

“REBEL BELLE”

Born into a family where political and community activism was a way of life, Angela Rye continues her parents' legacy and steps to battle for the people every day.

Powerful in knowledge, precise in her stance on any cause, and wittingly knocking out anyone who chooses to use race, hate, and bigotry as a weapon, Angela was born for this moment...fighting for the defenseless and speaking for the voiceless.



“My parents were very clear about who black people are to this country, but also to the world so at a young age they taught me that the first people came from Africa.”



Monarch: Growing up in your household was this path expected of you?

ANGELA RYE: Perhaps it wasn't expected, but it was definitely the way things were—we were expected to protect our family, our community—the people. I have parents who are advocates in their respective spaces. My mom is a retired college administrator. She was a vice president of a community college who served on affirmative action commissions and worked to ensure students from pre-K to college were best positioned with quality education opportunities. My dad, of course, is a community activist and works to fight on behalf of small businesses and opportunities for the disenfranchised to ensure they get their fair share of the pie or have the ability to make their own pies. In so many ways I think I just took the lessons from my parents, from the work they did in their day jobs and in their spare time, and applied it to my own life's work and mission because, again, I don't know of another way. This was the only way. Fighting for people who don't have the ability to fight for themselves or speaking up for the voiceless was a way of life. It wasn't anything exceptional.

MM: You see Maxine Waters as a mentor. What skills did she pass along to you which help you navigate the pressure cooker of politics?

AR: Well, I have to share my favorite of her more recent viral moments because she embodies it on the DAILY! It is what she said at Black Girls Rock when she was getting the Humanitarian Award. She talks about how she's not afraid of anyone (because she's not!) and she's a strong black woman—as long as I've known her she has always been that way and I love it! So if there is one thing I think that she's shared not just with me, but also with anyone who admires her, it is to be unafraid. We have one life to live, one opportunity to lead, and we have to make the best of it. She does that every day. I call her the nation's congresswoman because she steps up to the plate to help anyone with a need. I think that her best example is the one she just lives. She lives out loud and is very clear that she is on a mission to make a difference and I'm just grateful because like so many of my other mentors,

she practices exactly what she preaches. She lives out exactly what she says and she does exactly what she says she's going to do. She is amazing and I'm grateful that I can call her a mentor!

MM: Besides your parents, can you name five people you admire? It can be throughout time.

AR: I would say my best friend, her name is Leonetta Espy, or her married name is Elaiho, Harriet Tubman who we need to fight to ensure she replaces slave owning Andrew Jackson on the \$20, Eric Holder, our first black attorney general, Michelle Obama, how many is that (laughing)?

MM: (Laughing) I think you are at like four so I'll take one more...if you have one.

AR: Sorry...I have two. Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, who was my boss as the Chairman of the CBC when I worked there and Congressman Bennie Thompson who is from Mississippi and was the Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee when I worked there.

MM: Considering your upbringing and what you were being taught at home...did you ever have contradicting accounts of history while you were in school? And how did you handle that?

AR: Oh, absolutely! My parents were very clear about who black people are to this country, but also to the world so at a young age they taught me that the first people came from Africa. In the seventh grade and I remember walking into class excited because we got to take our textbooks home, (it was the little things back then). I opened the book and on the first page of the first chapter, there were two white people resting in what looked to be like a field with a lamb and it said the first people were from Mesopotamia. I immediately raised my hand and was like this book is wrong. The first people were from Africa so this is wrong. We can't learn from a book that's wrong. Shout out to Ms. Jungers for taking that challenge and so many others well—that book was so wrong though!



Monarch: Your ability to get your point across...is this a gift or were there a number of “oops” moments along the way?

AR: I believe our talents have the gift side and the curse side, which means for every talent we have there's a downside to it. I think for me the downside to the talent is I'm unfiltered and while people may appreciate that on TV, on *The Breakfast Club*, or if I'm doing my podcast, the curse in relationships, whether it's friends, my parents, or a significant other is whatever I've got to say it's going to be real and honest but it may not be warm and fuzzy. That's definitely the downside—my mom says I dish it, but I can't take it. I would prefer to receive the harshness in a warm and fuzzy tone, so I better work on that!

MM: Is it a challenge being a woman and fighting within this space?

AR: Yes, it's a challenge. I also think this is hard to answer because my only paradigm is being a black woman in this country. I can say that I'm sure for folks who are transgender who just got the smack down from your president on serving in the military are facing a real challenge. I'm sure that for people who are Muslim and were living here or wanting to come here for school or to teach or to work being banned because their countries of origin is predominantly Muslim are experiencing a

legitimate challenge. I think there are so many Latino people who may be on the other side of the border looking for a better life for their kids or for their families or immigrants from other parts of the world, trying to come here—in this climate—are experiencing an overly burdensome challenge. We are ALL being tested and tried in new ways. With these collective challenges it would be amazing if we could take this moment to join together and fight for one another instead of every man or woman or person for themselves. Resist oppression together. We would be better for it.

MM: Where do you find you're most needed?

AR: I don't really think that way. I can tell you that people tell me regularly, men and women, kids, older women like my elders, and I have some folks even in Australia (facts!!) that tell me I speak for them when I'm on air. I hope that I can continue to speak to the hearts and minds of people. I feel called to advocate against oppression of people and using my media platform is just one means to that end.

MM: Our founder loves you, but strong women intimidate a lot of men. This made me think that dating could be difficult. Is it challenging to date?

AR: Thankfully, no! I was raised by a really strong man and a really strong woman. Even though my mother's strength manifested itself in different ways than my father's, who is far more outspoken, it's still strength nonetheless so I don't understand intimidation. I'm definitely not walking around here trying to intimidate anyone so if they're intimidated it's not going to work. It definitely takes a strong man to balance this strong personality!

MM: Congratulations on your podcast *On 1*. How do you plan to make your podcast different than what is currently in market?

AR: Thank you. It's been a joy to develop. It's something that I do from the soul, from the heart, and I interview people based on what's happening for the culture, what's happening in the country, and how it impacts all of us. I pride myself on using my voice in a way that I would typically speak. It's longer than a short tv segment and not built upon sound bites. I have a little bit more time to rant and to ask questions of guests. If I have someone on like today, the podcast interview was with the vice mayor of Charlottesville, Wes Bellamy, who is the youngest elected official on the city council, but also trailblazing. He literally gives other young elected officials, other elected officials period, all over the country a roadmap for pushing an equity agenda in communities. I hope that people will feel motivated to take action when they hear the podcast, whether it's in their individual lives, from a personal development standpoint or in some ways giving back to their communities with their own strengths, talents, and gifts. That's I how I hope it's different.

MM: What do you hope to achieve with IMPACT Strategies?

AR: Like everything else I put my hands to do and set my intentions upon, I hope we make a difference through our political advocacy work. We work on strategic messaging and partnerships. We advance issue-based campaigns for hot-button issues to mobilize communities and we've been standing now over four years so I'm proud of the work we've been doing.

MM: How does it make you feel when having a racially charged conversation, for example the conversation with Joe Walsh on CNN a few months back, when they don't get that they are being condescending or prejudice? How do you feel when they can't or refuse to see it and tell you you're wrong when you point it out?

AR: Probably like every other person of color or woke or conscious person feels when they're talking to someone at work or in public who is ignorant. No different. I think that the only difference was that it was on air for the world to see. I just wish folks like him didn't have

platforms. I think the reality of it is that he speaks for a portion of an audience, a segment of our country and I think that's devastating. It's a horrible reality that there are people who still think like that in 2017.

MM: With the current racial climate in America do you feel that President Obama could have done more to deter the violence and injustices against African Americans by police officers, judges basically restructuring the justice system establishing an equal playing field?

AR: I think the president could have done a whole lot more if only Congress would have been on his side. The president was dealing with record levels of obstruction and it's really hard to move the needle on something when people have a meltdown because you say you could have been Trayvon Martin or Trayvon Martin could have been you. People could not handle that small reality. We are in a day and age where there was a recent study that 6 in 10 Americans think that the Confederate statues should stay up. [Need a citation for this fact] So if you're dealing with that, public opinion isn't necessarily on your side, Congress isn't necessarily on your side. Could he have done something through an executive order or taken some sort of executive action? Sure...but then you have to think about what that would have done to advance the rest of the agenda. If it were me, I think I would have tried to go balls to the wall and pardon Assata Shakur, get people to do more than just apologize for slavery, establish reparations programs to finally address slavery (or setup a federal designation for descendants of United States slaves like my Dad regularly talks about), try to get more funding to strengthen historically black colleges and universities, establish a permanent summer job program for kids of color, work to strengthen DAPA and DACA. What could he do that would not have been undone by a Trump executive action...maybe the pardon. Watching your president undo so many of President Obama's accomplishments is devastating.

MM: I know you watch CNN (smile) but what shows do you watch? In short, how do you unwind?

AR: I love Queen Sugar! I also have a guilty pleasure—reality tv! I definitely watch *Love & Hip Hop* and *Basketball Wives*. I also love *Insecure*. I think that it's so cool right now that there are black women directors on mainstream platforms that are doing amazing work. Other than that, I love to shop and travel. A spa day ain't never hurt nobody either. You have to practice self-care. I love spending time with my godchildren and being with friends and family. I love being with people that, no matter what, just unconditionally love you and you love back.