying to deny my Blackness, or my Black

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roots, and I'm trying to pass. A lot of mixed people just get kind of stuck where no matter how I identify, somebody is going to be upset about it.

So the assumption that we are only one version of ourselves, or we're half of something, that is also an assumption I want to debunk and to make space for mixed people to be full, whole beings, and whatever words really empower that truth, that's what we should all go with. 'Cause I personally identify as biracial Black, or sometimes I just say mixed and that feels really truthful. And I wanna be honored in that. You know, I don't want that to have to mean, oh, you don't identify with your Blackness, or you're trying to pass, or anything like that. It's like, I want to acknowledge my full experience.

**Shohreh:** Yeah and it's interesting how sometimes other people feel like they get a say in how you identify [laughter]. I'm thinking of, I had a, I will call him a former friend because it's someone that I ended up needing to cut out of my life for reasons like what I'm about to say. So this was someone who just out of the blue one day asked me, he was like, "Wait, why don't you identify as white?" And, you know, I was like, "I don't even know why you're asking this question," but it's someone I'd known for a long time, so I explained my mixed identity. And he just didn't understand it because I think he views me as white, right?

**Jazmine & Meagan:** Right.

**Shohreh:** So he's decided that I'm white enough that I should describe myself as white, and I'm like, but that does not describe my experience, both in the way that people treat me and also the way that I grew up and view the world, so why would I only identify as white? And also, it's none of your freaking business [laughter] what I identify as! Like, you have no say in this. Why do you think that your opinion matters at all in this?

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**Jazmine:** At all!

**Shohreh:** And it's so frustrating for mixed folx. It's like people don't take our own views of our identity seriously. They feel like they need to have an opinion on it.

**Meagan:** Oh my gosh, that part. It's like when you're mixed, it also makes others feel like there's a free-for-all. Like, come get a bite! Like, come, everybody, let's all cast our votes. What do you think she is? You know?

**Shohreh:** Ugh, yes!

**Meagan:** Like, let me tell you, oh, well honey, you know, you're, I could tell, I could tell, your nose, oh, I was thinking something was exotic there. Or those lips, or, everybody just decides that they get a piece of you because you're mixed. And it's not true. It's like we should be respected just like anybody else. It just really frustrates me the idea that people just have a say in our identities, and it's like, you should have less of a say for mixed folx because our situation is so unique, it's so case by case. So to make any assumptions is just dangerous, I think.

**Shohreh:** Yeah and you both have mentioned now this idea of exoticism being associated with mixed folx, and really, this fetishization of mixed folx, which is something that frustrates me to no end, the just like inappropriate comments that people make, like sexual comments. I mean, I used to be an attorney, and I will never forget being in a presentation with someone that I didn't know, it was a stranger from outside of our organization. And I forgot my business cards, and he was like, "Oh, do you have a business card?" And I was like, "Oh, sorry, I don't." He said, "That's okay. If I need you, I'll call the firm and ask for the exotic attorney."

**Meagan:** [gasping] Oh my gosh.

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**Jazmine:** Oh god. Gross.

**Shohreh:** And I couldn't say anything because all of my bosses were there, and I was like a first-year baby attorney, and I just had to like give a weak smile and walk away. And I was like, how do you not see that that's a completely inappropriate thing to say in general, 'cause this man is like 25 years older than me. But just like, why would you say that to me? That's so fucked up!

**Jazmine:** Oh, gross. Yeah, I worked in Corporate America for like all of my career, so I have a handful of stories of just the disgusting fetishization, objectification, just being a woman in general, but a mixed woman at that, is like so much. And yeah, I think it starts young too. I think people are like, oh, look at these cute little mixed kids, mixed kids! And no one ever says that about any other monoracial kid. No one's ever like, oh my gosh, look at these white kids. I really want a white kid. But people will say, I really want a mixed kid, and isn't that weird? I really want a mixed child, like, that's a weird thing to say. So I think it starts really young, people are like already fetishizing and wanting to have mixed people, and use them, put them on this pedestal, and kind of objectify them from a young age. So it's disgusting.

**Meagan:** Totally. Society as it stands right now is only comfortable sexualizing, fetishizing, and objectifying mixed people. They're not comfortable really learning about our experience, our full experience. See, nobody wants to talk about the identity struggles, the fact that mixed people also experience racism, oppression, violence, colorism, you name it. We're not ready for that conversation because we're just now scratching the surface of the monoracial BIPOC community experiencing so much pain. We're just now finally getting on board that oppression exists.

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So to then throw into the mixed experience, we're just not ready for it. We're like, oh, no, no, you guys are the pretty ones, we just want you to kind of shut up and be pretty, 'cause we like using your women to be the exotic creatures in media, and that's what we'll do. We also, it's kind of a win-win, 'cause we get to check a box *and* we like looking at you. But please don't talk about your troubles, [laughter] 'cause we don't wanna hear it.

And so that's really kind of how it feels, and unfortunately, I personally feel that way from white America and from some of the groups of color that I so desire to feel embraced by. And I think experiencing that isolation from both sides is so painful. Unfortunately, America is not ready to talk about it just yet. That's why there's such a need for community. It's like the world's not ready you guys, so we've really gotta talk to each other.

**Shohreh:** Yeah, and we're ready to talk about it, and we're going to talk about it.

**Meagan:** Yep! That's right.

**Shohreh:** So, I want to go back to this idea of holding privilege and pain, because I think it is important for us to talk about colorism and what it is and what it means for mixed folx.

**Meagan:** Totally. I know Jaz and I both have tons of thoughts on that, so I'll pass it to her in just a second. Also, for anyone listening, Jaz and I are different skin tones [laughs]. So we actually can talk about colorism from a different angle, which I think is really interesting. I am what some would say white-passing. I choose to say white-assuming, but I absolutely, to a lot of people, look white or maybe ethnically ambiguous. A lot of white people don't know that I'm Black. Black people tend to know that I'm half Black.

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For me, I totally experience light-skin privilege. Absolutely. I am an actress, and I get seen for all kinds of roles. From roles that should really go to a monoracial Black woman to lily white and they're trying to ignore a huge part of me. I've had to get really clear with my reps that I want to go for roles that make sense to my identity so that I'm not taking anything from an experience that is not mine.

But I think colorism is such a loaded conversation, and there's a lot of talk about what it actually is within the mixed community. I'd like to be super clear that I really believe the word colorism is to discuss the discrimination that is for darker skin tones. There is something that happens for lighter-skinned people and feeling that isolation, but colorism is actually about the trickle down of white supremacy and how it affects our darker-skinned brothers and sisters. And then I want to just pass it on to Jaz to kind of elaborate on that.

**Jazmine:**

Yeah, so colorism, yeah, it's discrimination based on skin tone, but it is definitely the preferential treatment of lighter-skinned people, and I think that's the issue at hand. And there's been so many studies and statistics of lighter-skinned people getting higher salaries, lighter-skinned people who have committed the same crimes as darker-skinned people getting better sentences, and so on. So, I mean, the direct trickle down of white supremacy, it's the closer you are to white, the better, right? That's the idea in America.

So, we talk a lot about how while we need to be uplifting our dark-skinned brothers and sisters, and talking about this, and shining light on how colorism affects them directly, we also talk about how on the reverse side we're left with a lot of guilt. We're left with a lot of this isolation again, because now we're being excluded from the Black community, in me and

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Meagan's case, because of this privilege, because of this preferential treatment that we're receiving. So it's kind of then creates this resentment within the minority communities. So instead of us kind of banding together and coming together, we kind of have this resentment towards one another based on how white America treats us, right?

And so we're really trying to bridge that gap and make sure we shine light on everything that we need to shine light on and uplift our darker-skinned brothers and sisters and really fix and address this problem. And also bridge the gap and mend the gap within the minority groups, because while we have privilege, we don't want it! [Laughs] We don't want the privilege. We don't want to have this preferential treatment. You know, my dad's Black, Meagan's mom is Black, and so to feel like we can receive better treatment than our own parents, I mean, that's just so much to grapple with on its own.

So, colorism is a huge topic, and it's kind of a controversial one 'cause some people don't necessarily feel like colorism is only to focus on the preferential treatment of light-skinned people. A lot of people feel that we need to look at the other end, like I was saying, how lighter-skinned people kind of get this resentment as well, but it's a hot topic in the mixed community.

**Meagan:**

And just to touch on why it's a hot topic a little bit, and especially within the mixed community, there's a lot of mixed people who say, "Well, I don't benefit from colorism, because I am also going through this intense racial trauma. I feel ostracized from my communities. And how am I benefitting from colorism?" And I think the reason why some of those mixed folk might struggle to acknowledge that is because the pain for mixed people isn't acknowledged. To jump to acknowledging privilege from mixed people, I

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think is a really tough thing to do. You kind of have to have this elevated sense of understanding of colorism to really understand that yes, at least I'll speak for myself, although I absolutely experience pain, and isolation, and racism, and oppression, and all these things, I still, because I'm mixed, because I have that lighter skin, because I have some of these Eurocentric features, the trickle down of white supremacy does touch me before it might touch one of my monoracial or more Black-passing brothers and sisters.

And so that's what I try to make clear. It doesn't mean that I don't experience pain. To acknowledge my privilege doesn't take away my pain. To acknowledge that I might benefit from colorism doesn't take away my pain and my truth. None of that takes it away. What it does is it acknowledges a very nuanced, very complex form of discrimination. And I've also noticed that when I can articulate that, I see some walls come down for some of my monoracial brothers and sisters, or more Black-passing, I should say, brothers and sisters, and how they're able to kind of sigh a relief. Because they don't want to feel like you don't get it. Like, they want you to acknowledge that this shit is not easy.

We have, like Jazmine said, statistics that prove we're treating dark-skinned little girls differently than we're treating the lighter-skinned ones. Studies that show that they're going to get suspended at higher rates. It just runs so deep, and it's also totally ingrained and saturated in our media of mixed people playing roles that should have been given to a monoracial Black person. And passing them off as full Black when they're absolutely half white and their looks represent that. So we're thinking, oh, well, that's Black excellence. That's Black beauty. And it's like, no, that's actually a mixed person. So what you're telling the Black community is that darker is not as beautiful and that we don't want to represent that.

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So the dangers of colorism run very deep, and I think it's so important to really be specific, as Jazmine and I both really try to do, of what colorism is, how the trickle down of white supremacy affects us, and how it's so helpful for mixed people to be so educated about this that they can say, "Yes, I see how I benefit from this. I absolutely acknowledge that privilege, but I also make space for my pain and my struggle, because that is just as real as the privilege."

**Shohreh:** Something that has really helped me conceptualize this for myself is seeing how this plays out even in the same family, for example.

**Meagan:** Oh yes.

**Shohreh:** So, I have three siblings, and all four of us look a little bit different and a little bit similar, even though we're all mixed. You know, we're all half Iranian, half white. And my older brother, Zack, I would say he looks the whitest among us. He got my mom's blonde hair, he had the lightest skin tone, and his name is Zack. [Laughter] And it's actually not. His name is actually Zacharia, which is Persian, but he goes by Zack. So of the four of us, he is the one who is the most white-passing, most read as white in different situations.

And then my younger brother is the darkest of all of us. People don't ever mistake him for white. People always assume he's full Persian. He's even been read as being mixed Black because of his skin color and just the way he wears his hair and stuff like that. And again, his name is Aara, which is not a name that people know as well.

And then my sister and I, we're somewhere in the middle. My name, if you read it on paper, you do not assume that I'm a white person [laughter]. You're like, mm, I don't know what that is. And then in person it can really

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depend on who I'm with, what's the context, what time of year it is, 'cause I live in Texas and so my skin gets much, much darker for half of the year than the other half of the year.

And so that for me has really helped me understand colorism, because I can talk even amongst my siblings and see how we're read differently, we've been treated differently, the levels of discrimination that we experience and in different contexts, and how we identify. You know, some of us feel more Persian than others among my siblings. So it's just so interesting.

But you can see where when people don't have that example, how it does feel hard to admit that there's any privilege in it because again, like you were saying, when you feel that pain and that struggle, it feels like giving something up, giving up something of yourself to also admit that you are benefitting from privilege in proximity to whiteness. But that's the reality of white supremacy in the world that we live in, is like you said, the closer that you are to white and that people read you to white, the more privilege that confers upon you.

**Jazmine:** Yeah, it's a spectrum. I think people think that it's like, you're either privileged or you're not, and that's just not what it is. Privilege is a spectrum. There's also lots of different types of privilege, and it's not black and white [laughs].

**Meagan:** Exactly. One thing that has really helped me with dealing with that is having some really honest, enlightening conversations with some of, for me, it's monoracial Black women and dear friends that I can really be myself with and be honest with.

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I recently had a conversation with one of my friends, and she had started diving into Mixed in America, and she was like, “Girl, I am just so shocked [laughs].” You know, she’s like, “Hearing from you, hearing from Jaz, seeing this community talk about their struggles,” she was like, “I have to be honest with you, I was so naïve.” She was like, “Look, I always claimed you as Black,” she was like, “I always claim mixed Black people. That wasn’t ever something I didn’t do, but I thought you guys had it great.” She was like, “I have to say, I thought y’all had the good hair, you’re given the skin tone, like, I just thought everybody loved you guys. You could fit in with white people, fit in with Black people.” She was like, “I did not know you had this inner turmoil. I had no idea.” And she was like, “And I feel so upset learning that so much of you felt that you weren’t claimed by the Black community.” She was like, “I hate that,” and she was like, “And I feel bad that I assumed all those things about you.”

And then I talked to her about the privilege and the pain, and I could tell that me acknowledging my privilege in that moment, being just as brave to tell her about my pain, personally, what my unique experience is, that provided healing for both of us. Because she could see that yes sis, I see you. I know how colorism affects you. Within our own community I see it. And you now see that it’s not all rainbows and butterflies for me [laughter]. And that provided so much healing.

So now when I’m not in the room to stand up for myself, she might stand up for me now. And when she’s not in the room, you better believe I will fight for her, I will talk about colorism, I will honor her, and I will make sure that I only take up space that is meant for me to take up, that I don’t want to perpetuate colorism. And I think that’s the kind of interpersonal healing that, at least I’ve found to be very beneficial for me.

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**Shohreh:** I think the mental health impact on mixed folx, given our unique experiences, is just really not yet fully understood. The unique shames that we feel and the fact that we do experience racial trauma coming at us from both sides, and what that all means for us. And you're right, it's like, if you're not experiencing it, you can't really know what it's like to go through that. And then also because a lot of people don't experience it, I think it makes it hard for us to normalize that experience and figure out how to heal from it too.

**Meagan:** Yeah, I totally agree. When you don't have the tools and the language, and there's one story, there's one narrative that's being perpetuated in media and all around, it's like, yeah, how can we expect people to know this experience? It really is going to take us little by little, number one, building community and banding together so that we can build the confidence to be brave, one situation after another, to really own our authentic experience. And not everybody is going to accept it, I'll tell you that.  
[Laughs]

**Shohreh:** Do y'all have thoughts on what mixed folx can do to feel more comfortable taking up space and embracing who we are? For those of us who are like, this is new to have a community for this, and what have y'all discovered in creating this community for what has been helpful?

**Meagan:** First of all, if you don't follow Mixed in America, I'd follow now, because we are, not only are creating resources every week with Mixed Mental Health Mondays, and Trigger Warnings, and giving media and things to consume that are all mixed so that you can just immerse yourself in mixedness. So I would join Mixed in America. We are also really privy to all the other pages, so we love connecting people and shouting out any mixed leader, any mixed activist, anybody that is empowering this community, we will

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definitely make you aware of those places. So I think diving into our community, we see people in the comments building friendships, and having conversations, and getting affirmed every day. So I think that's a great place to start.

If you go to our website, we have a workbook that is a great place to start to just start thinking about your own experience. One tip I would say is put the focus on yourself. Go inward, rather than, I think because of social media and this time that we're living in it's easy to want to search out for the answers. But my number one piece of advice would be, especially for mixed people who are constantly having others run up to them and ask them what they are, and blah-blah-blah, and poke and prod at them, I think go inward and think about what feels right to me. Like who am I? Who are my parents? What has my experience been? How do I present versus how do I feel? What do I know? What cultures make me me? What foods? What clothes? All of that.

And that's really something that only you can answer for yourself. It's not about asking everybody and it's not even about getting permission from all of your family members, because like you just said, your brothers and sisters might feel differently than you do. So it's really about going inward and asking yourself these questions. How do I feel? What words empower me and feel like they are expressing my full experience? Because for mixed people, we feel like fractions of ourselves so much, and we're code-switching and we're changing for others. So I think to take that sensation away and just go inward, you'd be surprised how calming that feels and how a lot of things become clear when we take out the temptation to get everybody else's opinion.

**Jazmine:** Yeah, the inner work, it's key.

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**Shohreh:** And as we're moving towards our final couple of questions here, I definitely want to end on a positive note, so I'd like for each of you to share what some of your favorite parts about being mixed are.

**Meagan:** Yeah!

**Jazmine:** I love that! I love the ability adapt. Like, we talked about code-switching, but I think it's a struggle, but it's also one of our greatest assets. I love that I can get along with pretty much anyone, 'cause I've just been used to having to be a chameleon. So I love that being multiracial kind of gives us this ability to just adapt.

**Meagan:** I love that. I second that one. I personally, I love my awareness. I think that because I come from more than one thing, I have this ability to be empathetic to so many different experiences. I don't necessarily sweat the little things, because I'm like, oh, well, that person might be experiencing this, this or that. I'm so hypersensitive to complexities and nuance that I'm always looking for a way to apply that to a situation, and I think it's totally in direct connection to my mixedness. It's like this inner duality, this ability to be flexible, to be aware, to see other human beings as not just black-and-white, but complex nuanced beings. I find that that just makes me a more interesting and empathetic human being.

And I think mixed people have that power, and we don't talk about it enough, but it's a gift. I mean, it works amazing in career, in Corporate America, in whatever your endeavors are, your aspirations are, you can apply this duality to that. And it keeps things mysterious and interesting, and being an empathetic person, we need more of those in this world [laughter].

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**Shohreh:** That's so true in my experience too. I think as an adult and coming into my own with my mixed identity, it has definitely helped me to see the world with more nuance and be able to lean into the gray and to just not give a fuck about boxes and like all these boxes we're trying to put people into, whether we're talking about race, or we're talking about sexuality, or we're talking about anything. And just being able to say, like, no, humans are complex. There's a lot more going on than you can necessarily see or assume just at surface level. And you're right, I do think that's a unique superpower that we have, because of our identity and how we grew up with different cultures.

**Meagan:** Absolutely.

**Shohreh:** So, for our final question, which I ask all of my guests, I would like for each of you to tell me how you define health and wellness for yourself at this moment in your life.

**Jazmine:** Mmm. I love that question. Health and wellness for me, I really think for me I'm always making sure I balance body, mind, and spirit. So it's important for me to take care of my body, always work out, eat healthy. It's really important for me to meditate, read, make sure I'm giving my mind the space it needs. And my spiritual practices are really essential for my personal health and wellness. I do astrology, tarot, and energy reading, but it's just really important for me to do those practices for me to feel like I have this overall health and well-being.

**Meagan:** Oh, I love that answer, Jaz! [Laughter] For me, balance and joy are coming to mind, for me, of like keeping these parts of my life in alignment with my truth and with my authentic expression. So whether it's career versus spirituality or finances and emotional life, all of that, just making sure I'm in balance and in alignment is super important to me.

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And one way that I make sure I'm doing that is I've been paying attention to joy lately. Just what are the things that make me feel joy and make me feel alive? And when I kind of keep my eye on that, I notice I'm just more in alignment. I'm just that much more centered, and I'm able to express truthfully. And that, for me, is what it's about, is finding moments of joy, authentic expression, and centeredness.

**Shohreh:** Mmm, I think most of us could ask ourselves that about joy a lot more than we probably do.

**Meagan:** Right. Especially right now. It's not easy. We're battling so much—a pandemic, we're about to go into a hectic election season, and so many racial issues are coming to the forefront. So sometimes just getting really simple and being like, what's gonna bring me some joy today? Like, I find that that's been really helpful.

**Shohreh:** Yeah. I love that! Well thank you both so much for being here. It is always a joy to get to be in conversation with other mixed folx and hear everyone's unique experiences, but also the things that we share that other people don't. So, for my listeners, one, how can people find you, and two, what do you need most from my listeners in order for them to support your work and your passions?

**Jazmine:** We have our Instagram, it's @mixed\_in\_america, and our website is [www.mixedinamerica.org](http://www.mixedinamerica.org). There's some great resources on there. That's where you can connect with us as well as the Mixed in America community. We have some webinars and workshops coming up, so if you guys follow us on there, you'll be able to stay updated on when we release those. So just to be a part of the community. We just ask that you be a part of the community, follow us, attend the workshops and the webinars, and we just really love connecting with other mixed people. It's so healing.

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**Meagan:** Yeah. I think the biggest ask is that if you're mixed and you're listening, join the community. Because we're doing this healing work together. We are doing webinars every month, and we have some big workshops in the works. So we want diverse mixed people part of that so that we can build this conversation and bring this awareness to the forefront. So I think diving in with us and doing the healing work together is our biggest ask.

**Shohreh:** Amazing. Well, I'm so looking forward to future content, and workshops, and all these things that y'all are gonna be putting out. I will be there cheering it on. And thank you again, both of you, for making time in your busy schedules to come on today. This has been wonderful.

**Jazmine:** Yes. Thanks for having us.

**Meagan:** Thanks so much. This has been such a pleasure, Shohreh. Thank you so much.

**Shohreh:** Of course.

And that's our show for today! If this podcast has taught you anything or helped you in any way, I hope you'll consider supporting me in my effort to keep it going. You can join my Patreon community and receive members-only perks by going to [shohrehdavoodi.com/patreon](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/patreon), or you can tip me for my work through the payment links located at the bottom of the show notes for each episode. I would also encourage you to subscribe and submit a rating and review through your podcast provider of choice. I love hearing from listeners, so feel free to screenshot from your podcast player, post on social media, and tag me. Finally, if you're looking for more information on what I'm all about and how to work with me directly, head over to [shohrehdavoodi.com](https://shohrehdavoodi.com). Hope to see you for the next episode.