



Crutches And Spice Podcast Transcript: #CantMarryMyLove with Tito Quevedo

- Imani Barbarin: Hello everybody. This is the Crutches & Spice podcast. I'm here with Tito Quevedo, or Carlos Quevedo, depending on how much he likes you. [inaudible 00:00:10] terrible food opinions, his lovely radical friendship tweets. And for him changing his name every two seconds on Twitter. Tito, hello.
- Tito Quevedo: Hey, what's going on you all? How you doing?
- Imani Barbarin: So Tito and I know each other because he's my boyfriend. We met on Twitter, he slid into my DMs and I will... stop it, don't look at me like that.
- Tito Quevedo: Really? You're just going to start off lying to the people?
- Imani Barbarin: All right. I slid into his DMs, I regret nothing. Yeah. We met on disabled Twitter. Although, you're not really a big part of disabled Twitter.
- Tito Quevedo: Nope. Nope.
- Imani Barbarin: No.
- Tito Quevedo: They don't like me.

Imani Barbarin: They like you. They just don't know you. They do. They just don't know you yet. So it's very difficult for them. So, yeah, I mean, how did it start from your perspective since I seem to be wrong?

Tito Quevedo: Well, three years ago I really started actively using Twitter. And as I've told you, you were actually one of the first accounts that I followed. And what I really appreciated was, here was this disabled person who was confident and steadfast in who they were. And in only a way that other disabled people can understand. It wasn't in a, I'm trying to inspire able people way it was, I'm doing this for other disabled people.

Imani Barbarin: Well, I do try. And I mean it was a little hard because I initially started with that type of mentality, but it didn't quite work out. It just felt so false. So it is pretty gratifying to hear you say that to be honest.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. And like I said, I navigate in mostly black or what you would call blurred Twitter spaces. And I probably found you as a byproduct of all of that. To be honest with you, I wouldn't be surprised if I found you because of Don Gibson who you also know, I'm sure.

Imani Barbarin: Oh, yes.

Tito Quevedo: But yeah. And I've told you it's because of you that I even started talking about my own disability and experience as a disabled person because while I talk about interpersonal relationships, and emotional intelligence, up until recently I hadn't really talked about it fully and openly with the, okay, I'm disabled though, caveat with it. I talked about it as the "average" person, not realizing how much my disability informed everything that I did and everything that I was, because until Twitter, it's like you're not allowed to be a disabled person or acknowledge that part of yourself.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. I find it's very difficult to come to terms with who you are as a disabled person just because, it rings either you're made into an inspiration, or you're the bitter, angry, disabled person. There's no in between. There's no nuance to who you are. But I'm glad you found me. I mean, you're pretty cute.

Tito Quevedo: Well, you're not so bad yourself, but-

Imani Barbarin: Well, thank you.

Tito Quevedo: Well, it's... And I guess one thing, and I think I've told you this too, that I realized I didn't do without doing it was, I would very intentionally not talk about my disability, or tell people that I was disabled. Because as soon as you tell someone something like that, they define every interaction with you by that.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, that's true. Like, Oh, they're having a bad-

Tito Quevedo: Yes.

Imani Barbarin: Day. Or they're just angry because they're just disabled. And today, we're actually going to talk about a very specific part about being disabled, which is, dating while disabled. And then knowing that, even though we haven't discussed marriage, we just know that we can't get married, period. Just because of health care and bullshit like that. It's yeah.

Tito Quevedo: They'll be like, all right, who makes more money? All right, so now you get a cut of their check.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah.

Tito Quevedo: Good times. Good times. That's a fun discussion at the table. So, hey baby, you got my money?

Imani Barbarin: What money? What money are you talking about? Listen, I spent all my money on coats and boots. It is sweater weather. But no, I mean, I remember when we started dating, you said to me, you kept saying to me like, we could never get married. Like just not even entertaining the idea. And from my advocacy, I just knew that this was a fact. And so many other disabled people have said, I've gotten married, and I lost all my health care. Or I wanted to get married, but I'm afraid that I will lose everything that I've worked for in terms of my Medicaid, my Medicare, whatever. And it's a terrifying idea. As somebody that works with a disability, I make enough for myself, but that's it. I'm making enough for my myself and my student loan, which is like taking care of another child. So, or a child, I don't know.

Tito Quevedo: Well, yeah, that's... The interesting thing that you learn as you get older, and if you have previous experience with marriage and long-term relationships is, love is great, but love don't pay the bills, man. You can care for someone, you can love them as intentionally as you want to. But at the end of the day, man, we live in a capitalistic system. And if there's no money, and if there is no peace about money, you're going to spend a lot of your marriage arguing and fighting about it. And that's the thing is, when you get into a relationship with anyone, obviously you don't just want to start thinking, I had all the time. But when you get to a certain age, you don't want to waste people's time either.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. And I feel like dating with a disability too, it adds that extra layer of that, it's not that... I think dating in it itself is not a waste of time, but knowing what you're getting into can be kind of jarring sometimes, because a lot of times people think about the theory of disability in the world, and not really the reality of it. And then two disabled people, dating each other, it can be kind of difficult sometimes. And this is one of the very serious factors that comes into it. And you were married before, so you know how these money issues come up.

Tito Quevedo: Yep. Because I went to the social security, and was asking them for more money. They were like, Oh you want more money? Have a kid. They literally said, if you want more money, have a kid. But if I had a kid, that's where that money would go. Like I don't...

Imani Barbarin: And then also the realities of like disabled parenting is, you know, the stories you hear of like not just sexual healthcare being inaccessible to disabled people, but people's children's schools are inaccessible. Daycares aren't accessible. It's just a mess. And also daycare costs like a thousand a month. And that's if you're lucky.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. Like I said, when it comes to dating someone, and being in a relationship with someone, when we talk about accessibility for disabled people, you think of like opening a door, or a ramp. But there are so many intangible day to day life things that people take for granted that are inaccessible to us. Like relationships and romance are often inaccessible simply because we don't have the money to get around, or move about, or you can't really offer someone anything monetarily. So why would you be in a relationship with someone? Because capitalism also teaches you, if you're poor, I don't care what it is, you don't deserve it.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. And then also just like you were saying with the logistics of it all, you need money for Uber, you need that money for paratransit. And then if you have paratransit, will it come on time? Or three hours late? Or will your Uber driver look at you, and then drive away? That has happened to me several times.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. So in order even just for the relationship to work with one disabled person and one able body person, there has to be a lot of lucky shit that happens. Like with us, the reason this works is because, I am staying with someone who has kind of allowed me to... They don't really require much of me as far as money goes. Like I give them a little bit, but I don't really give them that much. And plus, they do stuff like, they bring me to the train station so I can go to Philly. They help me out immensely and it's because of them, that I live four hours away from here. So there's a lot, a lot, a lot of stuff working in our favor just for this relationship itself to work.

Imani Barbarin: And even if it... This relationship, it's so hard just to get this relationship to work, even with the lucky parts. It's not like, I don't want anybody to think that it's easy. We both have different medical needs, which means that we're exhausted at different times, or we just like, we don't have the energy to get out of bed. And people don't... I feel like if I were in a relationship with a non-disabled person, I'd have to explain that. I'll be like, listen, today is not the day when I go outside. Tomorrow might be, maybe-

Tito Quevedo: Well, and even now, I know this is your time of the day as far as energy. If you don't get it done at this time in the day, you're not going to do it. As soon as the sun goes down, that's it.

Imani Barbarin: It's going to be witching hour. He knows me so well it's very disturbing. But we're both kind of like that because, you have other things going on that make it difficult for you to stay awake and stuff. And then there's like the stigma of us going out together. One disabled person out alone is just a disabled person, two is like a prayer circle. Somebody who's going to find this eventually. But yeah.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. And it's basically... I know when I was married, I dealt with a lot of people pulling you to the side and being like, you? You're with her? How? And in their minds, they would think that they're complimenting you, but what they're really doing is essentially saying, Oh, your wife is so nice to marry this disabled person. So now when it's two disabled people, it's like, wait, what exactly can the two of you do for each other? Like what?

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. Sometimes when we go out to restaurants, I do see like our waitress, or waiters, or read staff's face, look at us and they're like, which one of them is the [inaudible 00:00:13:07]?

Tito Quevedo: Yeah.

Imani Barbarin: I don't know. It's so interesting because I want to crack up half the time, but also I'm like, this is just sad just for people to think that, just going out with somebody who is disabled, is it pitying?

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. And one of the things that I tell all my friends, particularly when it comes to dialysis is, don't ever not talk to me, or not come to me with a problem, because you're thinking about my medical issues. Please don't do that. If your thought process is, Oh, he's tired today, let me not bother him. I appreciate that. But if your thought process is, Oh, he has dialysis, let me not ever bother him. No. Give me normalcy. Give me the normalcy of, come to me with your problems. Let's be friends. And it's the same thing with you. Like, let's be a couple, lets... It just works differently. Sometimes you're tired, sometimes I'm tired, sometimes we're both tired. It's just the figuring it out and being like, giving each other the reassurance of kiss on the cheek. I'm going to leave you alone. I understand.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. And I think that your point with friends gets to this idea of like, Oh, they have it so much worse.

Tito Quevedo: Yep. I don't do that. I don't ever, nope. And my friends do that too. They're like, well I just don't want to come to you with my problems because you have it so much. I'm like, I have it bad sometimes, but when have I ever told you, or anyone, I have it worse. Never.

Imani Barbarin: It makes you feel like a litmus test for their own problems. And you're like, no, you could still... Like everybody's entitled to their problems.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah.

Imani Barbarin: So frustrating. When we started dating, you told me all of the issues up front, we were very clear with each other, like this is how I am, and this is not going to change about me. And it's hard because, when you're dating somebody disabled, automatically as a disabled person, you always want to tell people upfront what's going on. But then also, it's like a very fine line because you don't want to present yourself as a burden either. But sometimes, you're made to feel like one.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. But it's kind of like... Because I would talk about you to my friends and I'm like, man, God, she has to say thank you for everything. She's so [inaudible 00:15:52].

Imani Barbarin: I say thank you. It's [inaudible 00:15:54] Why? I still don't understand why this is such an issue for you.

Tito Quevedo: Because like every little thing I do, you're just going to be like, thank you, like you're talking to a stranger.

Imani Barbarin: No.

Tito Quevedo: Just silently take it.

Imani Barbarin: That's what she said. No, but it's like I'm just polite. It's just... Shut up.

Tito Quevedo: Thank you kind sir. Stop.

Imani Barbarin: That is not at all how I talk.

Tito Quevedo: I mean it is kind of.

Imani Barbarin: Sometimes, [inaudible 00:16:30] but I always thank people, because I feel like, that's an internalized ableism. Me feeling like it's a burden to help me.

Tito Quevedo: I don't, I don't, I don't thank people for anything.

Imani Barbarin: I know.

Tito Quevedo: Thank you for doing what you're supposed to do.

Imani Barbarin: Wow. Wow. Anyways-

Tito Quevedo: Got to keep them humble. Got to keep them humble.

Imani Barbarin: We're going to keep going. But yeah, like it's just that idea of being a burden and a lot of times marriage is brought up because, when you're married to

somebody, that's also a legal "burden" that you're entering into and things like that.

Tito Quevedo: Like their college loans.

Imani Barbarin: College. Oh my God, you're going to pay my college loans for me baby?

Tito Quevedo: No.

Imani Barbarin: Okay. That's right.

Tito Quevedo: I can't even pay my college loan.

Imani Barbarin: I'm going to level up to [inaudible 00:17:16] I'll take the racism if he pays off my loans.

Tito Quevedo: Side note, apparently Bill Gates is worth \$105 billion.

Imani Barbarin: Can he pay off my student loans?

Tito Quevedo: Can he pay off everything?

Imani Barbarin: Does he need a sugar baby that walks on crutches?

Tito Quevedo: I mean, I don't know if he has Twitter.

Imani Barbarin: I'll tweet him. I'll see what's up. Yes. I think that it's very interesting dating somebody else who's disabled. It gives you a lot of insight into yourself in a lot of ways.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. I think because, like I said, in many ways it's like looking into a mirror because, you're going to hear another person constantly apologizing. You're going to hear another person constantly needing the reassurance that you're okay, that you're having fun with them, that you're okay with them, that you're satisfied with them. And it's two people dealing with the idea that, maybe they weren't told, but they were shown that, romantic love wasn't even supposed to happen for them.

Imani Barbarin: Oh yeah. I mean, I remember fantasizing as a teenager, about being married, and having kids, and finding somebody that loved me. And it was just like... In the media, you just never see yourself. And then in the news, every time somebody who's disabled gets married, it's presented as, Oh, look what an angel that non-disabled person is for marrying them. Look at what a sacrifice it was for them to be in their life. It's like, well, where is the actual reality of what it means to either date with a disability, or marry with a disability? What does my future look like if I can't see it?

Tito Quevedo: Yep. Yeah. And like I said, that was very much my situation of people constantly telling you that, you got lucky, you won the lottery as if I wasn't at home doing laundry, cleaning dishes, cleaning the house, taking the trash out, as if I wasn't doing my part. And to have people on the outside not acknowledge it is one thing, but to have your partner not acknowledging it either, that's when it hurts and you're like, you do know you are marrying a disabled person? Right?

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. And then it must have been such a mind bending thing when you're just like, do I matter in this marriage? Or like do I feel like I can contribute? What is my contribution?

Tito Quevedo: Yes. And like I said, I'll never forget when we were already separated for a pretty long time, and she calls me and tells me, she goes, I had to do my laundry, I had to clean my room, I had to do this and that. And she was like, I didn't realize everything that you did until I have to do it myself. And it's like, well, gee, thanks for nothing.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. I'm sorry, it happened. I do enjoy being in this relationship. It's been interesting because we're both interesting people, we're both goofy in the same kind of way, and very sarcastic. Actually, my mom really likes you because of your sarcasm. He met my mom in the most unconventional voice, would you [inaudible 00:20:57] here. He's rolling his eyes at me, which fair [inaudible 00:21:01] So did you make the conscious decision to date somebody disabled or?

Tito Quevedo: You know what's funny, I was talking to my friend Heather, and she was talking about how she was making a real conscious effort to date somebody that was black. And I said, I kind of feel that way about trying to consciously date someone who's disabled this time. Because what I wanted more than anything else was, I wanted that understanding from jump.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah.

Tito Quevedo: I'm tired, I don't have time to explain my existence, and the idiosyncrasies of my existence constantly to a person. And I just was kind of like, you know what, I think I need for my next partner to be disabled because I want understanding on that level.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah, I agree. I don't know if it was necessarily like wanting to know to have the understanding so much it's like not being the inspiration [inaudible 00:22:31] in the part of the... Like being seen as the sacrifice. Did that make sense? And I also just was sick of going out with guys who didn't see me as a serious partner, and who just saw me as like a notch in their belt, oh, she's a disabled girl, that makes sense. Check that off my list. It felt like I've only dated guys that were ready to get so serious so fast. There was one guy that was showing me wedding videos on our dates, of Nigerian weddings.

Tito Quevedo: Wow.

Imani Barbarin: And I was like, it's date three, you need to relax.

Tito Quevedo: Wow.

Imani Barbarin: Or there was guys that were like, okay, well not serious at all, just for fun. Or one guy messaged me, he was like, I want to cheat on my wife. And I was like-

Tito Quevedo: Whoa.

Imani Barbarin: I don't run, so I can't run from your wife, so I'm not into this at all. Also, the moral implications that needs to be said, you know, her not knowing, otherwise do what you want. But yeah. And I wanted to date someone disabled because it felt to me like I just wanted one less thing to explain.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. It was just, and I think it... Because I didn't know that you had the same disability I had. Not that that was nice, but it was-

Imani Barbarin: It was so sweet.

Tito Quevedo: And the fact that it worked out to where, yours affects you on your bottom, and mine affects me at my [inaudible 00:24:23].

Imani Barbarin: Okay. My bottom half, not my bottom. My ass is not the only thing [inaudible 00:24:26]

Tito Quevedo: Well, you know.

Imani Barbarin: [inaudible 00:24:27]

Tito Quevedo: I mean, it could, I don't know. But yeah, I was like, that's a sign. I was like, but yeah, it was just nice to be able to not really have to have that orientation with somebody. It's nice to be able to skip that and just get to know each other. And the thing is too like, I'm not ready, and I tell people this all the time. I think if it wasn't for my disability, I wouldn't be the emotional intelligent person that I am. Because I think because of my disability, I make an effort that most people won't because I know what it's like not to have that effort made for me and to want it.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. And I think for me, my disability has given me the ability to like, it's not always great, but I overthink things. And so I try to take things from like 10 different perspectives before I act upon it. And I try to be observant. I'm not always the best at it as we can attest, but I think my disability has made me really graceful, and trying to give people the chance to be themselves.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah, it's fucking annoying.

Imani Barbarin: Hey, I try to understand where people are coming from 90% of the time because-

Tito Quevedo: I don't know why. Who does that shit?

Imani Barbarin: Because you never know what kind of day somebody's having. Like unless they're violent, or belligerent, or racist.

Tito Quevedo: I know what kind of day I'm having. That's all that matters.

Imani Barbarin: And I just try to see people as people first. I know it sounds so hokey, especially in the disability rights space where it's like, people first language. Anyways, that's not the point. But just saying, it makes sense to me to see you and be like, we both have this disability. So let's push that to the side and just get to know each other.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. And like I said, it's also been interesting too of just because I've only recently kind of learned, to tell someone even platonically like, Hey, my name is Tito, I'm disabled. Here's what I need help with. Here's what I don't need help with. Like I did not start doing that until this year, literally.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. And even sometimes I'm like, why are you going so fast? He's like, we are both exhausted. Neither one of us can stand up straight. Let's take our time.

Tito Quevedo: You know, it's interesting that, no matter how much older you get, you're always growing, and learning new things, and helping yourself.

Imani Barbarin: And I think coming into your own is like a lifelong process. I think people want the idea that, you're going to reach this plateau and be like, I'm all my own, and I am so happy to be me, and I'm never going to have to readjust, or rethink, or retrain myself for anything. And that's never true. You're always going to have to re-evaluate things. You're always going to be willing to learn about the world and yourself. And it's okay to falter on that journey.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. And like I said, I have probably kind of my last kind of transformative point in my life has been like this past three years. All of my most important relationships, platonic or otherwise, have been made online. And I met all of you, or encountered all of you, at the same time. I just got to know you all at different times.

Imani Barbarin: Yeah. He was afraid to talk to me, all flirty and such, because I was living in Paris at the time.

Tito Quevedo: I mean, I don't know if afraid is the right word. So much as, #it's just not realistic.

Imani Barbarin: This is true. Let me spin the narrative.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah, no. Let's not do that.

Imani Barbarin: All right. Fine, fine. He just didn't see it happening because I was living in Paris. But when I got back, I mean I got back, and then we started talking like six months later.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah, it was actually Jessica who had told me, because I didn't know.

Imani Barbarin: Oh really?

Tito Quevedo: Yeah. Jessica was like, Oh, no, I think she's back in the U.S. I said, [inaudible 00:29:34]?

Imani Barbarin: That's cute. And then you gave me your number, and then we talked for two weeks, and then I freaked out because I really liked you.

Tito Quevedo: And then I deleted your shit.

Imani Barbarin: [inaudible 00:29:46]

Tito Quevedo: Yeah, I deleted your shit.

Imani Barbarin: I was like, Tito. And then you were like, who is this? I was like, Oh. He completely deleted me from his life.

Tito Quevedo: You was the one ghosting me.

Imani Barbarin: I wasn't ghosting you. I was having an internal flip out, and you just couldn't see it.

Tito Quevedo: So ghosting?

Imani Barbarin: But I texted you back.

Tito Quevedo: Yeah, like 12 years later.

Imani Barbarin: 12 days later, relax.

Tito Quevedo: You didn't even acknowledge my comments on Twitter.

Imani Barbarin: No, I freaked out because I liked you too much.

Tito Quevedo: That logic is flawless.

Imani Barbarin: I didn't tell you it's false, I said it was mine. That's all I said about it.

Tito Quevedo: All right.

Imani Barbarin: Okay.

Tito Quevedo: Okay.

Imani Barbarin: Well, Tito, is there anything you want to plug? Any sort of projects you're working on, or just things you want to share with the audience?

Tito Quevedo: Fuck candy corn.

Imani Barbarin: You know what? Rude. Okay. You don't have to... No, no, no, I can't let this stand.

Tito Quevedo: What?

Imani Barbarin: Candy corn is awesome.

Tito Quevedo: Candy corn is... God, you like candy corn? Pineapple... Why the fuck do I date you?

Imani Barbarin: Because I have great tastes.

Tito Quevedo: In what?

Imani Barbarin: Everything. Candy corn is delicious. You know, like candy corn on pizza. What if there was like a Halloween theme for-

Tito Quevedo: I'm leaving.

Imani Barbarin: No. For the audience at home, he is walking away. But anything else you want to plug while you're coming back?

Tito Quevedo: Like we always do about this time, I appreciate you. Thank you for being.

Imani Barbarin: I hope you get a chance to feel love today.

Tito Quevedo: Peace.

Imani Barbarin: Bye.