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SPEAKERS

Olivia N

Olivia N 00:01

Today is February 26 2023. I'm Olivia Newsom, interviewing Karolina here in New York City. Do I have permission to record this interview? Yes. Do you know you can stop recording at any time? Yes. Can you say your name, age and pronouns?

00:15

My name is Karolina, I'm 19. And I use they and she pronouns she and they,

Olivia N 00:22

how would you describe yourself?

00:25

I would describe myself as an artist, a philosophy lover. I would describe myself as a lesbian, a Latina, a woman and a non binary person.

Olivia N 00:50

Yeah. Can you tell me where you're from? Where you grew up and what your childhood was like?

00:55

Yeah, I'm from Brooklyn, in Windsor terrace slash Park Slope. Um, yeah, my childhood was fun. I grew up with my mom and my two sisters, both older. My mom was from Brazil. And my dad died when I was like, three. So I just grew up with all the girls in my house. Yeah, I was kind of in between cultures with like, a primarily white neighborhood. And then like my house. Yeah. But I overall enjoyed my childhood. Think that? Oh, I grew up Catholic that's like really big. Had a lot of influence. Yeah, it was definitely. Really big with me and my sisters, like our independence. went to Catholic school my whole life. Up until college,

Olivia N 01:57

can you talk a little bit about your relationship with your siblings and with your mother? What was that like?

02:02

Um, I've always kind of, I'm the youngest sister, but I, like play the middle ground where like I keep I have relationships with each of them. But like, they all have more complicated relationships with each other. Like my two sisters don't talk to each other at all. And I'm like, the one that they both talk to, and they like talk shit about each other to me. And I'm like, okay. But yeah, I'm kind of like, I think that I'm relied on is like, the smart one, or like the calm one. But also, they all see me as kind of like a baby. So it's two very conflicting things. My sister, my oldest sister, especially Giuliana has always like, taking care of me. She was kind of like a second parent and she still is.

Olivia N 02:53

So can you talk about what it was like growing up in an all woman household and how that influenced you.

03:00

It influenced me a lot. I like there was a lot of nudity, which also comes with like being Brazilian. So I always grew up very comfortable in that sense. And very afraid of men. I've never, like been comfortable around men. Even when I was a child. My mom would like be very big with like, cautionary tales. So I was just afraid. And I didn't have like a father figure or anything like that, which I think is perfectly fine. And I enjoyed that. To be honest. It's fun. Women are fun and creative and compassionate. So

Olivia N 03:42

can you talk about what Catholic school was like? You mentioned how you went to Catholic school your whole life? Yeah, what was Catholic middle school like?

03:51

Catholic Middle School was crazy. I mean, especially in terms of being gay I didn't know that I was a lesbian at the time. I didn't even know that I was queer. So that wasn't a part of my life after high school. But it was i don't know i To me it's like it was like regular middle school you know brutal. Everyone's mean. But yeah, it was weird or education was weird. A lot of time was spent based on like, religion a lot of time spent in church Yeah.

Olivia N 04:33

So in this like Catholic Middle School was at a private school or okay, you went to private school your whole life to Catholic private school? Yeah.

04:42

Which was hard because we were super poor always. And it would always be like a hassle trying to find like scholarships and like, the church paid a lot of my tuition, which gave this like weird guilt thing with God, you know? But yeah, A private school. So like always really small. My graduating class for middle school was 30 kids and my graduating class for high school was like 100 Kids

Olivia N 05:11

is small. So what was in high school? Like you mentioned how that was when you were starting to come into your queerness. At least Yeah, identity.

05:20

Yeah. Freshman year. I made my first friend at that school, because I came to the school with a couple of friends from like, childhood, but um, my first friend that I met there, their name is Jana. And they were my first like, gay person that I actually like talk to. And they were bisexual at the time, they identified as bisexual. And I was like, we had like, started to like, drink a little on like sleepovers and stuff. And, like, I think that the first time I got properly drunk, I was like, Guys, I think I'm bisexual. And I was like, crying about it, because it was so scary. But yeah, I think that was freshman year, then I thought that I was bisexual for a long time. until about a year ago. Now I really started to understand that I was a lesbian.

Olivia N 06:23

So did you like high school? What was that experience like with friends classes, that kind of thing.

06:29

I did like it. I've always loved school so much. And I love learning and reading and writing. But I was very into this role of like, straight girl Catholic school like I wanted to be. My role model was like worried Gilmore from Gilmore Girls. Like I was very like that especially we had to wear the uniforms and stuff. So I was like, might as well lean into this. Very like obsessed with like, getting the guy in like compulsory heterosexuality way where I was like, This is my value. But, you know, I was having fun at the time. I mean, it was definitely hard because I didn't have a real identity. But I was good at immersing myself in the environment.

Olivia N 07:26

So did you have other gay friends in high school?

07:30

Um, yeah. But everyone was like in the closet until like, senior year. So like, the gay kids gravitated towards each other. We were all friends. And all of a sudden everyone starts coming out. So it wasn't really like it was kind of talked about, but really just with Jenna.

Olivia N 07:48

So did you grow up religious? Like, what's your household? Religious too?

07:52

Yeah, um, it's, um, so my mom being from Brazil, especially Northeast Brazil makes the or like Christianity a little complicated, because, I don't know. It's not as like by the book. And there's a lot of like, different religions, like from indigenous communities and like, also from Africa that come together and Brazil with the, like, European Christianity. So there was like an element of fluidity. But I'm always

under God, you know? Yeah. But my mom and one of my sisters is like, very religious and my other sisters like kind of like spiritual like me. But it was very present in our life

Olivia N 08:43

did you ever. So when you were thinking about the presence of religion, and especially Catholicism while you were coming into your queerness at a Catholic at a private Catholic High School? Did it ever feel like oppressive in any way? Or was it just two parallel streets?

08:59

It was absolutely oppressive. I was like, I had noticed I don't know I thought it was normal. But I everything in my life was so consumed by fear. No, don't be sorry. I was just so afraid of like, going to hell looking back on it. That's what all it was, but it was like this fear in my body of like death and punishment and being a bad person being unworthy and I couldn't identify it with being gay. At the like, honestly, at the time, I thought I was bisexual and I was like, I'm never gonna come out to my family. I'm just gonna like marry a man like it's fine. My don't have to deal with it because it's just easier if I don't. Um, yeah, I just felt it was like a clear boundary of like having to hide a part of myself 90% of the time

Olivia N 09:59

and that other 10% Was it spent with Jenna and that's where you express to your queerness? Yeah,

10:04

I'm like, um, I guess sort of online, I would say, but mostly with Jenna.

Olivia N 10:13

Can you talk a little bit about how race and ethnicity affected you? You mentioned having a Brazilian mother and being in like a Latina household?

10:21

Yeah. Um, for the majority of my childhood, it was mostly about, like, erasing that to be honest, what happened, especially because I'm the youngest, like, my older sister went to school, and only spoke Portuguese. And it was like, you gotta learn English. And so that kind of was like, growing up. I primarily, I was like, I know, I knew Portuguese very well, but primarily spoke English, because that was like, the priority, like English has to be good. And, like, so obsessed with like, my mom perfecting her English, you know? Yeah, all my friends were like Irish. And I did Irish stuff and immerse myself in that. But it was always like, I don't know, I wasn't aware of like culture outside of my home. Especially I don't have any family from Brazil here. It's just my mom who came over. And then her entire side is in Brazil. So I would see them in the summer. But it was something that I felt very alone in and didn't. I wasn't able to find community in my Latinas until, like, this year.

Olivia N 11:42

So can you talk a little bit about social media? You mentioned it briefly how maybe you found like, online queer spaces. So how did social media affect your development?

11:58

Um, I spent a lot of time on social media, but I honestly couldn't tell you what I did. Like, it was all Yeah, it was just like, existing there. But it was like the exposure. My only really exposure of like, other gay people was like, just seeing things online, like Hayley Kiyoko girls, like girls music video, changed things for me. But it was mostly just like, observing other gay people online and being like, Okay, this is a, this isn't an option for me. But, you know,

Olivia N 12:34

why did you feel like you couldn't be visibly gay or be out in gay?

12:39

Um, it would just wouldn't be acceptable in Catholic school, and like, I had, I was very focused on being this like, perfect image of, like, I don't know, someone worthy of respect. Especially like, from men. Since I don't know, I always wanted like, men to respect me and find me like, I don't know, I want it to be serious, taken seriously. And with, it's hard to be queer and to be taken seriously. And it's hard to. Like, there's no space to find your identity in Catholic school.

Olivia N 13:29

So can you talk a little bit about class and how class affected you growing up? You mentioned how you went to private school, but you were the scholarship kid.

13:40

Um, it was hard. It was mostly like, the way that it affected me most was embarrassment. Like, because when things were like, when you're a kid, you don't really notice like the numbers, you know what I mean? All you notice is like, what people how people treat you. And I didn't like feeling like I didn't belong, and that I didn't deserve to be there. Everyone always told my mom, because my mom was always like, looking outside for help. And like, I understand that, and we like lived off of Social Security, like widows Social Security, I think. But it was mostly just like when I couldn't do certain things like my friends would go like on like little family trips together. And like I just wouldn't my family wouldn't be involved in that or something like that, like little things and going to the food pantry with my mom or like going to the church to ask for money on my mom, like talk to the priest. I was like, kind of treated as like the smart daughter or like the educationally promising one. And so I had to use that in order to like get my spot they're both in like merit scholarships, but then also like writing essays for PEEP random old people pay my tuition, you know. It's just mostly like seeking out and then being embarrassed.

Olivia N 15:03

So what led to your realisation that your sexuality was different? Was it Jenna for real?

15:15

Like, yeah, I don't know, I was just like, I clicked so well with this person and they're bisexual. And when they talk about being bisexual, I relate to a lot of the things they say. But, like, I don't remember coming to a realization, I felt like I had always known that I liked women. But I didn't know that the way that I liked women was any different from others. And Jenna helped me realize that.

Olivia N 15:46

Can you elaborate more on what it was like having a queer friend, a queer best friend in a Catholic school context? Yeah,

15:54

um, well, Jenna was always ahead of me in queerness. And so they were kind of like my role model in that sense. But it's like we're surrounded by I went to high school and Sheepshead Bay and that part of Brooklyn gets so conservative. And so it's like, it was just a one group of people. were my friends. And we were the only people who like weren't homophobic or, like, you know? Yeah. And so it kind of felt like, I did feel like an outsider, but in a way where, like, I was constantly trying to not, I was constantly like, trying to prove myself as like, someone who belongs there. But I'm Jenna, having a queer best friend in high school gave me like a safe space to just be and not have to worry about being someone else.

Olivia N 16:51

So do you remember what your first exposure to lesbianism was?

16:54

Um, my friend, my best friend in middle school had an aunt who was a lesbian. And she was super cool and successful. So that was nice to see.

Olivia N 17:09

Like, did it make you feel anything when you saw them for the first time?

17:12

I'm just like, joy, and because I always loved growing up in like, an all women household and I hated the idea of like, having to like live with a man. Like girl like, I know, right? Eight minutes. Exactly. It was like, Who told you you need to live with a man I like

Olivia N 17:30

when people actually like met like that. But no.

17:33

Like, one day, I was like, Wait, like, are bisexual supposed to be into minzu?

Olivia N 17:41

Actually, that's kind of 1.2.

17:47

But I was like, I don't know, like, maybe sixth grade. Um, and it wasn't like, I couldn't make a big deal out of it. Or anything. Like, I wasn't gonna go home and talk about it. But it was just like, Oh, that's so cool. That she doesn't have to live with a man she can have a wave. And a beautiful home. You know? Yeah.

Olivia N 18:17

So can you talk a little bit about when and who was your first crit? Queer crush real or fictional?

18:29

This is like, so difficult. Um, I

18:42

I'm not sure. I always think about this. And I like can't pinpoint it down because it was always like, oh, I want to be her best friends. Yeah, have a sleepover? Um, do

Olivia N 18:53

you have any homoerotic friendships kind of like that?

18:56

Honestly, ashes in person? No, like, maybe crushes. But I? Yeah, I didn't have like a whole moronic friendship.

Olivia N 19:07

That makes sense because of the Catholic.

19:09

Yeah.

Olivia N 19:11

So can you talk about around what year you came to your lesbianism and how did you arrive there? Because we've kind of like hinted at certain aspects or certain pieces of that process, but when did it happen and how did you get there?

19:30

Um, so my senior year of high school, I started dating this boy that I had had a crush on for a long time. And he was like the valedictorian like, he was like, the image that I was really trying to go for. And we started dating or in quarantine. We did it all throughout senior year and then kept dating through college and then like, I get to Sarah Lawrence, and I'm surrounded by all these gay women. And I'm like, wow, like I'm done. So much better than I thought I was. But I'm still bisexual and I'm still like, I have this boyfriend. But I'm going through it. Like, for some reason, I wonder what reason I'm just so depressed and like, nothing is making me happy. And I make best friends with a lesbian at school. And like we talk and you know, it's a similar thing that like, what happened was Jenna and Jenna at this point, I'm pretty sure is like, Yeah, I'm a lesbian. And I'm like, that's t like, maybe I should think about that. And then this new friend. She kept like, as we had conversations, you know, just friends. I was like, wow, I really relate to her about a lot of these things. And that's what made me like, reflect. And it took many months of like, trying to, it was spring of 2022. So my spring semester, and I was like, slowly trying to break up with my boyfriend at the time. But it was so hard because I associated all of my success with him. You know what I mean? As a person, like my value, and I felt like I was like, throwing everything away. And it took months, but eventually, after the semester ended, which is like so sad, because the whole

semester all I did with my friends was like, talk about how I should break up with my boyfriend. I did. That's okay. Yeah. And then, like, I lived my fucking life, like that summer, like, like, I was so happy all of a sudden, I'm like, Oh, it felt it felt horrible. But it was like, vital for my identity.

Olivia N 21:47

And your friends really helped you through your identity formation in that way? Absolutely.

21:51

Because like, we have this joke. I mean, not to. I think that obviously bisexuality is real. People are bisexual. It's also a stepping stone for a lot of people to realize that they're not bisexual that they're just like different identities of queerness. You know, but my friends have this joke, like five bisexuals and one lesbian walk into a room six lesbians. Like, you have a conversation. You're like, damn, maybe I don't like man. No, exactly. And so that we have one bisexual left in our friend group. So we were all kind of going through. But we were all going through this like identity crisis at the same time. And then that one friend who already knew that she was a lesbian was like, yep, like, yeah, so that was nice. We're all there for each other.

Olivia N 22:49

So can you talk a little bit about coming out? Do you believe in it? Have you come out multiple times before? And then does the phrase coming into your identity resonated with you in a different way?

23:03

Um, I came out around Thanksgiving this past year, so 2022. And it was like, I just needed it done. You know, like, cuz I realized that, like, eventually, like, I'm gonna have to deal with it. But right now, I should at least, like set a little foundation. And I was just like it. When I think of coming out. I just think to your parents, like, you know what I mean, my friends have always known that I was gay. Even when I was in the closet. So, yeah, I feel like coming out really only has a significance to like family. And I told my mom was like, Mom, like, I think I'm a lesbian. And it was just like, a, it was it was horrible. But it wasn't like, I was just like, Yeah, that sucks. But like, I knew that was gonna happen, like, it's fine. I don't really care about coming out. I don't think that it's something that you need to do. And I think that sometimes it's easier not to a lot of the time. But, um, yeah, I think that coming in. Makes more sense. Because it's more. I don't know, for me when I was finding my queerness it was about letting go of other people and like thinking about myself instead of like thinking about because all that other people were doing before were like, keeping me in a cage of heterosexuality. So, yeah, I live my queer life completely separate from my like, family life here because it's just like, I don't know. I don't have to. I don't have to come out like that.

Olivia N 24:48

Yeah. Do you regret coming out to your mom or did it feel worse and even with all the pain,

24:54

it was worth it? I don't regret it. I would, like I probably have to do it again. I think that she's like in denial. She isn't believed. Yeah. She was like, really? And I was like, yeah. And then she started going on, like some rant. Like she started. I don't know, I made her nervous or something. So she starts

talking about something else. And like she like, and then for the next couple of weeks, like she was like, Are you for real? And I was like, yeah. And then she would start talking about herself again. And, but then like, lately, like, she's been like, giving me warnings my men, like, I forget where I was, I was because I'm going to Brazil, and June this is just an example. And like, for family or just for fun for family. I'm going on my sister. So like, that might be really hard, especially because I have like tattoos that she hasn't seen now, and it's like, but long sleeve

Olivia N 25:41

vibes in the summer?

25:43

No, like, I'm scared, like, I'm gonna be out there. fully covered. No, like, people don't know what I'm gonna get bullied. Like, there's so much I can't do that. So I'm gonna have to show her but anyways, what was the question?

Olivia N 25:57

That's so crazy.

25:59

So she'd be like, Okay, I remember now. She'd be like, oh, like, be careful, like, watch out. For those like, I can't even translate like those like men who like are just out to like, have sex with you. In Brazil. I'm like, Girl, like, I'm not even talking to those men. Like, it's just like, I'll just be like, I'll just be like, I don't want to hear that right now. That's what I say. But I'm like, did you forget? Or did you forget on purpose? Or are you ignoring like, I truly do not know. But yeah, I don't value coming out whatsoever.

Olivia N 26:37

That makes sense. So can you talk about if clothing, jewelry, makeup, tattoos, piercings or other body mods, or forms of gendered expression have assisted with affirming your identities or your lesbianism in any way?

26:54

Absolutely. And I think that was like, especially coming from like a Catholic and Latino background, you know, the body models are not, you know, no one's into that. My mom is so not a fan. But like, I, I got my nose pierced first. And I was like this, how do I feel like more me? You know what I mean? When something so simple. And then I got a couple tattoos. And then I started to dress like a little bit more mask sometimes. And it's just like, I don't know, I never understood clothes as self expression. I heard people say that I'd be like, okay, but like, I would get up in the morning and put on my plaid skirt, and like polo, so like, that didn't mean shit to me. But like, I feel like especially being socialized as a girl. I can own my body through tattooing and piercing and dressing it like. Yeah, I don't know, I feel like it's like creating yourself externally, if that makes sense. And like creating how other people see you. And it's really like, a liberating against everything else. It's a way of like, understanding that this is me and other people don't have control over my body or what it does or what it looks like.

Olivia N 28:21

So what about art, I'm going to ask you a two part question I'm going to ask you about have forms of art, like photography, paintings, leaves and shit. I shouldn't have said in shit whenever she would hear lesbianism in any way. And then I'm also going to ask you because you are an artist. How has the art making process influenced your lesbianism? Or your gender identity in any way?

28:45

Okay, I'm gonna get into this question. So, um, last fall, I went with my friends to the Leslie Lomond museum. And their exhibition at the time was in this in the Sensia. And so it was like a bunch of Latinx artists, including Brazilian artists. And like, again, the only time I ever saw my culture was in my home. So it's just my mother, who was the source and like, I've been, I went to Brazil as a child, but not I haven't been there since 2014. So, you know, it's not, I don't see my culture and queerness together at all. So I go, my friends, and we all have realized that we're lesbians already. And we're all like, ready for the world to open up in front of us. And like, we spend so long there and I see Brazilian queer people and I it was like, truly life changing to like, see that there is a space for me. And it doesn't have to be separated from my culture, which is something that I considered a guarantee like I was like, There's no way that I can like both be involved with my Brazilian identity and be less In? And I don't know, especially with my family. Like, I don't know, it's not like my family's from like Rio de Janeiro or anything like that. So yeah, that was amazing. The art there. It's mostly I feel like in or at least more often when it comes to being queer. I think more about the artists and the artists process than I do the art and I feel like with like art that isn't queer, I'm thinking about like, the way that it looks, which I think is interesting, as opposed to like, how this makes me feel how the person creating it must have felt. How it's a reflection of identity. But asked for TV shows is that a part? Yeah. I'm not big on like TV and film, but I love the L word. And I think that's so. So like, I don't know, I love seeing how other queer people express their queerness it really excites me when it's like in like, subtle ways. Like I'm like, oh, like, I can tell you're gay. But other people can't tell you're gay. Like, that's cool. Like, I wish I had known those tricks in high school. You know what I mean? But, um, yeah, I enjoy seeing like, lesbian characters, as I don't know, I think that when I was a kid, I was like, always choosing like characters to like, really look up to and it's nice being able to do that now being like, I couldn't be you if I wanted to, like, Yeah, but for creating art. And myself, I think that it has a huge reflection on my identity, just like the action where like, I will. It's kind of like a gender thing as well, where like, I really relate to lesbianism and the gender identity way. And the aspect of like creation. And like, I don't know, I think that creating something is like an erotic experience on a lot of ways. Like, I read Audrey Lorde, and like, my life was changed. And I think about that every time I do anything, like the uses of the erotic and like, I will be painting or doing anything with my body. And I'll just, I'll feel like such a lesbian. And like, I'll feel like myself, yeah, and like I'm making something in the world that is for me, and that my like, being can extend and like relate to everything around me. And it's just like, it's beautiful. And I think that I wouldn't have been able to unlock that in me if I didn't go to Lesley Loman during that exhibit.

Olivia N 32:58

So, can you talk about your first encounters with lesbian sex, both directly and indirectly, and what your attitudes were around it before and afterwards,

33:09

um, attitude around lesbians, like sex was always okay. It's kind of like conflicting dynamics. So like, in Catholicism, obviously, like, that's not chill. But in my house, like, I think that Brazil has a very sexually liberated culture. And so we talked about sex, but it was always heterosexual. It was never like lesbian sex. And so like, when that was when lesbian sex would be brought up, which was honestly like it never like, I probably, I don't know, I guess I thought about her like, again, like things online. But my attitudes around it change in the sense where like, before, it was like, I'm going to be cool. Like, I'm going to act normal hearing about, like, this is chill, like, I don't have any sort of reaction when I hear about lesbian sex. But now it's like, or what? Okay, let me go into what were my first encounters with lesbian sex. So I had one of my friends at school who like, always talked about queerness with and we were very close, and then there was kind of like an intersection between like, a romantic relationship and a friendship. And that was like, a couple months. And that was when I lost my virginity, as my friends like to call it because like, different No, this was last fall.

Olivia N 34:39

This was last fall. So you had like, a friend that you ended up dating?

34:43

It wasn't like dating. It was like hooking up but like, it was weird. I had a situation.

Olivia N 34:50

Friend, do you know this? Yeah, yeah. Are we are we French friendly with this friend? Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah,

34:55

it's like in my friend like I see them next When do you consider them an ad? No, I don't I consider them my friend like I was involved with I want. Yeah. Okay. No, no. Like, no, you have to say more. No, because I do have to say yes. But after like now, it's it's like making art. The way that I talk about lesbian sex the way that I talk about making art

Olivia N 35:27

were you scared when you had sex for the first time with a non men

35:30

with the non men? No. When I have sex with first man with a man for the first time, yes, yeah. That was like, I don't know. It was a different type. Very different models of vulnerability in the sensor like this vulnerability feels natural with lesbian sex. And then with straight Sykes, it was like, okay, I can do this. You know.

Olivia N 35:52

So has your lesbianism been influenced by theory or academics in any way?

35:58

Absolutely. I'm a big academic. And so, like, I love philosophy, and I love reading feminist theory. Adrienne, rich and Audrey Lord have played huge part in like helping me realize my lesbianism. Yeah, I

took a class last year, which was my freshman year of college, which I'm technically a junior now because I skipped but a year anyways. So the first semester of college that I took we read Audrey Lord, use Zoom there of the erotic and I've read it so many times since then. But the yeah, my lesbianism has definitely influenced by theory, in the sense where like, I will read something and it's the same like identification process as I had with my queer friends who helped me realize my queerness and it's, yeah, through reading and also like, reflections on that reading.

Olivia N 36:58

So are there others like thinkers that you think about other than Adrienne Rich and Audrey Lorde? Are those the main ones that have influenced you the most?

37:05

Um, well, a lot of like, feminist thinkers also, like Simone de Beauvoir, which, like, when something isn't specifically about lesbianism, I still am able to, like, get my, you know, relate to it in that sense. Anyways, yeah. But yeah, I would say some underperform.

Olivia N 37:27

So have your views on marriage changed before? And after you did I find as a lesbian?

37:32

Yeah. I think that I had a very clear path in life before I identified as lesbian. It was like, school, college, marriage, kids. It's just like, getting a job. You know, that's, I thought of it in the same way. But now, very optional, also very meaningless. Like, to me, it's like, kind of like, I have an existentialist point of view with marriage, I think where it's like, it can mean something if you want it to, but in its actuality, it is like, doesn't mean shit outside of like, laws. I think that in heterosexual relationships, like marriage is just a form of like protection. I mean, not historically for women, but now. And I, in queerness, I don't feel like I need to be protected from the things that I felt like I needed to be protected from in heterosexuality so I don't feel like I have to get married.

Olivia N 38:32

So can you talk a little bit about your gender identity? And how your gender identity informs your interactions with your lesbianism and lesbian community? It's a big question. We talk a little bit about your gender identity and what it means to you and what do you mean, and explain a little bit more about lesbian as gender? And then illustrate with that,

38:55

yeah. Um, so my gender identity informs my interactions with the lesbian community in the sense where I feel very fluid and I can relate to a lot of people. Yeah, I Yeah. And that, that's kind of all I can say about that is that I just, I move around a lot. And that is, it feels good to have be surrounded by people who like get you in no matter what side you're leaning on that day. I am a big feminist and I love reading feminist theory and that has had a lot of influence on my gender identity in the sense where like, I view like, I there's a part of women this that I view beautiful, but there's also a part of it, where I view is like very constructed by men. And I, when I think of lesbian as gender identity, I think non binary

woman who are like a woman who is not going started by a man and is therefore not in the binary, you know? Yeah. Um, do I feel like? Um, what was the other question?

Olivia N 40:13

That was kind of it. I was just asking you about you kind of already talked about what your gender identity specifically means, do you? You explain that? And then can you also talk about maybe if you feel like gender nonconformity is at odds with some parts of the lesbian community, or

40:29

sometimes it does feel that way. But I think that it's only like that from like, the heterosexual perspective where you feel like you have to categorize everything. And I think that in like, queerness, like, you know, it might not make sense to straight people, but like, it doesn't really matter, like, you know, that's how I see it. What my gender identity means, to me is, like, understanding that I can relate to my body, and my body is something that I am not against, or I don't have to deal with it. It is my like, manifestation of myself in the world. And I should I can make it like what's inside, you know?

Olivia N 41:19

So, how does being Latinate inform your interactions with the lesbian community?

41:27

Um, I not sure I haven't met a lot of lanais lesbians, I am still finding my place with those interactions. But I like now I'm at the point where, like, I've come to an understanding that there's a place for me, and I'm like, exploring, I've been exploring my queerness. And I have to find a way to like, put the two together. And I think that a lot of that has to do with like, healing my issues with like, my mother's homophobia. And I think that once I get past that, I will feel comfortable, like existing as a queer person with within a Latino community. So with

Olivia N 42:21

your mother's homophobia, did she like was it just passing remarks about gay people growing up?

42:28

My mom is, it's, it's strange, because I think she has more of a problem. I think it's more transphobia. And like, fear of gender nonconformity. Because, like, when I told her that I was a lesbian, she, like started talking about something else. And like, whatever was going on about, she's a rancher. So she'll start rambling about random things and get really upset about things that don't matter. But she, at one point, she was like, You, I don't care like, as long as you like, never dress like a man, like, you know, like, you have to, like wear lipstick, and like all this shit. And it's just like, I think that she is just very, very attached to the idea of what a woman should be and what a man should be. And I think that the idea of what a woman should be comes from, like her own, the way that she was taught to value herself, you know, and then the idea what a man should be, I think that comes from like, a sort of revenge. Like, if I have to be this way, if I have to be a good woman, like you have to be a good man, you know what I mean? Or you have to be good at being a man. And I, yeah, that is kind of her version of the homophobia. Now. It's like, ignoring it, ignoring that I'm gay and hoping like, whatever hoping it

passes. So I think that it's going to take a couple years, but just getting her to like, see me will be that step in blending my Latina identity with my queer identity.

Olivia N 44:02

Can you talk about how class and informs your interactions with lesbian community and I mean, like your immediate community, so like, I know you have lesbian friends we have like friends, so that and then also if you have a broader sense

44:13

totally I think that I mean, being in college definitely puts it more on like an even ground you know, all of my lesbian friends are also like, you know, looking for coins in the couch. Um, I think that I don't know I don't really being in college makes it safe for me because like, the college, like, scramble for money is different from like the at home, you know, rent and bills scramble. This is like, you know, I have a meal plan. I have a dorm, my loans are paying for that, like I can worry about that in 20 years. I'm looking for money so that I can go like to the club this weekend, you know what I mean? So I it's very light hearted right now because I'm in college which is I'm very grateful for that.

Olivia N 45:14

So what's it like making a meeting lesbians in your city now, especially since you attend historically women's college?

45:24

Um, it's, it's lovely. I, most of the time, when I meet people, like, there's an 80% chance I'm meeting a lesbian. And I don't know, it's nice again, like, just like expanding my horizons and like, being affirmed every day that there is a place for me, and that there's so many people in this world who understand me, no matter. Like, if I come home and feel like I am very out of place. It's nice learning how easy it is to meet lesbians. It's like, it's funny, if like fondly looking on the stereotypes of like, every lesbian knows each other. And like, there's like, a web of like, situation ships. And it's like, yeah, I think it's cool.

Olivia N 46:19

So are you meeting most of your lesbian friends at college?

46:26

Yeah, I'm at college, through I have my like, Home Group, who I all they all go to school with me. And then like, everyone, is like meeting people from like, bars and stuff, Tinder. And most friends are, like, acquired through, like, kind of like a dating thing. I think that, like, again, this is like, stereotype. But I think it's so important and so beautiful that like lesbians have a beautiful skill of like, friendship, and, you know, relationships intermingling, and like being able to like, I don't know, it works. But that's mostly how I made lesbians, my school friends. And then like, we go out meet people, and then those people happen to know someone that I already know. And it's just like, a wimp.

Olivia N 47:22

So if like the lesbian spaces that you're in now, do you see any like specific groupings of lesbians?

47:29

Yeah, I see it in the sense where like, each of my friends, we like bleed into other groups, but I am a rock climbing lesbian. I am a an art like you know painting lesbian in like a I think that in my art subculture I'm kind of like, a little more Butch than I am on a daily basis like when I'm going to the studio like in a muscle team. I'm gonna get sweaty No Yeah, literally. What else? I'm like film lesbians which I'm not a part of that but like I think they're really cool. Um the cottage core lesbians are so famous. I have a lot of lesbian friends who crochet this is like, Am I answering the question? Yeah, like just like activities that lesbians do. The stoner subculture Yeah. huge part of my life

Olivia N 48:44

you know,

48:48

a lot of people came I love awaken bake like a lot of people were waking and baking I'm post awaken big Well, I wouldn't say that. I'm high you know what I mean? Yeah, but yeah. And like the kind of like the granola lesbians like I'm falling into. I know. I know. Like I'm falling into granola lesbian path. I feel it. My Ma Tei Yeah. Yeah, I do. Yeah.

Olivia N 49:21

Got a funky print button down.

49:22

McCargo pants. Yeah,

Olivia N 49:25

like your granola. We both have fuzzy socks on

49:29

chilies chili. We're smarter goals are no I'm not looking at struggle.

Olivia N 49:36

I'm building in person lesbian communities during COVID.

49:40

Um, well, I didn't realize that I was a lesbian until like COVID was chillin. Yeah, yeah. But I think that quarantine definitely held me back. I think that if it wasn't for quarantine, I would have realized that I was a lesbian sooner.

Olivia N 49:56

Okay. Yeah. So do you feel like a lot Out of your lesbianism and like your path is in lesbianism. It's really community focused.

50:05

Absolutely. I think that I'm a big community focused person. I'm always talking about everything with other people. And I love company. And so yeah, it's definitely very community focus without the community. I don't know what I would do, Drew.

Olivia N 50:21

So can you talk about the lesbian spaces or lesbian communities that you're involved in now? Um, when you're like, how many lesbian friends do you have? How did you find each other? What do y'all like to do?

50:34

Um, well, I'll talk about my most recently made lesbian friends. So I met a few queer woman recently, who are like a whole group of like, queer people, actually. And we all go to the same school and one of my good lesbian friends is dating one of the lesbians in that group. We like to go out find places to dance. We get high, we drink hard. Kombucha is like shit, like, stupid Bucha it's it's a kombucha, but it's like kind of like a beer. Oh.

Olivia N 51:15

That means okay.

51:17

It's just like, silly. Like, falling into the car can Bucha I mean? Yeah, it's alcohol. You get tipsy. But, yeah, I'm just like, yeah, silly College. stuff. Like we walk around looking for a party. And like, we just try to get some dancing out of it. And then if we if the paycheck comes that week, we go to like the club. But

Olivia N 51:47

what clubs do you go to? Um, strip clubs?

51:50

No, we go to we've been to the Playhouse and stone Hall. Yeah. I know. Like, we just got fake IDs last fall.

Olivia N 52:03

That makes sense. Yeah. Playhouse and Stonewall Playhouse. I agree. No, no, truly no judgment. But the thing is, I was like, what clubs? No, like, like, yeah, it's like, I'm kind of they don't have we're like, there's not a lot of places where you can be young and gay.

52:22

Yeah, exactly. So you got to go to the club. But it's hard finding lesbian spaces, because a lot of the times like the, I mean, I like the bars that you hear about when you're in your sophomore year of college. You know what I mean? They're not going to be whatever. But the Playhouse is mostly gay men. Yeah. So I didn't rock with that one too much. No.

Olivia N 52:44

I don't like clubs. But the music was fun. The music is fun. And if you're just going to dance, you're going to dance.

52:50

But literally, like, my friend went to the bathroom. And this guy, like, looked at her up and down and was like, there's so many fucking women in here.

Olivia N 53:01

Yeah, sometimes you go into these spaces that are dominated by gay men, and they forget that there can be lesbians who can go to gay spaces?

53:10

Yeah, you're like, we're also gay. Yeah. It's just like, wow, like, You're that openly misogynistic.

Olivia N 53:16

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I don't feel the same. I don't feel like there's that same energy when gay men go to lesbian bars at all. Like, I don't feel like it's reciprocal. totally the same ways. I feel like people get upset when they're straight men at lesbian bars, because that's where

53:34

gay men? Yeah, I also think that like, women look at men and like, you know, think about whether or not they're gay. And I don't think that men do that with women. Unless, like, that person is like, outwardly like mask or something. Yeah. You know,

Olivia N 53:50

when I go to when I when I see men, or when I think because like, I think it's a really slippery slope when you start identifying men in lesbian spaces. Yeah, I think it can be transphobic unintentional harm or intentional harm, and so I truly don't do that. But like the only time where I noticed that there are men in a space. I'm like, it's because some bisexual brought their boyfriend. Yeah, yeah, exactly. Should have left him at home.

54:17

But like, that's the like, he's not dancing. Yeah.

Olivia N 54:20

sitting at the bar, I can't work with the hot bartender because he's in the way because there's a lot of space shit like that. And he's tall and I can't fucking see anyways, and he's not wearing deodorant. And the vibe is off because he's ugly, and he's ruining the like ambiance Yeah,

54:38

it's like also like like

Olivia N 54:43

if he was like straight and regular but they exactly like you

54:46

got to rock with the vibe like I don't care about whether you're straight or not, but like, don't like act like you want to be here. Yeah, like

Olivia N 54:56

don't harsh the vibe or don't, I don't like when they go to the A lesbian bar and then they spectat in a weird way. It makes you feel like a zoo animal. Because I was so I feel that way. It was straight women too. I was like, go to the lesbian. I mean, I'm not saying okay, I don't think straight woman should go to lesbian bars. I'm like, if you're going to be in a lesbian bar, Don't be weird. Yeah, don't be like staying. Yeah, just be regular. Just like dance. Just talk to people. For

55:25

real. I think that it's just like nerve racking for some

Olivia N 55:29

lesbian bar. Yeah. Well, I have all these ideas. I'm like, if you're going to a dyke bar, like no one cares. Yeah. You're not like, telling me how gay you are. Right? You like life?

55:39

Yeah. Because it's like having like your past that you know what I mean? And straight people just like never got there.

Olivia N 55:47

You being straight would never come up. Is you like didn't say? Like, actually, I'm sorry. Like, why would you start any conversation with you? It doesn't make sense to Yeah, your sexuality at a dive bar? Like, what are you doing? Everyone? Like, that's the point. Anyways, that was an aside, can you talk about what identifying as a lesbian means to you.

56:17

Um, it's everything. It's like, just the foundation of which I move on from I do everything from that space. It is allowed me to, like, think about what I actually care about in life. And it's nice to like, redefine desire, and redefine honestly, everything. I think that being a lesbian is like, so incompatible with the world. And I think that that forces you to like, really understand yourself. So I just have it as a lesbian means that to me that I have thought so much about who I actually am versus who I'm supposed to be. Yeah, yeah.

Olivia N 57:07

So can you talk about the importance of your lesbian community and the importance of lesbian community, we kind of touched on it a little bit. But,

57:16

um, my lesbian friends are my family. They are the most important people in the world to me, and they are like, my queer friends are my future. Like, I look at them. And I'm like, I have, like, I keep saying, I

have a place in this world. But that's like, what my identity has meant to me is like, just understanding that I have a place in a way that like I've never felt before. And like, I'm like, if you're doing this with me, I can do it, you know, to that kind of thing where like, I go home, and like, I have a dorm. That's a house of mostly, like, my lesbian group of friends. And it's nice to see us in a home. You know what I mean? Like, it's just like, very. Home is the word. Yeah.

Olivia N 58:11

So what lesbian spaces do you wish existed?

58:15

Um, just more places to be like, hang out and like, be young. You know what I mean? Because like, we talked a little about bars, that kind of gets rid of like, the feeling like you have a whole deal is like feeling that you have was placed there. But then being under 21 is like you actually don't. So like, you know, and that's also kind of like humbling, like, it makes you feel like okay, sit down, like Yeah, I wish there were more Hangouts, not necessarily bars or clubs, but like Hangouts. But at the same time, I feel like they just kind of show up. And that's just like, that has more to do with me being young than the actual lesbian existence in New York, you know?

Olivia N 59:07

So, what does lesbian Joy mean to you? When are you happiest as a lesbian?

59:12

I'm happiest as a lesbian when I'm making art and when I'm writing when I'm rock climbing. I'm like,

Olivia N 59:25

right now.

59:27

I actually don't it's like bad because because we just got back from break. So like, I was out of practice. You don't have to pump you don't ya know, like, I'll get back to you in like five weeks. But

Olivia N 59:42

I get a random like picture. But it's so fun.

59:50

It like forces you to be in your body. You know, it's amazing. That's I always feel like a lesbian when I rock climb. I'm and when I'm dancing, and when other people are dancing around me, like, difference between like straight bar and gay bar immediately is like dancing. So that is lesbian joining me. Um just being with other lesbians, watching other queer people interact with the world. It like kind of like reaffirms me in my interactions with the world. And that brings me joy. Reading like poetry. I don't write poetry but looking at, like or hearing queer poetry. It's always like, makes me think about the way that I look at the world. And how I belong in it. Yeah, lesbian Joy means to me. Something that is like erotic in the Audrey Lorde sense. And something that is home.

Olivia N 1:01:06

Is there anything else you want to talk about before we before we end?

1:01:12

I don't think so. Okay, so