

The Women Tribe Presents  
Interview with Milly Tamarez  
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The upcoming series of interviews explores the unscripted lives of women working in various industries in New York City. We discuss pop culture's influence on their respected industries and get insider's perspective about what improvements need to be made.

Over the next few weeks we will get a deeper look into what it's like to work in Mental Health and Wellness, Comedy, being a podcast host, and so much more! Each woman shares her journey, opens up about ways that she has overcome adversity, shares her personal mantras and discusses how she is able to find happiness.

A few months back I had the pleasure of seeing Milly perform at a storytelling event hosted by Generation Women. At the event, five women each read an original piece on a theme. Each woman's age represents a different decade. Of the performers, one is in her 20s, her 30s, her 40s, her 50s, and her 60s+. Watching Milly, I could literally feel her confidence radiating from the stage. I knew right then I needed to know more about this individual. After reaching out to her, Milly agreed to make time to sit and talk with me. So, with great pleasure, let me welcome our first guest: Milly Tamarez!

Milly is a 28 year old Dominican woman and comedic actress based out of Brooklyn, New York. She has been featured on Vice, BET, Flama, Above Average, Univision, and Comedy Central. She is the one of the creators and producers of the "Diverse as Fuck Festival", a comedy festival that highlights diversity and multiculturalism. She is one of the founders of the all women of color improv team, "Affirmative Action". Her work has been featured in the Daily Dot, HelloGiggles, Galore Magazine, Adweek, and CodeBlack Report. She is currently in the Advanced Study Program of the Upright Citizens Brigade and a company member of Story Pirates. Milly, you are amazing!

## **Background**

Milly and I sat one on one at "The West" coffee shop in the East Williamsburg neighborhood in Brooklyn. We spent time chatting and getting to know each other, as she opened up and delved into her experiences being a woman in comedy.

Milly has vibrant energy. Milly has a vivacious, contagious laugh that left me feeling like my soul had been hugged. She knows what she wants, and She has her goals set high- she is not planning on compromising. This bad-ass lady has got me inspired!

The daughter of an artist, Milly was always encouraged to have a steady career that would allow her to be financially stable and not experience the struggles that her father went through.

*"I felt this obligation to try to do something serious, I took the LSATS, I wanted to be a lawyer." Unfortunately, she was denied from every single law school that she applied to, "even the shitty ones!" she says.*

After a year working in Americorps, Milly applied and received a scholarship to learn comedy techniques at Upward Citizens Brigade (UCB) Theatre. UCB runs one of the largest and most respected improv schools in the country. Milly had planned to work a corporate job during the day, and perform at night. As time passed, She just got deeper into writing material, applying for roles, and performing shows leaving no time for the corporate paycheck.

### **What's a "normal" day for Milly?**

*Spoiler alert: there's no such thing. "Everyday varies. Today was kind of light, but yesterday I had a company brainstorming session; where a company pays me to brainstorm with them. Companies will hire comedians to brainstorm with them to come up with super-funny shit for commercials. Those are one day gigs but they pay really well. After that, I went to do this MC line-control, hype-woman thing outside for four hours, and then I had a show. That was all yesterday. Today, I'm working on this packet. So everyday varies".*

### **What is a packet?**

*"When a comedy show or a late night show are looking for writers they'll send out an assignment or prompt. They will be like, we want five sketches from you that are three to five pages each. We want one page of monologue jokes, and we want two sample tweets from you. Deadline is in one week".*

Unbeknownst to most people that are not in a creative industry, when submitting a "packet", a writer will sign a disclosure agreement stating that even if the writer is not hired, the jokes provided are still able to be used. And no, you are not going to be paid for them. Yet, Milly's insightful perspective reveals that her capital and value as a creative is so much more than that one idea. *"If you can make one good idea, you can make another one. At one point I can be like fuck this is my baby yanoe? But on the other side, it shouldn't be that sacred. We should always keep everything at a distance."*

### **What other types of adversity have you had to overcome being a woman, and a woman of color working in a male-dominated industry?**

*"I just think that there's a lot of disrespect. Working on creative projects I've definitely had to make my own way and do my own shit, while working with other collaborators. And, I think whether they're men or women, I feel often taken advantage of. Or more is expected of me- kind of like a mother. It's thankless. I do feel like a mom sometimes because people will be like, you didn't tell me that you were doing this or that, and I'm like its not my fucking responsibility to be accountable for your work. Whereas, if I was a man, I wouldn't have to deal with that".*

*“There’s often situations where it’s like the Little Red Hen, and not the Little Red Rooster because people expect women to do all the work and then others come in and enjoy the fruits of their labor. It’s really about finding a way to be like, “fuck you---no. I busted my ass for this, you don’t get to eat the bread”.*

### **Have you been able to speak out?**

*“You don’t have that luxury of just being a bitch. You know what I mean? There’s so many people that I want to call out but you can’t. You gotta kinda keep it cute. More important than being talented is being easy to work with and a good collaborator, and a good person with integrity. That often means choosing your battles.”*

### **Being a female performer in the age of social media:**

*“There’s this whole other thing too, as a comedian and performer, you have to put all of your shit out there. You gotta put yourself out there. Gotta make videos, promote your stuff. I was really apprehensive to make my Instagram profile public. You don’t know what weirdos are out there. Yanoë, I made videos and everyone was like look at this fat, ugly bitch and all this stuff. That sucks that it’s part of it. Also, there’s like stalkers and weird guys on the internet. One guy tried to add me on Facebook and I didn’t add him back and he was DMing (direct messaging) me saying, ‘Hey I saw you on the subway today’. Like, I have to promote my shows, but there are creepy dudes out there that have access to where I am going to be physically. So that’s just something that is in the back of my head.”*

### **What do you want for your future?**

*“I definitely want to have a happy marriage, and like I want to have kids but I also want a fucking awesome career, I want to make a lot of money. Some people make it at 25 but a lot of people don’t make it until their 30s. That’s always my struggle- when am I going to have kids? When am I going to make it? There’s all this uncertainty.”*

Milly reminisces about a conversation she had with her Aunt about dating while she was in Dominican Republic. Her aunt told her to find an American man, insinuating that they might be more open minded to her career in comedy than a Dominican man. From Milly’s perspective, *“Not a lot of men would be comfortable with their wives leaving to do a show and not getting home until 2am. And that’s just something I don’t think men would have to worry about.”* While conducting a poll on @thewomentribe Instagram account, 100% of voters that were women voted “yes” to feeling comfortable with their husband/wife coming home at 2am from a show. Unfortunately, no men engaged in the poll.

It’s clear that we have made triumphant strides to gain equality and recognition as women in the workforce, but we still have a lot of work to do. Many women working as comedians, writers and performers deal with the frustration of having to justify their work schedules to potential partners.

Living in New York City we meet very open-minded personalities, and we know the men we surround ourselves with are supportive of our success. But nevertheless, to Milly, she is already thinking about how a late night schedule can complicate a relationship.

### **What comedians do you look up to and why?**

*“I really like Issa Rae. Her career has been divided among her production company and she has her own show. She is actively working on her own creative thing while mentoring and helping to cultivate under-represented artists. That’s where I’d like to be. Working on my own stuff while also helping and empowering other people.”*

Issa Rae is an American actress, writer, director, producer, and web series creator. She is known for her work on the YouTube web series *Awkward Black Girl*. She attracted further recognition for creating, co-writing, and starring in the HBO television series, *Insecure*. The show examines the character’s Issa and Molly’s relatable struggle with self-confidence in everyday experiences. Since 2011, Rae has continued to develop her YouTube channel, which features various short films, web series, and other content created by people of color.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Issa\\_Rae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Issa_Rae))

### **Does your comedy have a message?**

*“I’d like to think that my comedy has a message. That is what I am trying to work on. Not letting externalities define you”.* Milly uses the phrase *“All dick is trash”* to explain how she is no longer letting others’ actions (specifically men) affect her on a personal level. With an *“all dick is trash mentality”*, Milly will let no man’s’ immaturity, nor games influence her judgement or have a negative impact on her drive to succeed. By staying focused on the goals she set for herself, Millie has been able to grow her self confidence, her voice and her passion as a comedian.

Milly created a satirical sketch video entitled, *“White Forgiveness”*. In the video she encouraged people to venmo her and confess to racist statements or actions they’ve done. Then, she created commentary and reposted the submissions to *“forgive”* each person. Milly was surprised by the amount of people that venmoed her, AND with what they were admitting to. A woman admitted to getting cornrows in middle school. Another girl disclosed that she has received the Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship, but she was not black. After reposting a dozen of confessions, Milly decided that the project became too emotionally taxing.

She found that her social experiment of giving people a platform to admit to appropriating culture, exploiting opportunities and being racist was productive in the sense that many people were looking for their actions to be morally expunged.

The *“White Forgiveness”* video can be found on Milly’s website ([millytamarez.com](http://millytamarez.com)).

## Closing Remarks

*“Life is just a grind and a hustle and when you make shit, people feel entitled to it.... It’s always been a struggle to just focus on the work and not get distracted by the **externalities**. I am also Buddhist and that practice has really helped me stay focused. The objective of the Buddhism that I practice is for one to not be swayed and maintain a strong foundation for happiness. Happiness is not always feeling great and smiling. But it’s more of the idea that no matter what obstacles, I can always overcome them, and I’m always going to be solid. Like a mountain doesn’t waver in the wind. As a performer, the eight winds have always helped me, the passage is as follows: A truly wise man will not be carried away by any of the eight winds: Prosperity, decline, disgrace, honor, praise, censure, suffering and pleasure. They are neither elated by prosperity nor grieved by decline. The heavenly gods will surely protect one who does not bend before the eight winds”.*

*“Basically this segment is saying that you can’t get carried away by the good shit or the bad shit. You need to always maintain integrity and stay centered. I feel like that is key in comedy because it is so easy to be swayed. And if you are swayed, having the ability to snap back. I can not be influenced by my external circumstances”.*

Alex’s closing remarks

A massive thank you to Milly for opening up to me and talking about her first hand experience pursuing a career in comedy. You are so strong and grounded, it’s been a pleasure to get to meet you. I am looking forward to getting the chance to learn more about you! For anyone that may be interested in seeing her perform, she has a few of shows coming up. If you would like to learn more about her check out her website (<http://millytamarez.com/?portfolio=about-me>) and follow her on social media @millyon4ire.

Sources:

<http://caveat.nyc/event/generation-women-2-28-18/>

(<http://millytamarez.com/?portfolio=about-me>)

(<https://ucbtheatre.com/faq>).