

Intersecting Nerd Culture and Feminism, Jamie Broadnax



BLACKGIRLNERDS

Jamie Broadnax is the superheroine of the Black Girl Nerd community. From podcasting to live tweeting, she entered the digital realm with a focus on filling a void and has successfully created a space for fellow black girl nerds to feel valued.

A simple Google search: "black girl nerd," and zero response was all she needed to initially create a personal digital space. That quickly spread to an online community tuned in to the conversation of a black woman's experience surrounding much more than super heroes.

"I think there needs to be more space where it's not just about specific things that tend to be popular among black women," Jamie explains. "I want to see more black women talking about being involved in the STEM field. It doesn't have to be about fashion, makeup or hair. I feel like we definitely dominate those aspects of the market. It can be about so many other things."

Rather than wait for someone to come along and create these conversations, Jamie is actively working to lead the way. Through the use of podcasts, Jamie has been able to foster new conversations for women of color in the nerdy community.

Earlier this year, she introduced her latest podcast [*Misty Knight's Uninformed Afro*](#), alongside co-host Stephanie Williams of the Lemonade Show. The podcast is a 9-episode series about black superheroines inspired by a tweet about the lack of black superheroines in movies.

"I just wanted to do something unique in that same space but kin to the work I do with BGN. I figured I should do a podcast about black superheroines because we know these women and we know their names but what do we really know about them," she explained.

While 2017 is shaping up to be a busy year, Jamie is anticipating 2018 to be even bigger for her as she plans to release a book – an autobiography fused with commentary and perspective from folks in the BGN community. "It's definitely reflective of what BGN stands for: community," she said.

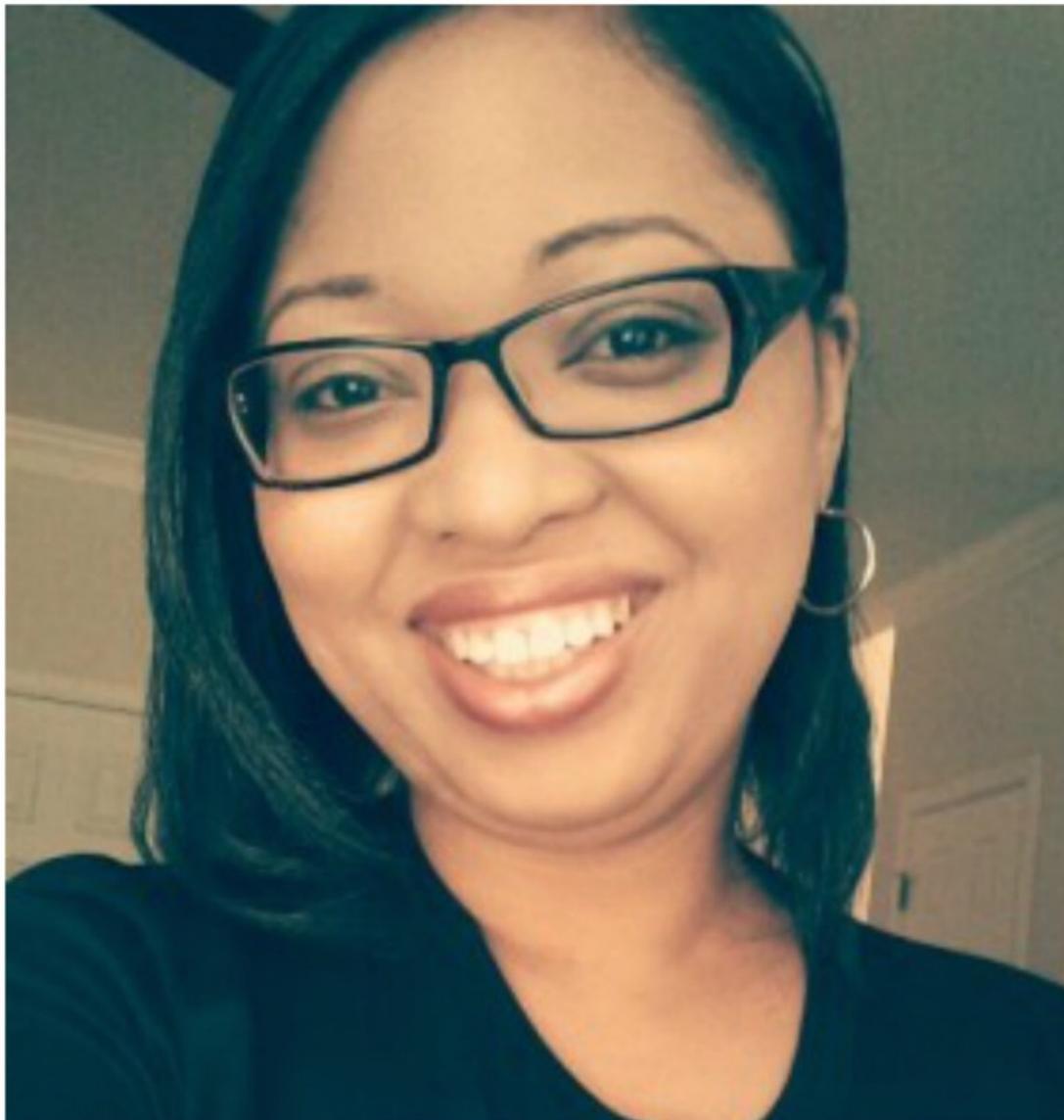
Head to the following page for our in-depth chat with Jamie Broadnax and tweet her your favorite quote – she may just respond.

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What does it mean to be a black girl nerd?

Jamie Broadnax: Being a black nerd is something that I've always been but never used a title to identify myself. I was always into different fandoms that are now part of the nerd culture. But it wasn't tied to a subculture. I think identifying as being black and a female in this subculture is very important because back when I was growing up things that were part of the nerd subculture like comics, gaming and things in the tech space, were predominately male and predominantly white. So it was assumed that black women weren't into these things. So that's why identifying as a black girl nerd is very important to me now because I want to carve a space out there, a safe space, where women feel empowered to be a part of different subcultural communities that in the past have felt very marginalized by them.

Have you always known you were geeky or nerdy?

Jamie Broadnax: No. I grew up predominately with guys. I was a tomboy and all of the things I was into were things that boys "would be into." I was into comics, I collected baseball, basketball and Marvel trading cards. I was into Sega, Nintendo and all of the games. Then I was also more on the academic side or the geeky side of things. I was a bookworm. I would read Shakespeare for fun. I read *Hamlet* for fun; it wasn't an assignment. These are things I was always interested in and I didn't see it as nerdy or geeky. I just saw it as hobbies and things that I like. I only got called a nerd by my brother, but I thought he was just being an annoying sibling.

Did you have any expectations before launching BGN?

Jamie Broadnax: Not by a long shot. I never expected to be talking to Idris Elba in his hotel room about BGN and him saying to me that he's a nerd. I never expected to talk to Shonda Rhimes and her saying I'm one of her favorite people to follow on Twitter. It's cool to see how its evolved to a point where everybody feels safe enough to express themselves and articulate all of these nerdy and geeky things about them that they probably would have

said behind closed doors and not publically on a podcast or a red carpet interview.

What's your proudest moment with Black Girl Nerd?

Jamie Broadnax: I think my proudest moment was being able to sit down and appear on the Melissa Harris-Perry show and talk about this platform. She was the very first person that followed our Twitter account. I will never forget that day. It still looked like a blog at the time and in the beginning stages, so the fact that she followed was amazing. She said she loved the blog and she obviously went to the site and look at some of the editorials. That made me feel legitimate in that moment. That was one of the things on my bucket list, to be on her show and then it actually happened. I think just having these moments, meeting people in person and doing these meetups across the country and people coming up to me telling me, "Oh Jamie because of your blog, I decided to create my own app or I decided to do podcasting because of you." All I did was create a website, I didn't mean for folks to feel like I changed things in their lives but that's the kind of feedback I get and it makes me proud. It makes all of the hard work I put into doing this on a daily basis, all worth it.



Do you feel black women are lacking those spaces where women feel safe enough to discuss like-minded things?

Jamie Broadnax: It's really cool to hear from movie stars, producers and influential people who identify with your community and your brand because you've allowed them to have a space where they can say that. There aren't many spaces out there, but back in 2012, there weren't any at all. There wasn't a space where Shonda Rhimes could say she's a fan Dr. Who, or where Melissa Harris-Perry can say she's a nerd and eventually she coined #nerdland on her show. There wasn't a space for black people, specifically to talk about the things they like, in that capacity of being nerds and geeks.

I want to see more spaces where we can feel free to be ourselves and not feel like just because you don't see a bunch of black women talking about

this subject or talking about this subculture that it doesn't exist. There are people like Ashlee Blackwell of Graveyard Shift Sisters, talking about black women directors that are making horror films. I think it's starting to happen now though, with more black women creating spaces that reflect women that look like them, which is great because five years ago there weren't as many spaces.

We noticed that your Twitter is always popping. How exactly do you connect different women within the BGN community online?

Jamie Broadnax: I'm really obsessed with Twitter. It's something I've always loved being an introvert. I'm definitely someone who feels comfortable being social on the Internet as opposed to real life, so that's a huge part of it for me. Just being on Twitter is a great way to connect with a community but that's not something I intended to do because Twitter was just a fun space for me. I was able to get a lot of people involved with BGN because of the constant perpetual engagement I have with people online. I use the BGN account to have different conversations, like talking about the newest Spiderman trailer and having discussions with people and asking them what their takes were.

What do you think about podcasting becoming the new radio?

Jamie Broadnax: I think us as people of color, we don't really have access to radio like white media does. Podcasting gives us an opportunity to tell our stories the way we want to tell them and provide context around conversations we are usually shut out of. So when we're talking about our favorite movies or television and journalism, and critiquing it around race, gender, sexuality or whatever, I think it's important that marginalized people have a voice and podcasting gives us that because it's free, easy to do and gives us an opportunity to be a conduit to a very large audience that we otherwise couldn't reach. That's why you see podcasting so popular especially among spaces with so many black people and people of color because it gives up that access that we weren't afforded by the NPR's of the

world. Being able to produce our own content and having autonomy in the world, it's a big deal.



Speaking of podcasts, how's the Misty Knight's Uninformed Afro podcast going?

Jamie Broadnax: Props to Steph Williams, who came up with the name. Misty Knight's Uninformed Afro started because I wanted to do something different in the podcast space. At the time I had just wrapped up another podcast I hosted, Get It Right by Rewire Radio.

Do we know how Misty Knight lost her arm or why Storm is claustrophobic? What do we know about these women outside the basic storylines in the movies and cartoons? Those platforms (games, TV series or films) are not enough to tell those stories, so Misty Knight's Uninformed Afro was formed. I'm excited about how it's turned out. We just wrapped our first season. I'm excited people have had a positive reaction to the show.

In 2018, you're coming out with a book. What can you tell us about it?

Jamie Broadnax: It's about the intersections of nerd culture and black feminism. It's a mirror of everything I've done on the website and the Twitter space. There are chapters about cosplay, online dating, and dating in general because that's been a big part of BGN with a few editorials I've done in the past and a podcast about it. Also, comic books—which superhero heroines inspired me growing up. It will be out sometime in 2018, but I'm not sure when.

A podcast about online dating? Please share details.

Jamie Broadnax: On the BGN podcast, the online dating episode reflected the editorials I've written, along with Candice Frederick. We talked about the struggle of online dating. Personally, I've been on every dating app and website you can think of. I just can't seem to get it together to the point where I just give up. When he comes, he'll be there. It's fun to hear people's different experiences, whether they are good or bad, I think we've all had a struggle with online dating and we all have a story to tell. I feel like I could one day write a book about my experiences.

So are there any plans to expand BGN?

Jamie Broadnax: Right now we're covering a lot of conventions across the country. We're launching a universal fan con in April of next year in Maryland, partnering with [The Black Geeks](#). This is an opportunity to expand both of our brands and be a part of a bigger community. But with the book, the

conventions and Misty Knight, I think 2018 will be BGN's year.

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