

DIFFICULT

I was listening to a Ted Talk one Tuesday night, while driving home from my... okay; I'm going to say it, my RESIST meeting. The subject that night was "Being Difficult." A woman talked about how being difficult made people uncomfortable. Especially men.

I am rarely *difficult* and I don't enjoy making people uncomfortable. My upbringing taught the exact opposite: be gracious at all times and by all means, make sure everyone is comfortable with you. But the Ted Talk was bang on. Whenever I try to reach for something that appears to be unattainable, if I find myself pushing up against something, resisting an ill-fitting idea, or attempting to make an improvement on a position or policy, well, I have been accused of being difficult. And I guess that could be intimidating.

Just recently, I was in rehearsal for a play: An original play with a brilliant director. It was dream come true, actually. After two weeks of rehearsal, we had our first run-thru. The first run-thru exposes you, but it's a necessary evil. That's when all that is wrong, is revealed. So here I am, going after my *want*, trying to discover the arc of my character, searching for a moment of truth. Afterwards, our director gave us notes before everyone broke for lunch. But there I was, sitting on the floor, my script before me, jotting down my discoveries, intent on cracking the code on my

second act. Thank God we have three more weeks of rehearsal. After a while, my director comes over to me, squats down and asks, “How did go for you?”

“Well, it was a bit of a mess, actually—“

He cuts me off and yells, “You are so ...difficult. Can’t you ever be happy?” (beat)

I said, “Hey, hey. (pleasant) I just did the first run-thru of a play we’ve only been working on for the past two weeks. It isn’t right today. And it doesn’t have to be right today. It can’t be right today. But if I log my notes, paying attention to what worked and what didn’t work, in time this thing is going to take wing. Because I’m a Black woman with a process and I aim to make this work. Just... not today.”

He couldn’t see my point, “Darling, it bothers me that you’re so serious. You don’t seem...happy!”

(frustrated) “Do I *have* to be happy? Really? If you were working with Sean Penn at this moment, would he be happy? Would you expect him to be happy? Would badass Sean Penn be tossing confetti in the air at this point in rehearsal? I don’t think so! And would you try to *make* him toss confetti? I’m Sean Penn! Allow me to be serious. And, please, don’t get frightened! (Beat) Drat! I made my director uncomfortable. I never mean to do that. It just happens from time to time.

You know what? It has occurred to me that the very next time someone suggests that I am *difficult*, I will simply say, “Thank you.”

