

DOPE LABS

Transcript of Lab 039: Add To Cart

Titi: Well, today is a holiday that we don't really acknowledge. I'll just say happy, hang out with your family and friends day.

Zakiya: And tomorrow is the most American of holidays. A celebration of consumerism.

Titi: Yes. A.K.A. Black Friday.

Zakiya: But some of y'all are going to be in for quite the surprise. Do you know just how many packages, whew! Are going to be in the mix with everybody ordering stuff online?

Titi: I don't even want to try and conceptualize it because I know that I can't, because Black Friday, when we were younger, it was just, you know, one day there was all these sales. Now it extends where it's like you got Black Friday, but the Black Friday deals start on Wednesday and Cyber Monday, there's Cyber Monday. So it's really a full calendar week of hurry up and buy all this stuff.

Zakiya: But the real gag is if you didn't place your order in July, it won't be here by Christmas. We'll tell you why

Titi: the whole shipping, from purchasing to getting the product at your door is a very complex system that I feel like none of us know much about.

Zakiya: I know. I don't understand how I'm placing an order and it's here within 16 hours.

Titi: Honestly. And I feel like as technology advances and some of this technology that we know nothing about advances, we're expecting things to show up sooner and sooner and sooner. But with every great thing, you know that there's some not so great things happening behind the scenes.

Zakiya: Yes, the dark side of shipping.

Titi: Yes. I'm Titi.

Zakiya: And I'm Zakiya

Titi: And from Spotify, this is Dope Labs. Welcome to Dope Labs, a weekly podcast that mixes hardcore science, pop culture and a healthy dose of friendship.

Zakiya: This week we're diving into the world of commerce, supply chains and transportation. Specifically, we want to know how a product goes from click to ship, away from the factory, and to your front door.

Titi: All right, let's get into the recitation.

Zakiya: What do we know, Titi?

Titi: Well, we know that shipping is usually really, really fast, and there have been some shipping delays.

Zakiya: There are so many industries involved in getting products to your door manufacturing, routing, weather, economics. And today we're focusing on shipping more specifically, how issues in the trucking industry are affecting shipping, logistics and the shipping delays don't make sense to me. It's specific things missing from the grocery store. There's no bug spray like the chemical killer bug spray only essential oil bug spray at my grocery store.

Titi: That's not good enough for my friend. Let me tell you.

Zakiya: Lemongrass everywhere, OK? Citronella everywhere

Titi: It's always citronella and I'm like, That does not work for me. Mosquitoes will come. And we also know is that demand for delivery is increasing across the board, like delivery of the past where it's just like, Oh, you know, you might get a TV delivered, you might get a computer delivered now. We're like, OK, I need my vitamins, delivered. I need my groceries delivered. Everything is being delivered at this point, and I feel like that was enhanced because we were all working from home or staying at home because of the pandemic.

Zakiya: Also, that demand for delivery and shipping things across this country has been exacerbated by the trucker shortage. You know, I saw some signs I don't know if it was a bed sheet or whatever. I was going down 85 and it said trucker strike and it had a date and I said, I don't want to cross the line. I don't know what it means to me. I don't drive on the highway too with them. I mean, I want to know what's going on. I've been seeing this happen in the UK, but it's also happening here too.

Titi: Right, We did see that the UK was having petrol shortages and other things like that. So there's something happening that we don't understand. Yes. So what do we want to know?

Zakiya: Considering all that stuff I know is somehow tied together? But how what are the specifics?

Titi: And I want to understand the trucker shortage. I didn't even know it was going on. My friend she be hitting the road. And so she told me what she saw, and I had no idea what is going on with this trucker shortage.

Zakiya: And then how does the gig economy play into this? You know, now you can send a package across town with Uber and also just the use of all these like subcontracting services to get things from point A to point B. How does that work into the big picture of shipping?

Titi: Yeah. And then for me, I want to know what we can do as consumers to like, alleviate or to get rid of some of the problems that are cropping up because of this increased shipping world that we're in.

Zakiya: Let's jump into the dissection

Titi: dissection dissection. Our guest for today's lab is Christopher Mims.

Christopher Mims: My name is Christopher Mims and I am a technology columnist at The Wall Street Journal.

Zakiya: Christopher is talking to us about his new book, Arriving Today, which is about how products get from the factory to our front door.

Titi: So first, we wanted to know how and where things are produced before they're sold. We know that most things we buy today are not produced in the U.S. and that's because of globalization. Globalization allows people to buy goods cheaply from all over the world. But how is this possible logistically?

Zakiya: According to Christopher, we can trace the history of globalization back to the shipping container and the Vietnam War.

Christopher Mims: What happened during the Vietnam War was the American military machine needed so much material that they needed a new way to move goods into the country.

Titi: And this is where American businessman Malcolm McLean steps in, who since the 1950s had been developing the world's first modern shipping container.

Zakiya: And the shipping container is really critical. Is this intermodal part of globalization? That means this going from a ship to a truck to a train? And so those dimensions have to be the same in every place, basically making it universal.

Christopher Mims: The shipping container was a classic chicken and egg problem because you needed everybody to agree on the dimensions and the specifications for a shipping container so that all the ships could carry all the shipping containers and also the trains could accommodate them and trucks.

Titi: So how big are the shipping containers?

Zakiya: Well, ISO, which is the International Organization for Standardization, has determined that a standard container is eight feet wide, about eight and a half feet high. And then they can either be 20 feet long or 40 feet long.

Titi: So big.

Zakiya: Big. And so when you think about that, I don't know about you, but once we start moving into cubic feet, I'm out of there,.

Titi: Right. I had you at eight feet wide, OK, had you at eight feet tall, but then 20 feet, that was like I ahhhhh

Zakiya: Right? So if you think about a 20 foot container, that's enough room for almost 100 washing machines or so in. Some of these containers can be refrigerated or insulated. Some of them have an open top. You ever see those trains that have the shipping containers on them, you can see the stuff on the top. I'm like isn't the stuff going to blow out, don't they need a cover over that?

Titi: I guess they've thought about what to do.

Christopher Mims: And so the American military saw this idea and said, All right, we're going to break the logjam. Malcolm McLean, we like your idea. We like your specifications. And they created such a large demand on their own.

Titi: The demand for shipping containers was so high from the Department of Defense that Malcolm McLean's design became the international standard.

Christopher Mims: And very soon after you had bigger and bigger ships to carry all these shipping containers, and that meant bigger cranes and ports to accommodate them. And it was just billions and billions of dollars of investment. And that created the global infrastructure, which allowed globalization to happen and is the reason that we can buy cheap goods from everywhere.

Zakiya: So basically, the shipping container was a game changer.

Titi: Once the shipping container arrived. This basically made it so that the idea of really having a global economy was right in front of us, like it became possible and there was a need for a whole new level of worker productivity. And that's when we get into scientific management.

Zakiya: So what is scientific management?

Christopher Mims: Any place you have software or an algorithm that can watch how people work and then dictate to them the pace and the manner of that work? That's scientific management, even though we don't call it by that name.

Titi: The concept of scientific management was invented by Frederick Taylor, and he published a book that was titled *The Principles of Scientific Management* in 1909. And it was around this time that Henry Ford, you know, like the car, invented the assembly line, which reduced the time it took to build an automobile from 12 hours to 1 hour and 33 minutes.

Zakiya: That's crazy gains.

Christopher Mims: It was just this notion that if you could measure the amount of time that it took for a worker to complete every single action if they were working in a factory, which remember, we're still kind of new at the time, or if they were working on an assembly line, which at the time was brand new, then you could use these techniques to manage people scientifically and speed up work.

Zakiya: So in order to employ scientific management, you really need some method of surveillance or tracking. And before the age of digital surveillance, there were stopwatches.

Titi: So what Frederick Taylor was doing was that he would go into a factory, say, who's the best worker here? And they would point to that person. And then he would say, work as hard as you can, and I'm going to time you using this stopwatch. And then he was able to determine the productivity of the most productive person. And based off of that information, they were able to simplify and optimize jobs so that workers could be as productive as possible.

Zakiya: This doesn't really sound like a fulfilling or satisfying work environment.

Titi: No! This sounds awful.

Christopher Mims: It ended up being this way that workers were pushed to their limits and beyond. Of course the irony is that scientific management is how work, especially work in factories and warehouses, in ports, many other places, call centers, fast food. This is how all the work is organized.

Titi: That's so true. I think a lot of us can think about our jobs, and listening to what scientific management is, see how some of those things are in all of our workspaces. And scientific management isn't only happening in the workplace. Now there's a lot of tools that can be used to monitor employees productivity when they're working from home, which a lot of us are right now.

Christopher Mims: With the advent of remote work, more and more companies are surveilling their employees when they're working at home, right? Because they don't have face time, you know, managers can't manage by walking around anymore. Companies will give you a company issued laptop or mobile device, and then they're watching the hours that you're actually doing your work.

Zakiya: This reminds me of that tik tok where the girl has a fan and it's like an oscillating fan and it's connected to something and is moving the mouse around. So it seems like she's working

Titi: genius, genius. She was like scientific management. Ha! I'll do you one better.

Zakiya: I'll manage you. But you know what's also really interesting?

Titi: What?

Zakiya: It's not always the manager imposing this type of system on the workers. Sometimes workers elect to use different productivity tools to help improve their own output and their own focus. I know I do.

Titi: So do I. I use OneNote, we use Air Table, Slack. Lots of folks are using Slack. All types of stuff.

Zakiya: I used to use Asana.

Titi: Yeah, to improve our productivity or make us more efficient, work faster, get more done in a short amount of time. So we are enforcing these scientific management concepts on ourselves.

Zakiya: Daft punking ourselves right on into the nine to five. So these tools can be good. You know, we use air table that helps us stay on track with our episodes, know what's happening. It also can help us move projects forward. We can collaborate better with our team.

Titi: But that said, all of that can be a slippery slope, and we're going to get into that right after the break.

Zakiya: All right, we're back.

Titi: Yes, and as we're talking about all of the shipping and everything like that, it really makes me think about how we're going to be purchasing. Everybody is going to be online shopping from their phones mostly. I think I think everybody shops from their phones these days.

Zakiya: Yes and watching the notifications from my banking app saying.

Titi: Girl, what is you doing?

Zakiya: Another transaction

Titi: But there's so many apps out there and our next lab is going to be all about fintech. So these are apps that help you organize your finances and get financially healthy.

Zakiya: Yes. And I'm excited about it because our guest is Natalia Brzezinski, the head of strategy at Klarna.

Titi: Oh yes, this is the perfect person to talk to about this.

Zakiya: Help us. All right, let's get back to today's lab. We're talking to Wall Street Journal reporter Christopher Mims about his new book, Arriving Today.

Titi: In the first half of the dissection, we focused mostly on how goods and products are being made using tools like scientific management to produce things efficiently for the global market.

Zakiya: But Christopher's book also focuses on the transport of those items, and before you even click, add to cart. That product has already been on a very long journey. A journey that starts at the factory.

Christopher Mims: Generally, the way a lot of finished goods and especially consumer electronics get to us is, you know, they are first made increasingly in Southeast Asia. A lot of things we think are made in China are actually made Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, places like that

Titi: From the factory. It goes to a small port put into a shipping container...

Zakiya: Shout out to Malcolm McLean.

Titi: Then the shipping container gets put onto a barge, where it gets taken to a much larger port,

Christopher Mims: where it stays for a couple of days after being lifted off by a giant crane. Then that big crane puts it onto a really big ship,

Zakiya: and we mean big. Some of these cargo ships are as big as the Empire State Building being laid on its side. We're talking the length of three football fields. This is not the boat that Megan Thee Stallion was talking about driving.

Titi: You can't drive that boat.

Zakiya: No!

Titi: Each container ship can hold up to 10,000 forty-foot containers or about sixty thousand pounds of goods.

Christopher Mims: And then you can travel all the way across the Pacific Ocean. And that's going to take weeks because it's actually moving kind of slow in order to save on fuel.

Zakiya: Finally, the ship arrives stateside, most often at the ports of L.A. and Long Beach, and that's where about 40 to 50 percent of all goods from Asia arrive in the U.S.

Christopher Mims: Then those containers get put onto a truck for the first time, and that's called drayage, and the container gets taken to a warehouse in the Inland Empire.

Zakiya: That's a region in Southern California.

Christopher Mims: All the goods are emptied out of the container, put onto a long haul truck. It might drive halfway across the country. Then all of those cardboard boxes full of goods go into what's known as a fulfillment center. If you're talking about Amazon, and human beings have to open up every single one of those boxes, take every item out, scan it, put it into a bin. The bin goes onto a conveyor, which goes to another human being, which takes all the goods, stows it on a robot shelf, which then scoots away like R2D2.

Titi: Oh my goodness, this is a lot. I am exhausted, and that's just the first part of the product's journey. OK, so now that the item is on the shelf waiting for someone to buy it, what happens next?

Christopher Mims: And then when you order that good, which has been on a fourteen thousand mile, two month minimum journey when you order it for delivery the next day within 45 minutes, someone has picked that item off of the robot shelf goes into a bin. The bin is carried on a conveyor down to the pack station. A person puts the items in a box tapes up. The box goes down another conveyor into the back of a truck, which goes to another warehouse where it's sorted. And then the final warehouse, which is called the delivery station, where all the boxes get stacked up at like, you know, 2:00 3:00 in the morning for delivery on a truck to your home the next day. You know it's next day or two day delivery.

Zakiya: Most people are not thinking about all of this when they add to cart, especially with things like two day delivery, One-Click ordering, overnight shipping.

Titi: Yes, I am ordering my goods by the light of the Moon. Most likely I'm in my bed and I'm just like, Click. Everything just starts getting shipped. I don't even think about it. I just keep swiping.

Zakiya: This just also feels like so many steps for me to get the few little things that I'm adding to cart. This is kind of changing things for me.

Titi: Honestly, because you think about every single step and all the ships and shipping containers and cranes and people and trucks. This is a lot for me to be saying, OK, I just need this new cell phone case that I've found on this website that six ninety nine. That's a lot.

Zakiya: Exactly. Every time I get ready to order something online now, I'm going to say, am I ready to turn on the crane to pick up my items? You know, like it might not be worth,

Titi: it might not be worth the crane movement.

Zakiya: And there's all this automation, but then there's all this on the ground stuff too. And one of them that we really should zero in on is the truck.

Titi: Even though the trucker shortage has reached crisis levels this year and been on the front page of labor news, the trucker shortage isn't really new.

Zakiya: Trucks are an essential part of the global economy. In the United States, 70 percent of all freight is transported by trucks, and it may feel like a cliché, but America really does run on trucks.

Titi: Not Dunkin'.

Yeah, you thought it was Dunkin', but it's actually trucks. So when we don't have enough people to drive those trucks, it can cost some pretty big problems for the economy.

Christopher Mims: It's affecting everything from what appears on stores at the grocery store to getting schools, school lunches to talking about why they can't get their couch delivered.

Titi: And with so many items being shipped to people and there being a trucker shortage that can lead to trucker burnout for the truckers that are now left to carry the load. We wanted to know what's really driving this shortage. Why don't we have enough truckers to handle the shipping demand?

Christopher Mims: There was this amazing piece in the New York Times in 2017, and there was this heartbreaking quote in it where this trucker said, You know, we feel like throwaway people. There's all these small injustices in the industry, which the net effect is that, you know, there's about three and a half million truckers in America. There's 10 million people who have a commercial driver's license. Those are all the people who went into the industry and burned out. And they're just like, I'm not going to be a truck driver anymore.

Zakiya: Those numbers are staggering,

Titi: Honestly, and it makes sense when you understand the experiences that a lot of truckers have.

Christopher Mims: A challenge in trucking is that even as rates go up and wages go up, the quality of life is low. So the average truck driver is on the road 21 days out of every month. They're working 14 hours a day.

Titi: Let me tell you something, I can't do anything for that long and that many consecutive days.

Zakiya: Maybe sleep.

Titi: Maybe sleep. And even then, you know, you get tired, you still get tired of sleeping. And so I can't imagine having to be alert at the wheel of this huge machine that's carrying all these goods. And it's not always like a perfect sunny day out in the rain, in the snow, in a hurricane. We're still expecting our packages so they can't call out. They can't say, Oh no, there's a storm. I'm not coming. They have to hit the road.

Zakiya: And when you really look at it, there's also the issue of stagnating wages. So if you look at what the average trucker made in the United States in the round the eighties, it was about \$36000 a year and in twenty twenty bucks, that's about \$120000. But by 2019, the average wage

was only \$45000. So when you normalize all that out for like inflation and all of that, what you're looking at is actually a 63 percent decrease in wages over a 40 year time period.

Titi: Christopher explained that sometimes big trucking companies will cover the upfront costs for a commercial driver's license, or CDL, which could be \$7000 or more.

Zakiya: But that has to be paid back,

Christopher Mims: so they got to work like a year just to pay that off. They're getting paid by the mile, and when you're a trucker and you stop at a warehouse, you're not getting paid for that time.

Zakiya: That's a lot of unpaid labor. So what we're seeing is the cost of shipping going down while the cost of living has only gone up.

Titi: OK, so only getting paid by the mile or during quote unquote productive time sounds like scientific management to me. And this really doesn't take into account that people like machines need maintenance. People now have to go to the bathroom, they have to shower, they have to eat and they have to sleep. And that's just basic survival. So it's no wonder that all these truckers are burning out and choosing to have other types of jobs.

Zakiya: Yeah, it feels like all of this is also coming to a head during the pandemic. And so you have to kind of ask, why now? How do we get to this place where the trucking industry has become unsustainable for the folks who are driving it for the truckers?

Christopher Mims: At the beginning of the pandemic, all the companies thought this is going to be like the Great Recession. Demand is going to go down. So they're like, OK, I'm going to book fewer shipping containers, less trucks and buy less stuff. But then the opposite happened. America went shopping, and demand is now so much higher for everything than it was before.

Titi: This is very true. We all got sent home and we just started buying and buying and buying. I remember early on in the pandemic when there was no paper towels, no toilet paper, no flour, no eggs, no nothing in the grocery store. I was trying to buy a paper towels off line, and the shipping cost was like \$90 to ship a few rolls of paper towels. I couldn't believe it. I really couldn't believe it. I did not purchase them. To be clear,

Zakiya: There is a baseline supply and demand in economics, right? So when there's a lot of supply for a product, the price goes down. Demand drives prices to increase, but supply and demand don't exist in isolation. The supply has to get to you, right? So even when there is a lot of supply, if we can't get it from one place to another. So if there's a supply and demand shortage for truckers, right? So if there are not a lot of truckers, the demand is no longer on the product, the demand is on the transportation. And so that's why I saw that really high shipping costs. But when you go back and really think about it, if we look at the really big picture, I feel like there was some acute things that we felt from the pandemic and shipping and demand for online shopping. But when we zoom out there had really been a major shift to online shopping even before the pandemic, too.

Titi: That's a really good point

Zakiya: And we are going to talk about that later this season. So be on your P's and Q's ready for that. And it makes sense, too, because we are creatures of yes habit, but more than habit convenience. OK, we want to have what we want when we want to and at our doorsteps,.

Titi: Preach.

Zakiya: And so if there's an option for me to have to travel to the store or wait in line at a counter, hope they have what I need, especially for boring purchases. I'd rather add all that stuff to cart and have it delivered to me.

Titi: And with free shipping and free returns, a lot of online retailers. It's so easy to add to cart and checkout, but maybe we need to start, you know, taking a beat before doing that and ask ourselves if we can get by without that purchase.

Zakiya: Yeah, maybe I don't need all these different Tehrani syrups to make, you know, cafe quality pumpkin spice lattes at home. I don't need it.

Titi: You don't?

Zakiya: I don't. I really don't.

Titi: And this leads us to the elephant in the room, Amazon. It feels like you can get anything, literally anything delivered to your house in the maximum two days. I've gotten things off Amazon and gotten it just a few hours later. How are they able to do this?

Christopher Mims: So Amazon, their whole modus operandi is that they're going to squeeze as much as they can out of workers using surveillance technology management by algorithm.

Zakiya: Amazon famously employs the use of scientific management for all of its employees, specifically those working in the fulfillment centers. Workers have to meet certain productivity quotas or face termination.

Titi: And in 2019, Amazon warehouse workers went on strike to protest inhumane working conditions. At the end of October, warehouse workers from Amazon's Staten Island facility filed a petition for a union election, and the request has to be approved by the National Labor Relations Board. And this would be the second unionization vote after the workers in Bessemer, Alabama, failed to reach enough votes to unionize last April.

Zakiya: And that's just the tip of the iceberg. We've seen many labor stories just like this in so many different sectors restaurants, food delivery, ride sharing and, of course, trucking.

Titi: And this is not a good look. Amazon has not just been under fire by the media. They've also been scrutinized by regulating organizations.

Christopher Mims: California just passed a bill limiting the use of the kind of work quotas that Amazon relies on inside of its warehouses. But this whole system of scientific management or, as I call it, Bezosism, which is scientific management plus all this technology, impacts every other type of worker at Amazon all the way down to the last mile truck drivers. Those drivers are subject to the same kind of surveillance as the workers in warehouses. There's cameras facing them, cameras watching the road, and Amazon says that's all about increasing safety, which I'm sure is true. But it's also about making sure that they work as quickly as possible.

Titi: And we learn that those drivers don't even work for Amazon, their subcontractors working for smaller trucking companies who work for Amazon, and this protects Amazon from any legal liability.

Christopher Mims: If one of those trucks gets into an accident, Amazon is not directly responsible for that truck. If one of those workers gets harassed by their boss, Amazon doesn't have to get involved, and they can't be sued for it.

Zakiya: This is like a Teflon coating, like a business version of it. And since the spring, Amazon has announced some changes to address some of the issues in their warehouses so they know they're there. But that includes spending like \$300 million on employee safety. But unfortunately, it still doesn't include driver safety.

Titi: So what's next? I mean, I feel like all of this goes back to the rise in the gig economy. And Christopher calls this the fissured workplace.

Christopher Mims: Which just means there's more layers between the worker and the people who hire those workers.

Zakiya: So companies like Uber, Lyft, DoorDash, they're all leveraging technology using principles of scientific management, but ultimately for profit.

Christopher Mims: It's about using technology to take advantage of our existing systems of laws. We are going to use all this venture capitalist dough and this technology to rush into the vacuum of inadequate regulation in a particular industry to try to extract as much profits and kind of mine them from the employees that we have. And to be clear, you know, I'm not against totally new models like Uber and Lyft, like, I think it's cool. Maybe there's some universe in which it could work, but making sure that there are sort of minimum protections for workers, not only is it the humane thing to do, but in the long run, it's probably the most sustainable thing to do because it would mean less turnover.

Titi: So what are the implications of today's use of scientific management more broadly for people working in the United States?

Christopher Mims: The overall trend is if you look at the distribution of income in America and the kind of jobs people go into, you have more and more people moving into more skilled jobs that demand more of them and pay them more, but also more and more people moving into low-

skilled jobs where if you have high school education or less, your options are very limited. That's called deskilling. So you kind of hollow out America's middle class and you create these two polarized classes of workers.

Zakiya: It feels like you get to this place where there are engineers and developers who are creating the technology to replace the jobs that people used to do. And then there's just everybody else.

Christopher Mims: Which frankly, is the majority of American workers who then are forced to work alongside that automation or become a part of it. I kind of picture them like bugs in amber, and they're just trapped in this matrix that has been created that all machines and it's like, OK, if you're going to function in this world, you have to operate like a machine. You have to operate at the pace of a machine. You have to do repetitive labor like a machine. And to be clear, that's not new, right? This is as old as the assembly line and industrialization, but this type of work has spread beyond the factory to so many other types of labor.

Titi: So when workers are being exploited and their privacy is being infringed upon, those are definitely signs that the scientific management practices that they're using have gone overboard. Humans are not robots and we can't ignore our own humanity and the humanity of other people while we're in the workplace.

Zakiya: That's so true, and it feels like this really big concept to wrestle with, right? Yes, I understand these things at the different levels of the supply chain, but then we still have certain basic needs, right? And so then you begin to ask yourself, like, what can I do on an individual level to affect some type of change?

Titi: Right. Because we're just one consumer in this whole big consumer machine.

Zakiya: Right.

Titi: It doesn't feel like there's a lot that we can do to make any type of significant change in what we know is a flawed system.

Christopher Mims: I mean, I think of it like climate change in a way. I think we get really hung up on the individual choices that we make. And those individual choices are important because they change our mindset and that changes how we interact with the world. But in terms of having an impact beyond the individual choices that we make, you know, I think we all just have to vote and be involved civically and an advocate for better policy, and it doesn't always have to happen at the federal level. I mean, California has this incredible power to set the agenda for the whole country, whether it's emission standards are these new laws governing how work is done at Amazon warehouses. So sometimes individual states, even cities have the power to set a floor on how much money and uber driver gets paid every hour. There's always these kind of opportunities to get engaged.

Zakiya: I think I'm feeling a little bit more hopeful. I have a better understanding of what's going on.

Titi: Yes, the more you know,

Zakiya: In mid-October, the president made a statement about the supply chain issues, and they're talking about leaving the ports open, having them run in 24-7, shifting to some night work. Based on what we learned from Christopher I don't know how much of a change that's going to make because it seems like there is issues at many different steps. But I think if people can kind of know what's happening, I've seen it in the news a little bit more. We can kind of temper that rush when people feel like, Oh, something's happening. I didn't know this was going on. It's like when there's a shortage of gas and then everybody runs out to get gas and it makes it worse. You know, I feel like this could be a little bit better. Things could maybe be moving slower, but we know that things will come.

Titi: So since tomorrow's Black Friday, how do we want to approach it now that we know all this stuff that we know from Christopher? I think for me, I've never gone out to the store and, you know, stood in the lines for Black Friday, but I know a lot of people that do. And I think one thing that I might try and do is maybe buy locally. Like, go out to a local shop in my neighborhood and try and find, you know, gifts from there. Or maybe just cut back on the amount of gifts that I feel like I need to buy folks.

Zakiya: I'm right with you. I'm all for cutting back on the gifts. I feel like, you know, in the past couple of years, it really kind of got out of control. I'm also going to try to, you know, when I am purchasing things, I don't need that stuff next day. I don't need that stuff in two days. Let it come whenever it comes. You know, I think if we could ease some of the demand in that space as well, I think that could be useful to0.

Titi: Or, you know, maybe you don't need it at all.

Zakiya: And that is a very ...

Titi: Remove from cart.

Zakiya: Good point. All right, we've been doing a lot of talking, but now it's time to hear from you. We're going to do a little pop quiz to see just how well you've been listening. So look at your Spotify app and you should see a poll pop up ready for the question. Give it to them. So the question is what event lead to the

Titi: creation of the shipping container?

Zakiya: I wonder how many of them are going to get it right?

Titi: They're smart. I think they all of them are and get it right. Don't be that guy where youre just going to choose the wrong answer to be funny?

Zakiya: It's their grade.

Titi: You willing to fail to be funny? I feel like my mom has said that to me before.

Zakiya: All right, it's time for our one thing.

Titi: My one thing this week is Succession. I know I'm late to the game. Most of you've already been watching it, but I had not even heard of the show. What happened? Why weren't yall in my DMs telling me?

Zakiya: I think I told you about this.

Titi: Yes, friend. But you watch a lot of stuff. And so sometimes I'm just like, you know, I'm not going to be able to keep up. But I've been watching this succession and I have been loving it. I'm yelling at the screen every single day.

Zakiya: Oh my goodness, I'm glad you like it. My one thing this week is a book called Good Morning, Monster. And baby it is a profile of five different patients from a therapist. There's so much to learn and there is packed. I've been telling everybody all about it. Good morning, monster. Check it out. See if it's at your local library or if you can listen to it if you don't want to get a copy. There's something to learn for everybody.

Titi: OK, I'm going to be on top of that.

Zakiya: That's it for Lap 39. We want to hear from you. Call us at 202 five six seven seven zero two eight and tell us what you thought. Or if you have an idea for a lap, we should do this semester. Tell us that too. We really love hearing from you. That's two oh, two five six seven seven zero two eight.

Titi: And don't forget, there's so much more for you to dig into on our website. There'll be a cheat sheet there for today's lab and additional links and resources in the show notes. Plus, you can sign up for our newsletter. So check it out at Dope Labs podcast dot com.

Zakiya: And don't forget. Semester four is going to be exclusive to Spotify for free starting December 16. So if you already listen to us on Spotify. Keep doing what you're doing, and don't forget to follow Dope Labs and tap the bell icon so you never miss when an episode drops. Now, after December 16, you won't be able to hear new episodes of Dope Labs anywhere else. So if you don't listen to us on Spotify, be sure to follow us on over here, where you can listen to Dope Labs, plus all of your other favorite shows for free.

Titi: Special thanks to today's expert Christopher Mims.

Zakiya: His new book, Arriving Today, is out now from Harper Collins. You can follow him on Twitter @Mims.

Titi: Dope Labs is a Spotify original production from MegaOhm Media Group.

Zakiya: Our Producers are Jenny Radelet Mast and Lydia Smith of Wave Runner Studios

Titi: Editing and sound designed by Rob Smierciak.

Zakiya: Mixing by Hannis Brown.

Titi: Original music composed and produced by Taka Yasuzawa and Alex Sugiura

Zakiya: From Spotify our executive producer is Gina Delvac and creative producers are Barron Farmer and Candace Manriquez Wrenn

Titi: Special thanks to Shirley Ramos, Yasmeen Afifi, Kimu Elolia, Teal Kratky and Brian Marquis.

Zakiya: Executive producers from MegaOhm media group, are us

Titi: Titi Shodiya

Zakiya: and Zakiya Whatley.