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SPEAKERS

Olivia N, Sasha D.

Olivia N 00:01

Today is May 24 2023. I'm Olivia Newsom interviewing Dana here in New York. Do have permission to record this interview. Yes. To you, though you can stop recording at any time. Yes. Can you say your name, age and pronouns? My name is Dana. I'm 25. And my pronouns are she her? Can you tell me where you're from? Where you grew up and what your childhood was like? Sure. So I was born in New York, New York City.

Sasha D. 00:29

I've moved around a lot. So first, like Long Island for a bit, which made zero sense in my life. And then I moved upstate with just my mom. And I was there until I was maybe 11. And then, recession happened. And then we had to move in with my dad and queens, and I've been in the city ever since.

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So what was your childhood? Like? What was your relationship like with your mom. So with my mom, it was very much strained, which is very common, if it's just like, you know, what, like two people in a household. She was working from home before like anybody else was, which is really funny looking back on it now. But even still, like, because she was working from home a lot, like I still really never got to like, really have her full attention.

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But I loved it. I loved growing up.

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Upstate, just mainly because of the nature and the trees. And it was like a big culture shock when I came back down

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to New York. But

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in hindsight, like, it was like the best thing that could have happened to me, because I had to shed a lot of classes, beliefs,

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that were taught to me living in the suburbs.

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And just, like, really evolve as a person, and become like, very communistic

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and more open minded than I could have been if I was still up there.

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So why did you move around so much? Um, honestly, I think it was like my parents, like, they, they were never married, they they just separated. So I was with the two of them in Long Island, and then just my mom, and then financial hardship era, I have to move back in with my dad, my aunt and my mom, which was a very tumultuous time.

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And then,

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when I was like, at my senior junior high school,

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me and my mom moved out of my dad's house when she lost her job, which is insane. So I was back with my dad. And she moved to Virginia.

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And now I live on on my own with my roommate.

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Can you talk about what middle school was like? Sure. So Middle School was literally hell for me. Like, so many reasons of

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a because I was moving from the suburbs to the city. And my home situation was diabolical. It was really bad.

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For just like financial reasons, emotional reasons, like immediate environment reasons, it was just not good.

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So I was the new girly.

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And I definitely thought I was like, better than everyone there because like,

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the public school system that I was, in at the time, when I was upstate, it was like one of the best like in the state level in the country. So while I was in this middle school, the culture shock alone

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was just like, very jarring. But also just like, academically, I was like, I feel like I'm being

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I feel like I'm stalking right now.

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Especially because when I got there, I had to be in a class where we're just terrible of New York City public school systems, but they basically like categorize people based on like their academics. So like, the smart kids, quote, unquote, are all in like, these classes. And it's like, as you go down, like the numbers, you basically will know like, these are like the quote unquote, unintelligent kids, which is terrible, like you're literally reminded based on like, the number that you have, like, where you fall academically. So I was putting, like, the last end of it, because I was late to register that was like the only class available.

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So I was super shy, but I made friends, like a core group of friends who were all queer, ironically.

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But I was like, I definitely don't fit in here. So next year, I'm with like the quote, unquote, you know, smarter kids just based on my test scores. But I still felt like very much out of place.

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And I didn't want to be there. So I had to get rid of a lot of a lot of just like societal classes, beliefs.

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which I eventually did grow out of like, thank God.

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But it was really bad. And I felt very much like,

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like a like a blade of grass. Like it really it really did toughen me up in the best way.

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But yeah, middle school was not not something that a

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lot of time I liked that I really enjoyed, like at all, like probably the worst part, honestly.

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So can you talk about what high school was like? Yeah, high school was honestly like kind of the same.

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Kind of the same but a little bit better because like there was more kids.

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It was a lot more diverse. It wasn't like,

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because the Middle School is a kind of like zone. So anyone who's just in your neighborhood like is there, but there's people from everywhere.

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And I got to like find my core group of friends who were into the same things as I was like, fanfiction, or like Tumblr or like,

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just anything of like that 2013 2014 Like boyband era like that was where I was able to be like, okay, like, I'm fine. Like, if I hate school, at least I have like this outlet. And I have these friends who like we can all like, just geek out over like similar interests and like similar music.

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But the school itself, like, so much anti blackness, so much classism, so much homophobia, as fighting for my life every single day. Like just being that annoying bitch who was like, constantly fighting ignorant people on all of these isms all of the time.

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And I just never stopped doing that. Like, even in middle school, I was doing that, especially in high school because it was like an everyday thing. And it wasn't even just like the students it was like also the teachers who were just terrible.

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So can you talk a little bit about how class influenced you growing up? You've made a lot of reference to class.

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And maybe how you had some like, bad, original thoughts about class that you had to outgrow? Oh, for sure. So yeah, a little bit more like your what? How class impacted you could be a single mom. Oh, yeah. So I bring a class a lot just because like as like a black communist like I have to.

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But specifically, because like going from like the suburbs to the city, especially like going from like middle class to being like low income in like such a short amount of time. Like, that was like my own class consciousness, like for real. And I'm so grateful for it, because I would have been insanely insufferable. Like, if I did not go through that. Like, it's like that childhood trauma, like literally helped me in like, the craziest way. But I'm saying that because

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I feel like within the black community, there's always there's a lot of talk specifically around like middle class black people, about like, striving to have this suburban life are like striving to align themselves with like bourgeois white interests.

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Because of all the privilege that is afforded.

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And while that did help me academically, socially, it like was said it was so detrimental, because when I moved, I had like, I basically put myself on this pedestal like me thinking that I'm better than everyone else, because I have this education, or I had this experience

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growing up, like with my elementary school, but like, it was terrible, like, it was literally terrible.

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And even now, like, my mom, she's in Virginia, but she's in the suburbs of Virginia. I'm always having like, these talks with her, trying to like make her aware of like her own biases that she like, put on to me.

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And I get it like as black people we're like trying to be black excellence, even though I hate that term. But um, it just did more harm than good. Ultimately, like I get why it happened. But like it was still detrimental for like our like me, in the communities that I'm that I was in or trying to be in. It was just detrimental. So I'm happy that like I got out of that. And now I'm like actively organizing to fight classism, capitalism, all of these economic isms.

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So can you talk about

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gender and how gender norms impacted you growing up? For sure. I'm still for gender norms. And I think this also has to do with like,

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respectability politics to also again, like just my familial proximity to whiteness.

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Like being hyper feminine was like, very much imposed on me.

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Um, like I always had to have my hair done.

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Always had to have, like, you know, like, there couldn't be any marks on any of my clothes could have, like, you know, threads hanging. Everything had to be q and pretty.

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And if I even like tried to, like deviate to be like a little bit more tomboyish. It's not that I couldn't like my mom would never be like, No, but it was there was definitely like this, this peer pressuring,

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and a lot of shaming. But it was very subtle. It was like, oh, like, why do you want this? Like, I think this would be better, like, Oh, really like, and I get that even today? Just like my choices today, my mom will make a comment.

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So

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when I was like doing soccer when I was playing soccer, that was like, the one avenue where I could be

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tomboyish or like, masculine in a way.

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Um,

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but outside of that, like, No, I couldn't.

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And even even with that, like my mom, she like put me into child modeling. So that was a whole other like, whole other element of like, you always have to look good, you always have to look presentable, you always have to look pretty always have to look feminine.

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And I remember, even in middle school, like, back when I was getting into my feminist bag, I was like, I don't want to shave my armpits. And that was like, the such a point of contention between me and my mom, like, literally, like we would be having screaming matches, like, the fact that I didn't even want to shave was like,

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it was like the end of the world to her.

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So just like, even though, like, I'm still very much identify with like, sis womanhood.

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But just like in a lesbian context,

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I would always push back on just the in strict enforcement of gender norms and gender expression, specifically for my mom, and I got where it was coming from. But still, it was definitely, definitely harmful. And it prohibited me from really expressing myself around her. And then also feeling comfortable later, being more masculine in the future.

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Can you talk about what it was like growing up in a Catholic household? So I didn't grow up in a Catholic household, but I definitely went through the whole like, catechism, like, you know, baptism, do CCD, and then you have your communion.

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So my dad, he was like, super, like, super lacs about it.

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It was just like when we were doing catechism because it was like a school thing, he would kind of get on me like to really care about it. But he himself is not really, you know,

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devout like that he was, he's the only parent of the two ironically, that knows that. I'm a lesbian. And he's only when I felt comfortable talking to you.

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And even when I came out to him, because we live like right around like our local church, we were just kind of like wrapping it, which wasn't intentional. just happen. I'm like, okay.

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But

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it was never like, I think I'm going to hell thing. That was never it. I've never, I've never really thought too deeply about that. Because he was he didn't even care. It was mainly like, my familial and like, immediate material environment, like, am I going to? Am I going to be my own personal health here on Earth than like, in a metaphysical sense, you know?

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So, did you go to a Catholic school? It wasn't a Catholic school like CCD is like, even now I'm like, What even was that? Like? I just never cared.

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I think it's just like, you know, your training, I guess, like your academic training to have your communion. But that was only like, on a weekend. It wasn't like my actual school school, if that makes sense. Yeah.

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So can you talk about how race as a mixed race black person affected your affected you growing up? Sure. So

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it's really interesting, because in mice in the suburbs, where I used to live, there was maybe like, three other black people like, and I was one of them in my grade. I don't even think there were any black, like little boys in my grade, which is crazy. It was like super white,

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Jewish, or like Catholic, and then like some South Asians, East Asians, and then like, literally three of us.

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So I never had this like, Oh, I think I'm better than like dark skinned people. Like I never had like the typical like, mixed, mixed like whatever that is like tragic mulatto identity, because it was like I'm the only I'm only one of us here with like two other people. So like we kind of banded together. But when I moved to middle school, I definitely kept hearing more comments about like light skin, mixed whatever, like what's your like, what are you like, blah, blah, blah. Um,

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Then I ever did in the suburbs, because again, they just saw us all as like, you're all black. But then like, when I moved to middle school, I was like, Oh, why does this kind of matter? Like I really never differentiated myself like that.

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So that was really interesting. And then again, like, obviously, it's like, more diverse, so people just want to know, but that's what I saw people who have complexes come out. And I was like, What is going on? Like, I don't understand this, like, I really don't.

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And in high school, too.

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But yeah, it was just definitely of like a situational, like,

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type of thing. You know?

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Did being like mixed race ever affect how other students interact with a few and middle and high school?

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Um, let me think.

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Because, again, I was always so like, this is what I am, you know.

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It was mainly like my family, like on my dad's side that were like your the other than like it would ever be from like, students. So you have a black mom. Yeah. Okay. And a white dad. Yeah. Okay.

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So yeah, it was like, it was more so like, the boys who were like, had a crush on me. Like, they would say something along those lines. And I literally would not pay any mind. I'm just like, okay, like,

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you know, I'm really not interested. I didn't understand why it's, I'm

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not interested. But I would only hear those comments like from mainly guys, and like the girls who like wanted their attention, if that makes sense, like, leveraging their identity in that way, for romantic purposes. But I personally did not engage because I wasn't like,

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my mom would only say something about like, my hair, like, Oh, you have good hair, whatever, whatever. But that's only because we lived in a suburban town where she was like, trying to make me feel affirmed. And like, me being like, not white. But like, obviously, it's like, you're doing it the wrong

way. Girl. Like, don't say that. I'm exotic as like a thing to like, make me feel good. Because like, that's terrible. Like, oh, like don't do that girl. Like, please. But yeah,

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that was it.

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That's okay. I dropped my pencil and

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everything's okay.

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Can you talk about your biggest influences growing up so this can be you mentioned fanfiction, you mentioned Tumblr? 2013 2014 I'm not letting you get away with this. Just like your biggest influences. Like it's a happy positive. Um, let me think definitely Tumblr like literally changed my brain chemistry talked about it.

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shaved my brain chemistry fundamentally as you know it.

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That was really where I stepped into my feminism social justice bag when I was like, like 2012 and my blog was defi feminism. I don't know if it's still there.

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I don't know if it's still there because I find feminism deep fried. Fried. Yes. Back when everyone was doing like these like quirky little dolls. Um, exactly.

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But um, so that's when I was like, really involved in like social justice things specifically like feminism, black feminism, sexuality.

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Definitely LGBTQ rights and then later on like steps into my communist bag and like college.

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So that really shaped me with like, just like fandom wars like boyband which fandoms so I was never a part of like the super who Locky and whatever the fuck I was, that was never my shit. What was yours? I did like Sherlock though, but I wasn't like a you know, I was definitely of like, the one direction I was definitely on that side of somewhere.

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But that's your only fandom. I think that was because like I just did not have time to spread myself thin. Yeah, and then like once one direction was done. And I remember that day so clearly in high school. Then I shifted into Kpop and then like now I'm like, fandom was like, I got it out my system.

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But just in that, like, One Direction Kpop thing. It like a was like a sense of community but also like, I think it really did prevent me from understanding that I was a lesbian because it's like, Girl, you're obsessing over these men. You are definitely not gay. Like in that like all the way you know what I mean? I'm

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backtracking. I always identified as pan or I always knew that I was sapphic in a very large degree.

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But it was like lesbianism that like took such a long time for me to arrive to. And being in a Tumblr fandom specifically specifically centered around boys. across the years, like maybe a good eight years was definitely my own personal column.

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Okay, absolutely.

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So can you

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talk a little bit about

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your earliest interactions with maybe queerness and queer spaces? Was that also on Tumblr? Yeah, for sure.

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queer spaces, let me think I went to I went to summer camp for 10 years. It was an all girls camp.

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And so just like, it's so funny looking back, because it's like, again, girl, you you are all gay. Like, everyone went there, you're all gay. And it's funny because like, later on, like, the people who I was closest friends with who weren't, quote, unquote, like the popular people at Camp ended up being like, the coolest people like the most realest people, and they were all gay. And I'm like, obviously, it just works out like that. But um, yeah.

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I remember there would always be like, rumors that like, these counselors would be gay, or like, they're just be like a lesbian camper, and everyone be like,

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and so I would always like, keep them because I'm like, wait, like, why are you catching my attention? Like, obviously, everyone is just like whispering in my ear. I'm like, no need to know who you are.

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No reason I need to know who you are.

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And no one would give them any like, shit or anything like that. It was just like, you know,

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Camp tea, you know. So there would always be like, either a group of counselors or like two counselors who just like started dating that summer. There'd be a lot of counselors who after camp ended, they would date and have been together for a while, which is really cute.

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So that was like one specific community of like,

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staff like just sapphic people like being together away from men, even though we had a brother camp.

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Being like in the woods being like alone. No, no, no adults, just us and like really forming those like bonds. And I think a lot of homoerotic friendships were cultivated at this time. Definitely experienced my own.

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very devastating. But, but um, yeah, every every friend group that I've had, we've all either been bisexual or later understood that we were lesbians. And again, this is wasn't ever like, Oh, are you gay or like, whatever. Like, I'm gonna ask you ahead of time. Like, we just kind of gravitated telepathically, which is great, because I hear a lot of unfortunately, I hear a lot of lesbians never had that. Or were the only queer person in their friend group. I'm like, how did that happen? Like, I don't think I've ever been in friend group where there was at least one straight person. Like we were all queer in some aspect, which was very lucky on my behalf.

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But yeah, it's camp was definitely one of those first things and then

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my friend group in high school, we were all queer. So again, just like the small little like enclaves, of queerness, were always present in my life.

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

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I'm trying to think of a concept of lesbianism as a possibility

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as a possibility, when you ever saw a lesbian for the first time was it at camp? I think it was at camp to be honest.

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Like someone who like was like I'm a lesbian.

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If it's like in media, I would say like my earliest like, obsession

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was like skins season or like the, the second generation with like Emily and Naomi. Oh, my God, like that. fundamentally changed me fundamentally changed me.

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Again, never fully interrogated that.

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But I was obsessed. And then just like if it came to like,

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like my own.

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Kind of like awakenings definitely like VH one music videos of like, Beyonce are like Pussycat Dolls, like all of the quote unquote, like, hypersexual videos of women. I'm sorry. They were like that, like that was my bread and butter. I don't care like that, like, awakened me. Like they were so so transformative.

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And I remember like, I would always watch the check on it music video, like every single morning. Like that was like I'm not even joking. Like, that was my like personal brainwashing like that was hypnosis. Like, it was like, just the pink and like, everything it was so Oh, my God, I couldn't stop watching. So that was it. And then like, I was really into video games as a kid. So like Lara Croft, that was like my girly. So like, I was obsessed with her. Didn't

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If I wanted to date her didn't know if I wanted to be her to this day, it's both.

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And I was like eight at the time. So like, stuff like that or like cameo another like badass like femme.

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Like main protagonist, who was just like so hot and like badass another another transformative thing

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that like a woken me or like shaped me, but I don't think there's ever been like a this is just like an accumulation you know?

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Can you talk about when you started to realize that you were like queer or bisexual or pan and then around what year you knew you were lesbian and how did you get there? So just your general queer awakening and then your lesbian awakening? So I don't think there was ever like a

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Oh, maybe I'm not straight because I don't think I ever I never identified as straight like I always just knew like that was just like so natural for me.

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But it was definitely the de like boys question that has always been floating in my subconscious

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and it took such a long time to get there. But um, so even in elementary school, my elementary school friends like, view it all either like, you know, childhood like, experiment with each other. And we were all queer. And then like middle school, the girl who first talked to me her name was Dima not Dana.

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She was like the Bye girl of our school. So everyone knew her as like this bisexual, girly.

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And then,

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in high school, we were all queer to some degree, I was definitely the more sapphic of the Munch, than then in college, same thing, like surrounding myself with other queer people.

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But it was in 2021. And I don't actually do know why I was in a lesbian situation ship, of course, through the pandemic, and it like rocked me to my core. And I think it felt more intense because locked down graduating, like all of these like life changing events, were just like sitting on the on top of this lesbian situation ship that was crumbling before my eyes.

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And I was a second time I was like, like, rocked to my core over another girl. So obviously, I have time to think in lockdown.

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I have time to think I have time to reflect.

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And so this is when I start, you know, making tic TOCs or whatever. And it puts me on lesbian tic tock, and I'm like, Oh, my God, like everyone is having the same experiences as me, or had the same experiences as me. What does this mean? So I've started to like really interrogate like my past interactions with men in like romantic or sexual contexts

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and realize that they were all shambolic, like literally shambolic.

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And I really tried to analyze my boyband era, too, because that was definitely the thing that prevented me from realizing it. And I remember seeing this video and someone was like, if you're thinking of like, if you're lesbian or not, just start calling yourself a lesbian for like a week and see what happens. Never went back, literally never went back. And it took such a long time for me to do that, like I saw that video. And I didn't actually do that, till maybe like two months later. Because there was like this thing in me that was like, this is kind of scary. And I'm like a lesbian way. But just like a, this is like, a new identity that I have to like, come to terms with myself, because I haven't identified his pan for so long.

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And I felt like shedding an identity was like really serious to me. And I didn't feel like I really could take on that label, even if it did make the most sense to me.

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But then I finally did it and like my life has never felt more comfortable. Like I've never felt more comfortable my being since identifying as a lesbian.

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So, have clothing, jewelry, makeup, tattoos, piercings or other body mods or forms of gendered expression, help, like affirm your lesbianism in any way. I think definitely jewelry. I always had like a bunch of piercings when I was like in high school, but I really upped it once like

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I started to like really come into my lesbianism. I also started to like, feel more comfortable leaning into like mask coated or mask presenting clothing, even if I don't identify as a mask per se.

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And again, that was like my own like conditioning that I had to work through if like me thinking that I couldn't or like it would look bad on me because of like childhood stuff. And I feel really comfortable in it.

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And it's just like allowed me to feel more expressive because even though my

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Instagram, like, I look back and I'm like, oh my god, like just the way that I styled myself. Yes, it was cute but like, it was definitely conforming

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in a very specific aesthetic, which now I feel a lot more comfortable in my body. Like it's like night and day.

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So, I'm going to ask you a twofold question. I'm going to ask you like, what forms of art that you've consumed that have helped your lesbianism? And since you're also an artist, I'm going to ask you about the art making process and how has the art making process helped you think through your identities, and B, being a black lesbian, thinking about lesbianism and then using art as a medium for that expression?

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So the art that I consume specifically for lesbianism has always been like either, like I said, like

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if it's like a hypersexual sis woman that's like done for the, or was filmed maybe for the male gaze.

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That was just like something that like stirred

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these queer awakenings and me and I never even, like interpreted them as being like, bad, you know what I mean? Because I'm like, Oh, this feels very much like, I resonate with it.

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And then

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for like, music, definitely Kailani I definitely Kailani lesbian.

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And their music has really helped me and understanding my own feelings around lesbianism and my own prior experiences and like the intensity of the emotions that I would be feeling in a particular time around somebody.

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And even in like the queer clubs and spaces that I go to

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none of the music is like white centered, or like, if it is like, I know, it's something that I can't be around like Phoebe Bridgers or something like that is not that is not for me, girl, and red is not for me. Definitely, like the all queer lesbian scene is where I feel most comfortable.

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And then even when it comes to like, my art again, girl, why didn't you ever? Why didn't you ever derogate this I would like exclusively draw women all the time. Like I've never drawn a man once in my life.

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And it's like, girl like you really thought your pan anyway. Um, yeah, so just like very,

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very intimate, very

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emotionally intense drawings would be like things that I would constantly draw. Even if there weren't two figures like in

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in a work like it would still be heavily emotionally charged because that's what I was feeling at the time.

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But yeah, I try to consume as much lesbian media as I can even if it's like crumbs like I'm going to watch it like, because first kill I did. I thought it was great. I don't care. I don't care. Like wasn't bad. It wasn't bad, like drama. Exactly. Like give me the corniness. Like it doesn't have to be like, I'm not expecting like they always expect queer media and lesbian media to be so profound. And I'm like automatic. I'm like, I don't really want I don't like give me like my baby. My babysitter's a vampire or something like Vampire Diaries, but for days, literally something like that tea Wolf. One of my favorite shows ever Yeah, give me the paranormal lesbians. Yeah, give me supernatural lesbians give me detective lesbians gave me like sci fi lesbians. Like not too deep either. Know that deep shit. No. And I'm like, even if the it is quote unquote deep. It's like usually never black lesbians. It's usually white lesbians that assists women that are like yearning and not talking. They're so tender. And I'm like no, like lots of tenderness. I'm like don't give me the soft shit like no like actually throw somebody against the wall like do that no.

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Those went against the wall so pin somebody down si we're just having a conversation I would say yes on the recording but as I when I were having a conversation about this literally yesterday, because they were just so tired about of reading like lesbian or sapphic romances where they their hands interlocked like, I don't know. Like I'm a dog. Like I don't care. Like, no. I'm like, no, like, I'm tired of the cottage core agenda. Like we need to have like, the very intense passionate

34:38

just like I'm looking into your soul type.

34:43

Dynamics like none of this. We're running in a field and we have like peasant skirts. I don't care about that. Like that is not me. That is not how my lesbian looks like. My lesbianism looks like like at all. I don't I don't want that the white lesbians can keep that me on the other hands.

35:00

My other black lesbians like give us something that resonates, you know, give us like, I don't know a New York loves the love story of like two people in like different neighborhoods like something like and it's long distance you know what I mean? Like a stoop, lesbian romance like where is it? I think the ferry to see her you know, I've never you don't have to be so you know catechin like cataclysmic like also, like lesbians are in San island like, I'm have to rescue you. I'm sorry, like you're being held against your will,

35:31

to Staten Island lesbians in this. They're not currently in Staten Island, but they were born there. Want to kill us? Okay. Um,

35:41

can you talk a little bit? So we're talking about passion? And intensity? Yeah. Where were your first encounters with lesbian sex both directly and indirectly. So that indirectly is like porn. You've heard in the ether people talking about lesbian sex? I don't I did when I was in middle school, and just growing up, and then what attitudes did you have it before after those encounters? So with porn as someone who watched it very, very young, like, very young, because like it was never made for lesbians. And also, it was like, very much so white. I was like, Oh, this isn't me, like all the lesbian stereotypes that like, or lesbian imagery that I had never looked like me or like anyone that like could be me. So like, it was very much like the stereotypical Fedora wearing like vest, like, white lesbian, who has, like, you know, who's like Butch and everything like that. So I was like, Oh, this isn't me, because I don't look like that, like very much like a representation thing as like a child. I'm like, Well, if that doesn't look like me, then that's not me. So I just kind of discarded it. And then with like, the porn thing, I'm like, this doesn't sound like it's enjoyable or look like it's enjoyable. They don't look like they care about each other. So I would watch straight porn or like gay man porn, specifically, because I was like, the closest thing that like I could connect to.

37:08

But

37:12

yeah, it was like a lot of a lot of stereotypes that did not resonate, which took prolonged, like my self discovery of like lesbianism.

37:24

And then, like my first encounter with it was like the situation ship in college. I like literally blew my mind like, it was so like, there was nothing that I could compare it to.

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Mind you, I had dated somebody that was my first and only relationship. We never had sex.

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But this would this situation ship. It was in college. And it was definitely like this, we shouldn't be doing this type of arrangement, which made it felt more intense. Anyway.

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But it was amazing. It was life changing.

38:00

And

38:02

it was during winter break. So it was just us in the dorms. And she confessed, like how she felt about me.

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And like an Uber at like three, and she had like a girlfriend at the time. I know.

38:17

I know. I know. I'm not a cop.

38:21

I know. I know. I know. Um, and her partner was white. And she was saying how like, Oh, she just doesn't understand. She was like, that's okay. That's why I was like, Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So I was like, Okay, what do you want me to do about that? Like, I don't care. Like she thought like, sorry, she's like, Yeah, she doesn't understand a lot about race. She was definitely like a social justice like activist, scholarly type. Community Organizer person. Joseph Black, she was a person of color. And she was just like, saying, like, you know, my, my girlfriend's understand about race. A lot of stuff about race. I have to have all these conversations her she doesn't really get it. Um, this is after she confessed how she felt about me.

39:02

And we're and I invited her back to my dorm so we could talk about it. Yeah.

39:07

And so I'm just listening intently. Nobody. Why do you think you're still with her that you saw? Like, she sucks. I'm sorry. So she was just like,

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as we're talking, she's like, looking at me, like across this couch. Not like that. But just like, like, like, she's like, holding herself back. You know what I mean? Like,

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I know, and I'm just looking at her like, are you gonna do it? You know what I mean? So eventually, she's like, Can I kiss you? And I didn't say anything. I was just like, go ahead. You know what I mean? Just like if you're gonna do you're gonna do it. So every day or like, every, there was like, maybe like three times like she would come over

39:49

to my dorm for like a fake, you know, hang out and then like, we'd get to it. Yeah. And like it progressively got more intense. So I'd always be like, No, you can't like you can't go inside me like we can't be

40:00

doing this, you know?

40:02

So we would just be kissing. And then like, she would just slowly like, keep on doing me emotionally and like, psychologically, so she would get further like every single time, which is really hot like the build up. Yeah. And I remember there was like a time like we were just like, after afterwards

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we were just like lying in my bed. And she was looking at me and I can literally hear her heartbeat. I was like, is that your heart? And she was like, Yeah,

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you just like feel really good. I was like, Well, what does that mean?

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I was like, what does that mean?

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Um, and it was like such an it's such an intense intimate moment. Like, I literally have a seared in my brain. And it's just like gazing into each other's eyes, like not saying anything.

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And then like, cut to like school about to start. And she, I go to her apartment again.

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And I go down on her. That was like, the last time like we ever did anything, because she texted me, she was like,

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I think I need to take some time and space. Like, I just need to sort out my emotions, blah, blah, blah. This is like when her girlfriend came back from like, wherever she was around the world.

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And so we just kept hanging out, obviously, but I was like, I'm gonna give you your time and space on we're going to ask, but then I found out after like, during the pandemic, mind you she's a whole other timezone. We're texting each other every day, I found out that they got back together in February. This is like separated. We mean, we're like, the white lesbian and the lesbian of color. Were they separated when the white lesbian was around the world? Like, were they like separated? Or were they still they were on a break, quote, unquote, a break. But we know that was real break. Yeah, not at all great.

41:50

So it was like June and I confronted her. I was like, I literally know that you guys are together. When we're going to tell me she goes me for a week. And then gets back and she's like, oh, yeah, like, we got back together. I should have told you I you know, everything I said about you. Like I meant I was like, Did you though, like because you completely lied to me? So she's like, Yeah, like, I think we're gonna focus on our relationship. Right now. We've talked about even couples therapy. I was like, if you are in couples therapy, like 2122, you should break up but that's neither here nor there. Couples Therapy money, then spend your money. That's fine if you're fucking there. But whatever. A week later, they break up after she told me that a week later, they broke up and she comes back in my DMs. And she's like, I'm really sorry. Like, blah, blah, blah. Like, I want to take you out to like this restaurant, blah, blah, blah. And she's sexy. She's hot as fuck. Like, she should do it. God is fuck. Oh, I can't because she saw me.

42:46

She thought blocked me. But it was like, it was so too much. Yeah, for sure. But I hated it. Because like, I was literally like, she's going through so much emotionally. And like your business. I know. She's just going through a lot of therapists. I know that and I was just like, oh, no, but I like care about you as a personal Akhmad basically. I really did. I really fucking did. Because she was like, we were like praying with each other. We were like, doing all this spiritual shit. It was so intense for no fucking reason. And then she like wanted to like find God again. And because like all her bullshit was catching up to her. She became like, born again, like Christian or something like that.

43:22

And then she stopped blocked me and I was like, Okay, you feel very guilty. Totally fine. Get it. Just don't make me look stupid. But I felt like I felt like I looked stupid. I don't look stupid. But that was like

folders that you guys were in love. Oh, no, that we were low. I definitely was like, I'm definitely intensely crushing on her because you're fine. Yeah, we first met in college.

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Before any of that happened at a pride party, lol. And I kissed her because we were like, really vibing. And again, she didn't say she had a girlfriend at the time. They were on another break, quote, unquote.

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And so when we came back to school,

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after I was doing my FBI research, I found out who her girlfriend was before I met her. So our another party. I had to act like I didn't know who she was, even though I did. I was like, hey, you know, like, yeah, yeah. And it was so funny. Because when we first saw each other again,

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we were at this table, she was over here, and I was over here and we were like, fake, you know, looking for stuff like snacks or whatever. And she knew I was like it standing in front of her didn't say anything. So I was like, I have to go around. And then And that night, they were both fighting and like they left the party. And that's when she hit me up and was like, oh, like do you want to go to an art gallery? This Wednesday. Bla bla bla bla bla. That's what she told me that they were on a break or whatever that you know, they're together, blah, blah, blah. But she was like,

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she was crashing on me that whole that whole like semester, and that's when she finally exposed her feelings to me. kind of feeling a little bit bad for this white lesbian. I don't because she doesn't find

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didn't care about race like she shouldn't have anything? Yeah, she didn't have anything to say no black lives matter. Nevermind and that's why I was like that like you're gonna be this like activist. Oh, he's an activist. Sure. I guess she is oh she like okay then nevermind she's definitely one of those like Soul passionate social justice people involved in like a lot of like coalition's and stuff. Yeah interesting so that's always like you can have a white partner that doesn't care about racism and you're doing all of this work online and in real life and she doesn't she doesn't have anything to say she can even be bothered to post a black square that's how you know like that's crazy. It's crazy. You know what Never mind cuz at first I was like dang. No like you know what? Not my business? No No because I'm like, Oh, I'm peeping how you're doing all you're sharing all these resources and your girlfriend is silent. Like she has not said anything. You can even repost. No, nothing. The only thing she posts is like, Oh, they spelt my name wrong because she's like Italian or something. I'm like, that's where your concern lies. Okay. Okay. On like, some random forms or something like that. But yeah, so that was like the most intense besides like my actual first relationship which rebuke it. That situation ship was like, very transformative. And me like really understanding like, a lesbian sex and lesbian romance.

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Especially just like the dynamics of it, because she was like, definitely more dominant than I was. Me understanding that I liked that feeling.

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Me understanding that I liked mask, aligned, lesbians, especially after that encounter.

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It was like really transformative. And then like, ever since that, like,

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if I would go on like an app.

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I would like always, like, check in with my partner be like, Hey, do you like these things you like this? Like, I would always not like a clinical sense. But like, we want to know if we're compatible. I want to know for sexually compatible, yeah.

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Which is something like I never experienced with like, either the men, the two men that I had been with brief point in time.

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Or just like hearing from other women, like their concerns, sexually were never a thing. Like, they didn't matter in the grand scheme of things. But like, with all the people that I've been with, we're always so like, do you like this? Do you want that, like, you know, like, really try to make it as enjoyable for both people.

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And even like the concept of like, a stone top, or like a pillow Princess, I was like, oh my god, we have everything. Like, we have everything. Like there's people who really, truly like to give. And I discovered that about myself too. Like, there's been times where like, I've only been the top, and I'm fine with that. And I will be thinking afterwards, I'm like, sis, how people can never, they can never do this, like, they can never conceive of like, one person getting off just because they're pleasuring someone else. So just like I would always like just be very reflective of that. Going forward being like, like, this is where it's at, like, why have we not been here sooner? You know what I mean?

48:10

So can you talk about how your lesbianism has been influenced by theory or academics in any way? theory or academics? Let me think, like, did you read something? I'm trying to really get into stone bridge blues, because I have to, it's like, necessary. You don't have to know but I'm like, it's critical. Like,

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like, it's like lesbian history, like I have to.

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Especially like older like lesbian poems.

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From like the 80s or 70s.

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I'm really trying to find more black lesbian accounts like historical black lesbian accounts that aren't like the color purple. You know what I mean? Like something that's not a work of fiction, something that's more

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like either, like a biography or just like firsthand accounts, things like that.

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But I think a lot of

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what has informed me is just like in general, like works that talk about sexuality in like a patriarchal misogyny sense. And then like having to undo all of that and really analyze it.

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Think about my own relationship with the men that I've dealt with in the past.

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And be like, oh, yeah, this is never ever compatible. This is never ever going to like work.

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I just like use them for like sexual validation.

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And that was about it.

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So can you talk about how class informs your interactions with the lesbian community for sending like your lesbian community, the broader lesbian

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In community like the lesbian identity, maybe about like New York City, nightlife and queer nightlife and offerings. So I think as specifically as a low income person

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who's a native New Yorker,

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I try to frequent spaces that are either with other New Yorkers or other black lesbians specifically.

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And I think just as like a queer community, unfortunately, like, we are more marginalized. So economically, we're going to be pushed to the margins. So I've never encountered like a,

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I've never encountered like an instance where like, I'm on a date or something. And someone's like, Oh, what do you bring to the table, like, I'd kill myself, like, I would kill myself, if any of the SIS hat, podcasts, Black Twitter, conversations seeped into the community, I would destroy the community for personally like if that ever happened. Which is something that I'm always so thankful of. And something that I always tried to talk with, like the few non lesbians in my life about, like, you don't have to, like have these classes, conversations to engage in romance with people, like you actually don't.

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And it's very detrimental.

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So fortunately, I've never had like a classist interaction with people and even like the lesbian events that are out there either free like you can go in for free, besides Henrietta's, which is like a cover, but like weekends, only on the weekends, which I'm like, I get it like you're the only one of two left standing, I get it, but like still.

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But everything is either free or like,

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they like they might have a thing that's like, if you can't like just let us know, you can pay what you can. So even with that, like we're very much like in Intune to like the economic disparities that we may have, which I really appreciate.

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But definitely as a low income person,

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I always do have to be hyper aware of like if people do have classes attitudes, especially if they're not from the city to because like, again, like they're in a lot of these events are either in predominantly black neighborhoods, or in gentrified neighborhoods. So I try not to go to the gentrified spots as much as I can.

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But it's always on the top of my head. But again, I try to curate my material reality, to not be in a situation where I will have to, like, you know, worry about those things, as much as I can.

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So how does race inform your interactions with other lies? Oh, my God all the time. All the time.

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Yeah, being a black lesbian in the city, like there really is two different lesbian communities. And it's really a tale of two cities. It's always a tale of two cities in the city for so many different like axes of oppression, but specifically within the lesbian community.

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The few spaces that we do have ourselves get infiltrated a lot by white lesbians,

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which is so diabolical and something that I will always call out. There's one

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there's one event called gush, which is like,

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literally my second home, I love it. It's a party specifically for black lesbians, but I know that they've like expanded to like just be like, we're of color, queer people of color. queer people of color. Yeah.

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But every every, like, time a gush event happens. It's like once a month, like literally, it's not even thinking go to all the time, once a month.

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Everywhere. I'm like, Oh, I have a ticket for Gushin. I'm selling. I click on the user, it's a white lesbian. Aisle, I want to go to Gosh, does anyone know where I can get tickets? It's a white, lesbian. All of the things that I see about gosh, like a rarely from black people. And then even when I go to gush, increasingly, like there's more and more white lesbians, and it's like, do you guys just not care that like, you guys have all of these other events? You have cubby holes, specifically, you have Henrietta's? You have gingers, you even have the woods now, which is like, again, becoming more and more white. Though few like events that we have to like, be safe spaces for us. Because y'all really y'all give us the white lesbian stare anywhere we are. You still feel entitled to that space.

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And even just like with trying to understand my own lesbianism, so much of it was like, catered to whiteness, like this is what lesbianism looks like. And it's like, through a white perspective, or a white lens, which is like how am I supposed to relate to this or think that I'm, I'm in this community if I don't see myself, so I would always have to like, even now, I always have to go out of my way to specifically search for black lesbian events or like black lesbians on Tik Tok or just anything to like curate it

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A

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space either online or offline that reflects my life and reflects my community because it's so so many of the conversations are white dominated, and they leave out a lot of nuance. And they leave out a lot of perspectives that are in contrast to like whiteness, or like sis heteronormativity or like patriarchy or all the isms that like goes into white supremacy, because, like, we're subverting all of that as black lesbians.

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But it informs me every single day

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what's it like making lesbian friends and meeting other lesbians in the city now?

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Um, where are you meeting them? What are y'all doing? So I am meeting them in a few places and meeting them at like, black raves. Since a lot of queer people go to black raves.

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I'm meeting them at political education. Either coalition's or centers so like the people's forum, I met so many black lesbians. They're one of my closest friends right now. I met through the people's forum. For a revolutionary for feminism class.

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Tiktok especially, a lot of my Mutual's are either black lesbians, or they're just queer black people.

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And then Lex is, especially because that's just like an online thing for your people to find each other. So both in real life and offline, but they're either music centered or social justice centered, which is where the black lesbians tend to congregate.

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So

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can you talk about your first visit to a lesbian related place or event? What it What was it? Like? What did you expect it fine. I think it was cubbyhole Not gonna lie. That's okay. What year

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would you like 2017. And again, I felt very much out of place because when I was there is very much a white lesbian space. I'm

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even getting in was kind of difficult. There's not a lot of space, the music was specifically for white lesbians, like I couldn't even just enjoy the music.

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And there's no one to talk to because they're all talking amongst themselves.

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And then like the few ones that like were interested, like, they didn't know how to interact with black lesbians without like, either putting on a black set or like doing like this weird, like,

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weird menstrual menstrual thing where they think that's like, the only way they can connect with us. So I was like, I'm gonna never come here again. I'm gonna go to like these other like straight bars that are like that have at least good music, even if I don't care about the dudes.

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And then I went to Henrietta's. And it was really fun, because it's a place to actually dance

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as well as Hell's Kitchen.

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I will just find like a bunch of other lesbians there.

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Yeah.

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So

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can you talk about what it's like, building lesbian community,

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especially in the beginning of the pandemic, when you were coming into your lesbianism, and any struggles building in person, like physical lesbian communities, or maybe the creative ways lesbians were making community during COVID. So I think online like online is a really useful world to find other lesbians. I know so many people who have like, met their partner through Tik Tok, or they met their partner from Twitter,

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which is crazy, but like, it happens, it happens. It's crazy, but it happens. I just had like, one of my Mutual's hit me up today on Twitter, and they're moving to New York City. And like, we already have, like a Kinect, like someone that we actively know of. And they live all the way in Albany. I'm like, How do you even know this person? Like, it's crazy.

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So listening community is really small, which is is like good and bad, because it's like, we're all connected, but also,

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like, we're really are all connected. It's kind of the same.

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Thing You Do exactly. So it's like small because it's like,

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Okay, let me backtrack. I like how when I first discovered I was a lesbian, I couldn't unsee it. Like, I couldn't unsee our world, you know what I mean? Like, I felt it's like, even now, if I'm on the street, it's like, I'm hyper aware. You know what I mean? Like, it's like, I have like night vision goggles and historically women's college campus right now. Exactly. So it's like, it's like three days. Exactly. And it's like once you once you have your lesbianism, like a

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walked in like your third eye, you like, you literally can never unsee it, it's like a really, if you know, you know, like, you have to be tapped in like, it's a secret society, it's a secret world.

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Which is so cool. And it's fun because like,

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no one else is like aware of it unless you're in it. And, uh, so it's so obvious once you're there. And then if you point it out to other people, they're like, Wait, really, because they're just not, they don't have the same lens that we do you know what I mean? Like, we see each other like what we do.

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But because of that, because like, once you now aware, it's easier to find spaces that we would congregate. So like

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being that we're all marginalized people, we tend to care about social issues. So like, marches or like mutual event, mutual aid events, or like

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any political education, you know, site for organizing, or like community organizing, things like that anything being like socially or politically active, you will tend to find lesbians, and then you can branch out and be like, oh, there's this cause going like that we're like, invested in or like this, this issue that we're very passionate vocal about.

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You can build community there. If you're a creative. There's like, so many either, like events that are specifically for lesbians, or like, there's like a show. It's like a battle of the bands. And it's like all for lesbians. Like, you know, my friend photographed that. Yeah, so just like things like that, where it's just like, either like a sports event, or like a political event or an artistic thing, like those are like the main places. And it's crazy, because like, once, you know, one lesbian, you kind of just like, absorb everyone into like the same kind of thing. Not that like everyone has the same friend group. But just like, you have all these connections. So if you do need to build, like a group of something for us to connect to, you have so many different, just like points of reference to like build off of and everyone's so helpful. Everyone wants to like keep getting each other involved, or at least link us closer together. Because it can kind of feel like if there's not an event, quote, unquote, going on, and everyone's kind of doing their own thing. But it's just good to like, know that you have all these different, like points, like these degrees of separations that you could organize with.

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So I'm going to ask you some pretty big thought questions. And I'm hoping that at this point in the conversation, you might have an answer to them. So what does identifying as a lesbian mean to you?

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is the first step the first one, I'm going to ask them separately. So big question. Being a lesbian to me is decentering men from my life in totality, as much as I can in this capitalistic patriarchal white supremacist world.

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Define sis heteronormativity defying sis hetero patriarchy

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loving women, women aligned people.

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And like the truest

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possible way that I can,

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and building like a community, building a community where all of the isms and all of the social constraints that

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have been imposed on us are no longer there. And we get to

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literally create an entire world like a whole new community. Separate away from all of that were

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just being authentic in our sexual and romantic expression is a form of community and world building.

1:04:09

So

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what lesbian spaces do you wish existed?

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I wish that there were more lesbian spaces for

1:04:27

there's a lot Yeah, gone. I first wish that there were more lesbian spaces for black lesbians specifically.

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That are

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I would say like I guess less like cottage quarry, and more like

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well, really passionate, really intense and sexually charged. That are safe, obviously.

1:04:57

And open

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And liberatory

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I wish that there were more lesbian spaces for communal gatherings in the daytime as well.

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So like maybe a lesbian

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I don't want to say like a campus but something like that, like a, like I guess like an area where like there's different shops, I guess or like different points to like eat, or like rest or sleep

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that are like a safe haven for lesbians to like congregate like a little lesbian oasis. Like, you can do your homework, you can do work here, you can sleep, you can barter, you can do anything in this like

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little oasis.

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I wish that there were more lesbian neighborhoods as well. Especially for black lesbians. I don't know if that's even possible. But just like a neighborhood where it's like, you go outside and you know, it's like with other lesbians or other black lesbians specifically.

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Which, again, we run into problems with because gentrification

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the way we have to pay for housing, which is insane, things like that.

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And I also wish there were more lesbian spaces for

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like,

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just getting to know other people in

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a creative way that isn't so like overtaking a pottery class, and like, you have to pay this money to take the class with other lesbians like, just like community centered spaces that don't involve money,

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if at all possible, to focus on like connecting over a shared cause, or a shared purpose or shared event.

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And we're lesbian artists, like just lesbian, more lesbian, like musical artists, visual artists, like I love Kailani. But like, we need more like we need more lesbian art in the world.

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When are you happiest? As a lesbian? What does lesbian Joy mean to you? Lesbian Joy means that I don't have to deal with or think about any of the insanity that plagues sis hetero relationships. And if I do, it's just like a

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it's like a byproduct of just living in this society in which they dominate it.

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But in terms of like intimacy, and sexuality, and expression, all of the like,

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barriers that sis hetero people constrain themselves in I don't have to participate any of that, like it literally does not benefit me, socially, at all, materially, maybe for like my own safety, I'll have to engage in it. But

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in my own personal life, I don't have to deal with any of that. I don't have to deal with what says what people believe about relationships, what they believe community looks like, what they believe relationships look like what sex looks like. I don't have to worry about any of that. Because lesbianism is so expansive, it just lets

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there's so much room for creating your own forms are what your own vision of being intimate and being loved and being provided for and providing for others looks like without any of the rigidity that exists currently.

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Is there anything else you want to talk about?

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I don't know anything. Oh, just like, Okay, I'll talk about how,

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how I used to sexually objectify men, and that like, really prevented me from understanding I was a lesbian.

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Oh, okay. So they're, obviously combat exists.

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Combat is a thing.

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And so one of the tenants of combat is male validation

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and seeking sexual desirability from men. So the reason why it took me so long is because in college especially, and even in high school,

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I would be, there would be like these events in high school called like, no ID events, which are basically like raves for, like, high schoolers.

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At like, real clubs, so like, 15 to like 17 year olds, like they would rent out a space at a club, just for us, just for our age. Like it could be like, no, like, like no adults there. Besides like security, it would just be for us. And they'd have some like pretty big headliner. It's like it was such a fun time. COVID We would have wiped out the entire city if that happened. But anyway,

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But

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they stopped having those in like 2017. But it was really fun. So obviously, like you have all these high schoolers who are like, sexually charged, like, wanting to be wild, we're all drinking or smoking. We're all doing drugs.

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So at these events, like literally, like a dude will literally, like just come up behind you and start like, grinding on you. Yeah, no, but because like, I just love nightlife so much. I thought this was fun. So I was just like, Yeah, I'm gonna throw it back on them, whatever. And, like, it would just be this thing where we would like, try to get with as many dudes as possible. Again, so bad for like, sexuality reasons, hygiene reasons, whatever. It was just fine.

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So I will be like, I'll be getting with all these dudes. And of course, it was fun, just from like, a sexual aspect. Because it's like, oh my god, like, you know, I'm making out with these dudes and like, we're drinking and we're like, having like, all this fun, like, we're partying and blah, blah, blah. So it was fun in that aspect.

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And then when I got older, and college, it would be the same thing at this one bar called Maru and K town, like, again, very grimy. If a dude wants to kiss you, he'll just kiss you. Same with like, you know, these no idea events. So me and my, my sweet mate at the time, we will be like, Oh, let's see how many dudes we can get with like, it was like a competition for us. They also are queer, too. They, they came to the understanding as to during the beginning, but it was definitely this thing of like, we want to see how like many dudes we can like, get with as like a sport. You know what I mean? It wasn't anything to do with do I actually like them?

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It was more of like,

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how many Jews find us, like, sexually desirable? And like, can we like quantify that like, by like counting or like keeping track through the night. So because of that it took such a long time for me to realize I was a lesbian because it's not that like I even liked them. It was like, Do they like me? And like feeling validated in that sense.

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Because I've never talked to them after I've never asked for any information, I would just like we would have our moment and then I move on.

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So because of all all these like experiences in my life, with these dudes not seeing them as like actual people, or romantic or sexual prospects just literally being like, you're just an object for me to like, feel good about myself. It took a longer time.

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And then ever since that, like even if I go to like, like a lesbian bar or something, it's so scary for me to like, actually talk to the people I want to talk to because like, I don't objectify them like I see them as a person.

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But yeah, it was like the differences are like nine days of like me not even caring about how many men I got with but then like the actual lesbians I want to talk to I'm like, I'm so shy. Like, I can't even like it takes so much for me to like actually like, initiating, which I always do I have to, but I never felt that fear with with men. It was like not a fear, per se I hate when peoples are like, scared to talk to. It's just a nervousness. I will say that it's a nervousness. I never experienced that nervousness with men because I didn't care about them.

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Is there anything else? I think that's it. Any questions for me? No, that was it. Cool.