

# **NANA DARKOA SEKYIAMAH TRANSCRIPT**

## **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

sexuality, blog, women, african, book, feminist, Ghana, sex, life, writing, stories, open, writer, communications, feminism

## **SPEAKERS**

Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah, Betty Kankam-Boadu

### **Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 00:00**

Life can be really, really hard. And I feel like we need to be deliberate about inviting pleasure into our life. And then we can find pleasure in the everyday moments, and then the small moments. We actually just need to be conscious about it. And so yeah, that's the focus for me on pleasure. The trauma will be there. You don't need to be searching for it. But you need to be conscious of pleasure, or you need to invite it into your life and stay open to those possibilities.

### **Betty Kankam-Boadu 00:34**

Hello, and welcome to Inspiring Open, candid conversations with influential women who have made an impact in Africa. We're talking about their personal, educational and career journeys, the choices they have made along the way, and what they have gained by setting aside their doubts in a world where women's voices and opinions often go unheard and unacknowledged. Inspiring Open is a space to explore the value of sisterhood and how networks of sharing and openness can create waves of change. I am Betty Kankam-Boadu, a journalist and women's rights advocate. Join me as I explore the fascinating backstories behind Africa's most tenacious female personalities. Inspiring Open is a podcast series from Wiki Loves women, a project of Wiki In Africa. Be inspired, be challenged, be bold.

My guest on Inspiring Open today is Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah. Nana writes across genres including creative nonfiction, short stories and essays. She is the author of *The Sex Lives of African Women*, a book which celebrates African women's journey towards sexual liberation. Nana is the co-founder of *Adventures From The Bedrooms Of African Women*,

and award-winning website, podcast and festival that publishes and creates content that tells stories of African women's experiences around sex, sexualities and pleasure. Her short stories have been published in *It Wasn't Exactly Love*, and *The Pot And Other Stories*, *The Guardian*, *Open Democracy* and *Essence* have published articles and opinion editorials. Nana is a huge advocate of pleasure and wants everybody to open up to pleasurable experiences. Let's get into today's conversation.

So we'll start from the very beginning. And we would like to know where you grew up, how you will describe your upbringing.

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 02:39**

So as a child, we initially lived with my grandparents in Airport Residential Area. So my sort of early memories are of running around their backyard, which was huge, playing with a washing hose, getting myself wet, falling ill because I'll get myself wet and I was asthmatic. And then later on we moved to North Kaneshie and then later on I went to boarding school at quite a young age. Well, I think it was a young age around 12 years old. I went to St. Mary's Secondary School and Korle Gonno. So yeah, I feel that was my childhood. But I feel in general, I was a fairly happy child. I loved to read that was my favourite thing to do. I was that kind of child who at a party would go with a book and just sit in the corner and read. Yeah, that's why I wear glasses today. I remember my mom saying to me, if your eyes start to hurt don't come and find me and complain because she would send me off to bed and she'd later find me under the covers trying to read a book with the outside light that was flooding into my bedroom.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 03:47**

No wonder you're a writer then. You loved books at an early age. That's interesting. So between your grandparents and parents, what values were you taught that you still live by?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 04:01**

My mum really worked hard to prevent me from being a liar. She used to say I was either going to be a liar or a writer. And I'm a writer, mainly of non-fiction so I don't even lie, most of the time in my books. As a child I was very creative with the truth, and she just felt like she had to channel my efforts in the right direction. So I feel that's actually one of my primary values. I really believe and value honesty. I'm one of those people I'd rather you tell

me the truth, even if it will hurt me, even if it will upset me. I hate to be deceived. I hate to be lied to. And maybe that just comes from my mum really emphasising the need for me to tell the truth when I was young, because I would do things like go into the fridge and it's my Auntie's chocolate and the chocolate will be all over my mouth and they'll say, "Have you seen my chocolate?" I'm, "No." "Did you eat the chocolate?" I'm, "No." But the evidence is literally written all over my face. So my mom really whacked on getting me to tell the truth. Yeah. And I feel that's, that's one of my primary values in life.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu** 05:05

Great. Did you always know you were going to be a writer, and essentially a storyteller?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah** 05:15

Absolutely not until ... it was only in 2012 that I started to think of myself as a writer, because I attended the ... At the time it was called the Farafina Writers Workshop, which was a workshop and is the workshop initiated by the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and it was going to that workshop that made me feel confident enough to actually be, Okay, this is something I really want to do, I want to pursue writing as a craft. But when I was a child, I loved acting. That was the thing I used to do, I would act in school plays, I would write school plays, I would direct the school plays, and I really wanted to be an actress. There was a time where I vaguely wanted to be a lawyer, only because of Law and Order. But then once I was in secondary school, my parents who really tried to encourage me to do law by then I was, No, I'm not interested, I want to study communications. And I just had this image of myself being this top shot communications PR executive will be going to fancy dinners and swanning all over the place. So communications was really what I wanted to do, which actually is also what I do today. So yeah, I did achieve my childhood dreams in that regard.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu**06:30

But as a communications person, are you living the life of this fancy woman?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah** 06:40

Not at all, because at the time I had kind of imagined that I'd be working in the corporate world, right, but I'm an activist, and I've gravitated so as the feminist world and the NGO world. And yeah, even though in the pre-pandemic days, I had a lot of travel as part of my

job, it definitely wasn't the kind of swanning around that I was imagining. You don't feel like you're swanning around when you're in economy, cramped. So it wasn't that glamorous life I imagined, but I really enjoy so many aspects of communications, from writing stories to designing campaigns to getting the stories that you think the world needs to know out there in the public eye. Yeah, it's something I feel very passionate about.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 07:24**

So Nana, the first time I met you, you worked with AWDF. can you take me through some of the places you've worked, that have defined your career?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 07:35**

So I currently work for the Association for Women's Rights in Development, AWID for short, as their director of communications and tactics. I've done that for close to seven years, it's been really interesting. I've gone through the ranks, I started off managing a woman's rights and media project that they had with the Guardian and Mama Cash, which is another leading woman's fund. And yes, I'm currently the Director of Communications and Tactics. And prior to that, I worked with the African Women's Development Fund here in Ghana as their communications specialist. But I've done a variety of things. Before that, before working with AWDF, I used to live in the UK. And I used to work as a leadership trainer, facilitator and coach for the Metropolitan Police Service, which is something a lot of people don't know about me. So that's also another one of my professional hats, that of being a facilitator, trainer and a coach, and something I really enjoy. And I'm hoping to do more in the coming years.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 08:36**

Tell me more about your work with the London Metropolitan Police. How did you get that job? And how was that experience?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 08:46**

Okay, so I was born in the UK, but I wasn't raised there. I was raised here in Ghana. And when I was 19, I went back because I think, like a lot of Ghanaians at the time, I felt like the best thing to do was to go to university abroad. Frankly, I wanted to go to university in the States, but I didn't win any scholarships. And so my only option was to go to university in the UK where I could, at least, pay fees that were slightly more affordable. I basically

worked all the way through university. I never had the typical university life. I was just... always had a full-time job. And I was studying part-time. When I finished my first degree, I applied for jobs, and didn't get any of the jobs I applied for. And one time I saw that there was an advert in the paper and it said that the police were looking for communication officers. And because I'd studied communications, I was, oh, this is my street. I didn't really understand the details of the job. It was only when I looked further that I realised oh, the job was actually to be a 999 operator. So basically, to be the person who answers the phone when people call the police with an emergency. So I did that job. I remember one of my friends was horrified. She was like, "How can you as a black person go and work for the police?" But I needed a job, and it was a good job, and it was well paid. And I actually learnt a lot. And again, I grew a lot in that role. I quickly became one of the internal trainers who then train other people to answer emergency calls. And then, later on, I became a leadership trainer, where I was responsible for training police officers, as well as civilian staff who are managers to be, in a nutshell, better leaders, because the police was also trying to move from being a force to a service, were trying to implement some of the recommendations of The Macpherson Report, which had branded the police as institutionally racist. So yeah, I spent a year training police officers and staff. It was, in many ways, the most stressful period of my life, but it was also the period where I learnt the most. I discovered that I had a skill for facilitation, in a sense just creating the conditions that help people reflect, to help people discuss, to help people open up. But then it was every two weeks you had a new class. And that was a stressful thing, because you kind of have the first day where they're big burly police officers looking at you this African girl. And I was the first black leadership trainer, I was the first black African Leadership trainer, I was the first black African woman leadership trainer. So you have them sort of kind of looking at you, what can you teach me? And then within, say, two days, you've broken down the barriers, you're all getting along, but you always have that stress on day one. And you would have that stress repeated every two weeks, which was a lot. And obviously, you had to also deal with a certain amount of ignorance, and you had to do a lot of education. But it was always good by the second week, but it was just sort of stressful every week, sort of amping yourself up to be with a group that come across as hostile, but that you know you can win over. But I feel like it's one of those experiences that, like I mentioned earlier, I learnt the most from so I'm never nervous going into any situation, because I kind of feel if I could deal with that and succeed, I can deal with anything.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 12:17**

How and why were you drawn into the world of activism, and feminism to be specific?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 12:25**

So when I was 19 and I was studying my first degree, one of my courses was cultural studies. And feminist theory was a part of that. So I read books by people like Bell Hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, Alice Walker. And for me, it was like somebody had turned on the lights, you were sitting in darkness and somebody turned on the lights, and now you can see everything clearly. Everything those feminists said made sense to me. I was, oh, so this is why that used to happen. This is why the world is the way it is. They just to sort of explain the way the world is to me and it made complete sense. And then I just started reading, reading more and more about feminism and everything I read made sense to me, and I felt like I just wanted to continue studying this. So then I went on to, I mean, do many different things. There was an African women's organisation in the UK at the time called Akina Mama wa Africa. It still exists today, but they've moved their head office Uganda. So I signed on to volunteer for them, and I'd just go to their offices and work for free. But part of what was really great was they had all of these leadership courses. So as a volunteer, they would send me to their leadership courses, and I learned a lot from other African feminists. And then I also got to connect with other young African feminists. And that was basically what started me on a lifelong journey of activism, and then, having that experience also, when I came to Ghana, it made it easier for me to get a job with an African feminist organisation, and that's really what sets me and my journey.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 13:55**

Unfortunately, for so many people, feminism has this negative connotation. Have you experienced such negativity before?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 14:06**

I feel like those are the kinds of experiences that I used to have when I was much, much younger. But nowadays, I move in the world with my people and with my community, I do not spend time in spaces, to be honest, where I feel like these are people who don't get me or don't understand me. So I surround myself with feminists. I don't get those kinds of reactions today. And I probably just moved out of that space. I love to live in my feminist echo chamber. I'm quite happy there.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 14:31**

Good. You're a member of the Black Feminism Forum. Why black feminist? And even for that matter, why African feminist, someone may ask, can't we all exist as feminists?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 14:46**

I don't describe myself as a black feminist. I describe myself as an African feminist. And for me, what that means is that my feminism is informed by my context. It's informed by where I come from. For me, it's also a way to connect my identities as a Pan Africanist, and as a feminist. So there may be issues that, or particular concepts, that white feminists have that may not be issues that I relate to because we have different realities. And so being an African feminist, for me, it's about dealing with the realities of being African. And also, one of my primary concerns being the well-being of the continent.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 15:25**

You mentioned that you don't worry so much about what others think about you and the work you do, because you found your tribe. How life changing has find in that tribe been?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 15:38**

It's been everything. Because I think sometimes you may feel alone in the world, or feel like you're the only one who feels a particular way. But when you find your tribe, you realise, oh, my gosh, I am normal. There's so many people like me, we have the same belief system, we have the same politics, we're fighting for the same cause. They make my world better, they lift me up, support me, I don't need to explain myself, I don't need to have arguments with them. So, it's everything to find a tribe. And it's a thing that I would encourage people to invest energy, and whatever your passion is, finding people who are like-minded, who support you, who love you, who care for you, who lift you up, and who are there for you. And I feel that's what African feminists do for me.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 16:22**

Yeah. Tribes are important. What are your thoughts about putting literature into categories? So there is African feminist literature, for instance. again, why can't it just exist as literature?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 16:37**

I know that sometimes some writers feel that you narrow them if you describe them as, say, an African woman writer, or a feminist writer. I personally have no problem with that, because my identity is so important to me. And because part of why I write ... because my identity is part of why I write, so I have no problem with being defined according to my identity. I also don't think it limits who accesses my book? So with my book, for example, *The Sex Lives of African Women*, people may feel, oh, does that mean men won't be interested in reading? I know, some men read it, because I primarily wrote this book for women, so even if no man read it, I wouldn't be bothered. But I've had men DM me and tell me how much the book means to them, and the buying it for other woman, and all of that kind of stuff. So even if somebody described my book as African feminist literature, I would have no problem with it, because I'm actually really proud to write African feminist literature. Some people also like to pretend that there is no such thing as African feminist, or some people like to pretend that feminism is a Western import. And as African feminists, we also are reclaiming the stories of our African feminist ancestors. So for me, that's also part of not just the reclaiming, but naming the work we do and having that name recognised, and also being able to point attention to the knowledge that we produce as African feminists.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 18:13**

Now, let's talk about *The Adventures from the Bedrooms of African Women*. The blog has been in existence for 14 years.

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 18:22**

Yeah, January 2009.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 18:24**

I feel before some of these topics on sex and sexuality became trendy in Ghana, you and your co-founder had been on it. What led to the start of the blog?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 18:35**

So a couple of things. One, I had become interested in blogging. As a communication specialist as really curious about how could the blog format help us tell stories? And so I was exploring and had started a blog for the AWDF, African Women's Development Fund. And I used to go to these meetings, monthly meetings, by blog in Ghana, and two of the bloggers, Kaiser and Nanaya were like, Oh, why don't you have a personal blog? And I was

like I have nothing to blog about. And then later on that year, I went on holiday with a group of my friends. And we went to the western region, we were on the beach, drinking cocktails and chilling and having a lot of conversations about sex. And they felt to me like the first time was having really open-minded non-judgemental conversations with other African woman about sex. And I just thought, why has it taken me so long to actually be able to do this so freely? And so I came back, and I called Malaka and we're chatting and I was telling her how amazing my holiday was. And Malaka was that one friend that I could always share intimate secrets with, and she with me. And so I said to her, "Look, I want to start a blog about sex." And she said to me she's been wanting to write a blog, she been wanting to write a book about sex. And so I said, "Let's do the blog together. And later on, we can turn the blog into book." And that's how Adventures came into being

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 20:00**

Was there a blog that was readily say patronised by people because of the topics you discussed?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 20:07**

I would say it was readily patronised. Because the stories were interesting and they were regular. But yes, of course, sex sells. I mean, we don't have enough knowledge about sex. So when you're writing about sex, and you're writing about sex in a way that people can access, they have their questions answered, they're going to read it, they're going to consume that information, because there's such a dearth of comprehensive knowledge about sex. Yeah, so the blog got lots of readers very, very quickly. And I think also it probably got lots of readers in the beginning because I was myself. I had my picture up on the blog, I had my name up on the blog. I wasn't trying to hide myself. And I think that made it interesting for people. I don't know, there's been lots of anonymous blogs about sex where those blogs have done very well. Maybe the popularity has nothing to do with me being open. I think it had more to do with the topic. Yeah. And the fact that the quality of the writing was good.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 21:06**

You began writing the blog yourself, and later allowed for others to contribute? Why did you see the need to open it up?

### **Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 21:14**

I very quickly had the realisation that, this blog is called Adventures from the Bedrooms of African Women, it's not called Adventures from the Bedrooms of Nana Darkoa. And of course, woman were sending me messages, sharing their stories with me in the DMs. I just started encouraging people. I'm like, you know the story that you just told me, do you want to write it to the blog? Do you want to share? There are some people who started writing regularly. And so, literally, we gave them their own username and password to the blog. These are women I havd never met, many of them I've still never met. And we just give them access to the blog so that whenever they wanted to write a story, they could publish. And I think that was also a huge part of the success of the blog, because then we had a woman who came from different backgrounds, different identities. So then there were many more stories on the blog, the blog was being regularly populated, and there was always new and exciting content there. If I had tried to do it myself, I'm sure at some point in time, I'd have probably just gotten tired.

### **Betty Kankam-Boadu 22:11**

That's open right there.

### **Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 22:15**

Exactly. Yeah, I was totally open, it was totally open. Yeah. And my trust was never betrayed, to be honest. The degree to which I trusted the community, on Adventures... sometimes I think about it now, and I'm like, whoa, was that stupid? But I don't think so. I feel like my faith in people was returned several times. I'll give you an example. There was a time where someone wrote to me and said, I have a visual disability, there was a change with them to the blog. And this change is really affecting me. And they're trying to give me tips on how to correct it, I couldn't. It turned out that person had some sort of IT skills. I basically give them an admin password, and they fix the issues. This is again, somebody I didn't know. They could have taken down the blog for all I knew. Also, I didn't have money to... we were paying for everything in terms of the domain name and sever, hosting with our own resources. I didn't have extra money to go and hire website's specialist, you know. So even in those early days, fixes were done by community members. I mean, I moved from Blogger to WordPress, because the founder and owner of Web for Africa did that for me for free. And he was somebody who had met in blogging circles as well. So it was such a community effort, Adventures has been such a community effort up to this day. Yeah, it's

only recently that we've had some resources where we can now afford to have professionals to do things for us.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 23:51**

Yeah. And, again, I like how far Adventures has come? Because I also saw that now you have a fellowship programme. Can you talk to us about that?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 24:03**

Yeah. So I mean, like we mentioned earlier, from the very beginning, and I started to encourage other women to share their stories, lots of people became regular contributors. With their own time, they'll be writing for adventurers on a regular basis, maybe one story every week, one story every two weeks. A lot of people have honed their craft as a writer on Adventures and over a period of time, have become better writers because they've been writing regularly. And we just felt like we wanted to create a system where we could give something back. We could give somebody, a couple of people an honorarium. We could also offer them more structured support, more consistent editorial support. We could create online training so they could benefit from, we could have other more experienced creatives, have mentored sessions with them. And so that's what we're trying to do with the fellowship.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 24:58**

Amazing. The topics on sexuality in particular featured on the blog from the very beginning?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 25:06**

Yes, we've always discussed the issues of sexuality. Because the one thing that blog has also been for me as, and just in general writing, writing is a way for me to think. so if I'm trying to figure something out, I write it. And in the process of writing, I come to a clear understanding. I mean, when I was 19, and I started to read about sexuality, I was having a lot of aha moments, because I have never previously thought of my sexuality. I had just kind of ... I'd just never questioned, oh, do I have a sexuality? What is the sexuality? I was a typical Ghana girl. All you know is that sex is bad, and you shouldn't have sex. And I felt I hadn't ever had sex. I hadn't thought of the experiences I'd had with other girls and my boarding school as sex. So when I started to reflect on my sexuality, that's part of what I was reflecting on. And I would write about that on the blog. So yeah, we've been talking

about sexuality since 2009. It's not anything that's new for us. And, I don't think it's anything that's new for Africans in general. It's just that we have a lot of religious fundamentalists who try and whip up hysteria around sexuality and who tried to pretend that Africans only have one sexuality, which we know is completely false.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 26:31**

Nana, you're in Ghana, and you have witnessed the debate on sexuality to the point that there is a bill being pushed in Parliament to criminalise it. I wonder how you feel about it?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 26:49**

Oh gosh. Okay, so much that I want to respond to that, that I don't know where to start from. Well, I personally feel sexuality is on a spectrum. I don't think that sexuality is fixed, I don't think it's immutable. I think people's sexuality can change. Some people may experience their sexuality aspects, others may not. I think what's important is that everybody's human rights are respected. And nobody should be discriminated against or abused because of their sexuality. And I think states, including the state of Ghana, has a responsibility to protect sexual minorities. And actually, Ghana has signed a number of international covenants to say that they will protect the rights of sexual minorities. So it's really upsetting when we allow religious people to try and hold sway over the country, especially as a country. As a country, it's a secular country. For me, that's really upsetting. And what's even more upsetting, and upsetting is not the right word. But, there's a lot of hate that sexual minorities experience in this country. And when people try to talk about people who are sexual minorities as if they are not human beings, it's fosters and increases the hate for them. And there are real consequences for people's lives. People are being threatened, people are being abused, people are being beaten, people are losing their jobs. And I think it's a really disgraceful place for Ghana to be in. And I guess maybe I was overly optimistic about Ghana, but I had never expected us to be here. I hope the bill gets killed. And that hope, not only does the bill get killed, but that these conversations would have hopefully helped some Ghanaians to understand that we are all one people, and that we all have the rights to be here. And that we all have the right to live in peace and to be secure. And we have the right to love whoever we want to love. And what our government should be doing is making all our lives better. Making sure we have the basic necessities, we have good healthcare, we have education, that's what I want our government to focus on, rather than focus on who is sleeping with who. That's not the state's business. As long as people

are consenting adults, what they do is their business. And what the state should be doing is providing health care such that adults can be safe. We have many problems when it comes to sex, we have a huge problem of paedophilia, and this is actually been done by their heterosexuals. So the homosexuals are not the people that we need to fear. In my book, a lot of people shared about their child abuse experiences. And they experienced that abuse usually was... I mean, obviously I was interviewing woman, they were abused by men, older men. People in the families, people who were relatives. We see this in the papers all the time, girls being defiled. For me, that's a bigger concern we should be dealing with.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 30:11**

Yeah, yeah, I think the hypocrisy is just too much. Congratulations on your book, Nana, *The Sex lives of African Women*. Tell me how the process of putting together the book was like?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 30:25**

It was such a long process. It took me five years, and there were many times where I was, will I ever finish this book? Should I just give up and publish the stories I have on the blog? I'm glad I persevered. And, eventually it was published in book format. The idea came in 2014. And I actually started the writing and interviewing process in 2015. And I finished in 2020. Yeah, it was a long process, but it was interesting, it was fun. What I would do is anytime I travelled to a new country, I would seek out an African woman to interview because I wanted to show the diversity of our stories across the world. And I'd also, realised, rather belatedly, oh, we have African descendants in places like Latin America, which I had never thought about. So I wanted people to also see that reality in my book.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 31:19**

But why did it take five years? Is it the process of getting the interviews, or you had all the interviews down, but it still took five years?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 31:31**

Yeah, I had a full-time job. And many other side hustles. So I had a full-time job, I had the blog, I had a small consultancy, towards the end, I had a daughter, so it wasn't a full time thing. There'd be months where I would go without writing or interviewing anybody. And then maybe I'll do a residency and I'll work on ten stories at a go. So it was very much written in fits and spurts until I got my book deal. And when you have a book deal, and

somebody's given you money, and you have signed a contract to say you need to deliver your book by a certain deadline, you will wake up at five o'clock to write every day, which is what I did in the long run.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 32:12**

Well, congratulations all the same. I am glad it finally came out. For someone who needs convincing to pick a copy of the book why is the book a must read?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 32:25**

I will say there was no book like it, and those are not just my words. Those are the words of Margaret Busby who is a preeminent black woman publisher in the UK. But then also every day woman DM me all of the time. And they tell me the book has changed their lives, the book has made them reflect on their sexuality, reflect on their choices, it's inspired them to seek more pleasure in their life. And so a lot of women have told me that the book is life changing. And, yeah, that's why I would encourage everybody to get the book if they don't already have it, and not to just get one for yourself, but to get one for your sisters and your friends and your brothers and your mothers. I love that so many people have told me that they bought a book for their mom. And some people have told me that keeping a copy for their daughters. That's really nice.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 33:20**

You are very vulnerable with some aspects of your life on social media. And I think a few years ago, you shared about your struggles of trying to have a baby. Where was your headspace that time when you made the post? And now that you have a daughter, how does it feel?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 33:41**

Yeah, motherhood is way more challenging than I imagined it would be. I had no idea that even up until almost two years old, my daughter would not sleep through the night. I wish I'd known that from the beginning. To be honest, I can't remember the headspace I was in when I wrote that original post but for many years, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to be a mother or not. I was really in two minds. And then obviously I made the decision to pursue motherhood and yeah, I feel I just want to be real about motherhood. I love my daughter with all my heart. I'm so glad she's in my life. It's freaking hard work. I'm glad I didn't do that

when I was young. I glad I did it in my 40s when I'm financially stable enough to be able to have somebody super qualified to support me as a live-in nanny. And I don't plan to have a second child because I still want to have lots of space and time in my life to be able to pursue my own creative projects. And even now I have less time to write, for example, because I used to wake up from writer five but anytime I wake up my daughter wakes up. So even if I'm awake I have to lie quietly bed so that she can continue sleeping. And I think nobody really warns you about out all of those kinds of things. And I think also being a mother has convinced me that nobody should be forcing people to become mothers, because you do have to give up so much of yourself. And hopefully, it's a short-term thing. Because obviously, as the children grow, they become more independent. And at some point in time, they wouldn't even want to be by you. But at this point in time, my daughter just wants to be by me. I had to say to my nanny, I'm going to do a podcast, please make sure that you guys don't come this way. Because if she comes down the corridor, she's going to come into my office, and she's going to come and sit on my lap. Even in the middle of the night, if I wake up and go to the bathroom, she wakes up and follows me to the bathroom. So she's got severe attachment issues. But it's also sweet because she loves me. And she wants to be around me all the time. But sometimes it's just, oh, my goodness, please give me five minutes. I just want to be in the bathroom on my own.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 35:53**

Yeah, yeah. I mean, I'm not a mother. But I can imagine, I think I can imagine that. You read stories, and you hear people's experiences about how the process of trying to become a mother is, and then I had to see it first-hand what my sister had to go through to eventually have a child. And she would also say that you know what, Betty? When it happens, it happens. If it hasn't happened, sit yourself somewhere and relax, because yes, you want it, you yearn it, but it's not an easy process at all, as people will make it seem, hey, go get a baby. Ah, when are you having a baby? When are you doing that?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 36:37**

Absolutely, yeah. And it's kind of ironic, because when you think, especially when you're young, you have this fear of if I have sex for pregnant almost as if it's automatic, and really isn't for a lot of women.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 36:52**

Yeah, it really isn't for most women. And I just wish that narrative would change on that. Because when you become an adult, and it doesn't happen automatically for you, it messes with your head. But hey, what do I know?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 37:07**

I think you clearly know a lot. But yes, I think we should delink sex from pregnancy because it's not automatically connected. And, I don't think we should be saying to people as a deterrent, if you have to sex you'll fall pregnant. I think what we should be doing is really giving people the options when it comes to pleasure, explaining that you can have pretty damn good sex by yourself. You can have sex with toys. And, here's a whole range of protection if you do want to have sex with somebody else. Here's how you can keep yourself safe. That's what I think we should be doing. Not saying to people don't have sex, because if you have sex, you'll fall pregnant and your life will be destroyed.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 37:49**

Absolutely. Now let's talk about open and what it means to you.

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 37:56**

So what does open mean to me? I think it means different things, I think it means making knowledge as accessible as possible. Preferably free, or a lot of it free. I think it means having it available in multiple formats, in multiple languages. But the format is really important. So something that people can read, they can hear, they can feel, we can touch. I think if you're doing something that's open, it doesn't really belong to one person. It belongs to a collective or belongs to everybody. I also think when something is open it's done in collaboration. Yeah, for me, these are a couple of indicators of something being open.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 38:47**

I said, early on, a lot of the work you do is really rooted in open, from opening up your blog to strangers who have made it even better over the years, to pushing for inclusion for women and sexual minorities. You are open more than you know.

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 39:06**

Thank you for saying that.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 39:09**

In what way do you want conversations on sex, sexuality and feminism to change?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 39:15**

I want the conversations to become more open, with another theme of being open. No, I really want us to be more open-minded. And to allow ourselves to unlearn some of the things we've been taught by our society, by our parents. Allow ourselves to relearn, to educate ourselves, to listen to people who may be different from us and may have different experiences. Yeah, just have an open-minded approach really towards sex and sexuality. Even for ourselves as individuals. I think it always starts with the self.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 39:55**

I realised that you emphasise on pleasure a lot, particularly on Adventures of course, an extension of that pleasure in other areas of your life. Why the emphasis?

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah 40:06**

Because life can be really hard. Life can be really, really hard. And I feel like we need to be deliberate about inviting pleasure into our life. And then we can find pleasure in the everyday moments, and then the small moments. We actually just need to be conscious about it. And so yeah, that's the focus for me on pleasure. The trauma will be there. You don't need to be searching for it. But you need to be conscious of pleasure, or you need to invite it into your life and stay open to those possibilities.

**Betty Kankam-Boadu 40:38**

Thank you for listening to Inspiring Open, a podcast series from Wiki Loves Women. This first series of Inspiring Open was funded through the International Relief Fund for organisations in culture and education 2021, an initiative of the German Federal Foreign Office, the Goethe Institute and other partners; and an annual grant from the Wikimedia Foundation. If you enjoyed today's show, subscribe on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen to your podcasts so you never miss an episode. Feel free to share, rate and review us. We appreciate the support. You can also tag us in your posts. We are @WikiLovesWomen on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. I'll leave you with the words of Ntozake Shange. "Sisterhood is important because we are all we have to stand on. We have to stand near and by each other, pray for one another and share the joys and the

difficulties that women face in the world today. If we don't talk about it amongst ourselves, then we are made silent by the patriarchy. And that serves us no purpose. Until next time, look after yourselves and your sisters. And remember, be inspired, be challenged, be bold. I am Betty Kankam-Boadu and you've been listening to Wiki Loves Women, Inspiring Open.