

# Imm1\_rg\_interview\_2022-12-16\_001 (1)

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

feel, lesbian, weird, people, mom, chronic pain, experience, growing, community, lesbian community, aunt, friends, montessori school, vibe, swim, lesbianism, spaces, school, cool, gay

## SPEAKERS

Olivia

**Olivia** 00:06

Okay, today is December 16 2022. And I'm interviewing Rachel, here in person in my apartment in Brooklyn. And my name is Olivia. Jeff permission to record this

00:24

interview. Yeah. Yes.

**Olivia** 00:27

recording at any time, yes. Can you state your name, age and pronouns?

00:32

Rachel gholston? I'm 21 years old and my pronouns are she her?

**Olivia** 00:37

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

00:44

Yeah, so I'm from Stoughton, Massachusetts. Like, mostly, um, I yeah, I grew up. I grew up there. I lived in Cape Cod for a little bit before that, but like I really consider myself from Stoughton. My childhood, I was raised by my mom and my aunt, their blood sisters. And it was me my aunt and my mom and my grandma. And my little sister who's technically my little cousin, because she's my aunt's kid. But like, I call her my little sister, just because it makes sense as we grew up together, like we've never not lived in the same house until I left for college. Yeah, it was like, it was pretty cool. I had, I had a kind of a tumultuous, like, upbringing, I would say, not all gray, like we were low income. So it was always like, they were hustlers, for sure. And then when I was like, 13, my mom died from cancer. And so that was like, a whole thing. And, yeah, like, it was, it was a little bit rocky after that, because my aunt didn't plan on raising to, like, adolescent kids alone. So she was working all the time. I was working all the time. But I did well, in school. I went to Montessori School, until eighth grade. And then after that, I just went to like my public school like Stone High School, which was like, fine. I did pretty

well there. And yeah, I don't know. I don't know what more what more to talk about, like growing up. Yeah. Yeah.

**Olivia 02:36**

Um, can you talk a little bit more about middle and high school and what that was like for you?

**02:40**

Yeah. So Middle School was weird, because I was still in Montessori School. And this was like, it was kind of awkward, though. Because Montessori school was really small. It was I was probably, I think I was one of three like eighth grade girls in that, like, when I talked about small, I mean, like tiny as well. And I think there were like 10 boys or something like that. So it was definitely the scale was not tipped in my, in my favor. I didn't really hang out with a lot of guys, like I always had grown up with, like, with women, like all women. And so like, I don't know, just that just wasn't the vibe for me. And I was also struggling a lot because like, my mom was like, sick during that time. And so I really didn't know how to process a lot of what was going on. And I think it really just like, isolated me from my, from my peers, because I was like part of like a pro like one of the primary caretakers like for her at the time. So I always had to have my phone on me in case you would call or like other things like that. So it was just really difficult for me to feel connected to people. I have two, two best friends like from that. That time, my friend, Arielle and my friend Annika and we still we're still close to this day, which is really cool. Ionic has been my best friend since fourth grade. And so like they were pretty solid, but like I really, I really had to keep keep all my mom's sickness on the low because she didn't want anyone to know about it. And so it was like really like one of those things where I was like, kind of just just like, being one person at school, and then a completely different person at home. And so that was kind of weird. And then high school was a big challenge like just because I was moving from like this private school with like, 20 kids in my class to high school where like my grade had like 400 people in it and I had no really like understanding about like, what public school was like, especially since I had been like kind of trained in Montessori school to attend a private high school and like had to go through all that process. So it really like the only reason that I went to my public high school was honestly because I wanted to like My mom had wanted me to go to a private school, but I really hated it. Like I hated always being like the scholarship kid or like the one on like, financial aid or like one of the only black people like in the school, like, it really just was not the moment it was not the vibe for me. And so I, I was like, I want to go to my public school, I want friends in my town, I want to be able to walk to school, like I want to do, like, sports and things. And so I did, I did that. Um, it was it was actually really cool. But again, just like a huge adjustment, I really didn't know that you had to stand for the national anthem every day. I didn't or like the pledge or whatever the fuck it is. I didn't know. I didn't know that was a thing. And so like, on the first day, when everyone did it, I was like, oh, like, word. It's like the first day of school. I guess that makes sense. And then I came back the second day, and they did it again. And I was like, Why do every day like why do y'all do this every day? That makes no sense. But whatever. Um, but yeah, that was fine. I still like I kind of struggled to make friends in high school because I feel like by that time, everyone kind of had their like, groups already their cliques and like, had known each other since like, kindergarten, and even though I lived in the town, I really wasn't that connected, except for I used to do like 10 softball, and I was pretty good at it. So I decided that, um, but yeah, I actually would have to say I didn't really start getting close to people until like, junior or senior year. And even then I didn't really have like a friend group. And I feel like that's kind of always been a consistent thing. Like, I've never

really had a friend group. I've been tangentially, like involved with everybody. So like, everyone I know, everyone, like everyone knows me, but like, or at least vaguely, but like I never really like stuck to one until like really the end of like high school when I started to like feel comfortable with people. Yeah. And it was also weird because at the end of at the end of my freshman year of high school, my dad died. So it was very much like into to school contexts. Like I really couldn't escape like the dead parent girl thing. And so like explaining that to people or just like going through that like a second time like, in like, this new environment was like super stressful. And there was a lot of like, a whole like custody battle thing. Like even after my after my mom died and before my dad died, it was just like a whole mess. And so there's just a lot going on at home that I was just like so focused on. So like school wasn't like, like, I feel like I couldn't really be present there all the time. But I did clubs, I did sports. I was I did varsity volleyball, I was captain of my swim team. I was captain of my acapella like group in high school. I did choir, I did Jazz Choir, I did. Like I was involved. Like I did peer mediation. I was like a head mediator there. I was. Yeah, I was kind of everywhere. So I wasn't for lack of like, wanting to be involved with things and people just walk on.

**Olivia 07:55**

Yes, you had a lot going on at home. And that's why there was just some disconnect from your peers and having to hide things and then couldn't get rid of the dead parents stigma that students attached to kids, which is really fucked up. Yeah. And then integrating into a public school after being in a tiny, tiny private school for so long, and then suddenly having 400 classmates

**08:22**

Yeah, and the style of learning was different to like, I had never had to sit at a desk for eight hours before and that was horrible. Like my first like, year, I just couldn't sit still, it just felt so like, I don't know, like weirdly a natural and I loved school, I loved learning, I cared about it. And not a lot of my like, people that I felt like, like I didn't really care about, like, the kind of learning that I was doing in public school, which was like, not the moment. And I felt like a lot of like, my friends in Montessori school, or at least like my best friends. Like we had the same like academic drive. And it was really difficult to like, like find that in a in a way that wasn't competitive because I hate like, I hate competitive academic academics. It doesn't really like I got good grades within like, graduated top 10 Like within like, all like AP classes, but I never I never talked about my grades and shit like that. That wasn't like when I when I did, I didn't like that.

**Olivia 09:24**

Can you talk a little bit about how gender norms might have influenced you growing up? You spoke about being your mom's primary caregiver.

**09:31**

Yeah. So it's interesting because I feel like growing up one of the, like, great things about having to like to single like being raised by two single moms was that like, like gender norms honestly didn't really affect me in that way. Like I wasn't like I could wear whatever I wanted. Like I could wear skirts and dresses, which I did because I wanted to and then like when I got like more tomboyish like That was fine too. Like there wasn't really any type of like regulation on like, what I was allowed to wear or what I was allowed to do like I played on like the like boys like like baseball and T ball team before I

transferred to like, town softball and like they like let me do that. Like I really wasn't like, there were really no, like gender norms. The expectation was that I was that I would be straight like that was always like, I guess, like maybe engaged and even really, like, they didn't even consider that that would be like a possibility. And honestly, I didn't really consider that it would be a possibility either. So it really wasn't something I thought about until I was like, oh, like, Okay. And then. Yeah, but like I Yeah, it was one of my mom's primary caretakers in like, I feel like in the loosest sense of the word, but I still was, I was young, so there wasn't really much that I could like do for her in terms of like caretaking but my aunt did work a lot. And so she and like, she worked like manual labor jobs like she'd she was like, owned her own convenience store, like worked in construction, like things like that, like so she was very like, and still is, like, now she does bookkeeping for a construction company. But she's very, like, very hands on like super strong, like always just wears like jeans and a T shirt, like type vibe. And so she was like doing all that. And then like, I would come home from school and I would like try to cook dinner like make sure like she had her like, proper medication. Like there are some times like when sure like mind started to like go where like, I would come home and things were like super weird, like the furniture would be different or she wouldn't remember like, what year it was. And so like that was more of like the kind of like caretaking that I did was just kind of like, like keeping a watchful eye distant yet watchful eye and like making sure that she was fine. But I feel like that that wasn't necessarily a reflection of like, a gendered care expectation, but more of just like, uh, I was there and like, that's when we couldn't really afford to hire like anybody else. So that's really just kind of how we did it. But yeah, I would definitely say like, even even with, like, my mom was like that I never felt like, like pressured to perform any type of specific gendered care roles, or gender roles, like period there.

#### **Olivia 12:36**

Would you be willing to talk a little bit more about class, you mentioned growing up low income and growing up with two single moms and the struggles of being in classes vanished or low income, like a private school for a lot of your life and maybe, like that kind of discrimination or like, what it was like to be in an environment where you grew up where everyone was hustling?

12:56

Yeah, so it's, it's weird because I, my, my mom and my aunt's parents were wealthy, they had money. Like we we own that, like the house that I grew up in, like, they owned it outright, so we never really had to pay like a mortgage. But like, my grandfather died, or like, When my aunt was only 19. And then my grandma had a bunch of health issues. And then, like, shit just happened. And like, a lot of what, like, we had was lost. And so I think, part of like, there's sort of like a unique, like, struggle to like, my aunt and my mom, because they didn't grow up having to struggle. And then, like, the fact that they had to, like, take on multiple jobs in their adult life was like, a little like, it's, it was really disruptive to like, their understanding and perception of like, like how to live. And so like, my mom wanted me to get an education like more than anything she like, thought that I was really smart. And so she like prioritized it and she believed in the Montessori like mission and values. And so she worked at the schools that I went to so that I could go there for free. And yeah, it was just weird like these these kinds of kids that go to Montessori school like it's weird because it's not flashy money like It's like old or like crunchy granola ass like money, where like their parents are probably like multimillionaires and you're like, but you wouldn't know like until you go to their house and you're like, oh, like you have a pool inside your home. Like inside your actual home. Like okay, like not even back I'd like actually inside. And so yeah,

that was just kind of like it was always a little weird. Like there was always just like, like this disconnect like, I don't even think it was like pressure but because it's not like I looked that different from the other kids in terms of like dress and things like that, because again, it wasn't really flashy in terms of like what they could afford. But it was always like in terms of experience, like a lot of these kids would go on, like, like, like trips out of the country like to like different places, and like after winter break every year, or like summer break or whatever, like we'd all have to, like talk about what we did, and it would be like, so like, like, I feel like I'd just be sitting there and I'd be like, I like was at home. I can, it was really just kind of like awkward. And then like, I remember this like one time my like my best friend Annika wasn't allowed to sleep at our house because her mom knew that my, my mom and my aunt were both single. And she was like said something about like, not wanting there to be men like strange men in my house. And the entire time that my my mom and my aunt were like single and like raising me and my sister like which is for my entire my entire life. I think my mom maybe went on like two dates total, like for the entire 13 years that like we were together. And my aunt Emily didn't like and still has been probably in over 20 years had like, a date or seen like a man. So the assumption that like, because of what because like because income or Yeah, we were low income or like that she was a single mom though. And I think especially low income was like the because like you'd never see like, like, there were other kids with single moms. And that wasn't like a concern. Yeah. And so like, it just was very like, like weird. And so after that, like I didn't really ever bring anyone back to my house because I started to feel like this weird sense of not like shame, but it was like definitely from like, the houses that I've been to not at all like, like that. And so I was just like that, that was like a big part of it. And I didn't really I don't think I really like experienced any type of like, financial discrimination directly, like from my peers at school, but it was always just like, like, you know, like birthday parties, but they were kind of like at a place that was expensive. So like, I couldn't go so things like that just being like, just like barriers.

**Olivia 17:31**

Can you talk a little bit about how size affected you growing up?

17:35

Yeah, it's so weird because I feel like I had a very skewed perception of what my body looked like as many adolescent young girls do. And I was just it just like I was bullied really badly in elementary school for my weight. I yeah, I guess I'll have this archived. They used to call me cool, but it stood for constipated, overheated overweight a loser. And I only found that out because my, like one of my best friends had like, found out what it stood for. And like told me about it. And honestly, I feel like I might have been better off not knowing because I feel like as a fourth grader that doesn't really do good things to your self esteem. Yeah,

**Olivia 18:17**

like definitely put, like, didn't need to tell you. Yeah, I was already

18:20

like one of the only black kids they're like, like one of two. I've only black girl. And like, on top of that just was like, Yeah. And it was so like, uncomfortable. And I think that I I had a lot of sensory issues too. So I had issues with like, like getting dressed already. And like clothing and things like that. So I was just like, really, like I started to internalize that so, so much, but I was also a swimmer. So it was so damn

one of those things were like, while I was experiencing that type of like bullying at school like size related bullying, I had to like get into a swimsuit every day. So it was definitely like a little bit of a mindfuck Yeah. Yeah, the way of

**Olivia 19:14**

enabling you at swimming to they didn't

19:17

it was so it was definitely I think the reason I liked swimming so much was because I like like, like it wasn't uniform. You know what I mean? This swimsuit was a uniform I always had some suits that could fit me because like the size like range for like, like competitive swim suits are like pretty good. And so I didn't really have any issues with that like I never thought I felt powerful right? I was fast I was a good swimmer. And so I was like always ahead of like my age group and things like that. And so I felt actually more connected to my body like in swimming but like all we it was always that first like fear of like entering the locker room and like having to change and things like that. That was so like strange. And I feel like a lot of the adults, like I told, like I told my mom about it, like, she was very much, like, really mad for me. But that also like, I don't know, I feel like it, it hardened me like really quickly because just like there's just like so much going on like. And then like I was mean back, like I turned into a bully, I was mean like I like I feel like, you know, like, there's only so much that you can take until like, you feel so powerless that you feel like you have to take it out on somebody else. And so I did that I did that to one of my best friends and it like effectively ended our friendship and I still feel really bad about it to this day. And then I lost a bunch of weight and shot up, I grew like six inches and like was at like probably the height of my like competitive training. Like swim training like career even though I was like really young, I was like 12. But like, I, I had no perception of the fact that like my body had changed at all, like I look back on like all these old pictures and I'm like, like, I didn't wear a two piece swimsuit, like ever. But then I started to and I look back on all these pictures. And I still remember like feeling like I was so big, and like thinking of myself as fat when like, objectively I was I was no longer. And so it was like, it's like super weird to like, look back on those perceptions and like how, how the way that I perceived myself was absolutely not how I other people were perceiving me. Um, and then like, my mom died, I stopped swimming, I gained a lot of weight back like, I'm, I'm pretty cool with how I look now like I'm like, not like, I don't know, I kind of just, like, found the whole body neutrality thing. And I'm like practicing that and have been like, exposed to like, radical fat liberation. And I think that also the fact that like my like, on both sides of my family, like, my mom was big, like my aunt is but like, just like my whole family's big, big people. And so like, it's very, like, I don't know, it's grounding now. But I do think that I missed out on a lot of things. Like I didn't do a lot of things like I didn't feel like I could like wear tight clothing. I didn't take a lot of pictures. So it's like very, very few pictures that exist of me. When I was younger, just because I hated the way I looked so much that I didn't want to get in front of a camera. And I think I regret I regret that the most like how, how bad I mean, not regret in the sense that like, not that I'm putting blame on myself for that. But like, I don't know, like, I just wish I had more pictures from like my middle school in high school years, but there really don't exist a lot of them. But yeah,

**Olivia 22:48**

can you talk a little bit about race? Like, I know, race, size and gender are all intertwined. And you've talked a little bit about race and being the only black girl growing up? And can you talk a little bit more about how race affected you growing up?

23:03

Yeah, I was I was raised by white people. My mom and my aunt were white. Or my aunt was white. And so like I and there were a lot of problems with like, the way that my my mom and my dad interacted. Like they didn't, they didn't live together. Like they weren't together when like for very long after I was born. Which is like a whole thing. But like I Yeah, so I was very frequently like the only black person and a lot of the environments that I was in growing up, which like, always bothered me for some reason, but I couldn't really I didn't really have the language to determine exactly why I was bothered by that, or like, what was going on, like, you know what I mean? Or like, why I was bothered, especially like, in swimming. Like there really are not a lot of black people who swim competitively, or at all. Um, and so that was like, super weird. And then in high school, I like definitely felt a lot better that I was around like, other black people and like other people of color, which was super like, like, just affirming and like relieving for me. And then but also like a little weird because again, like I grew up with white people, and a lot of people thought that I was like, like, you know, like, Caribbean or like grew up in a Caribbean household or like, we had a lot of people who are Cape Verdean like at my high school and so a lot of people were like, you have to be Cape Verde, like things like that. I had to be like, No, but I wish I was like so that's always kind of weird. But I think the main thing for me was my hair. I had again a lot of sensory issues and like even though my mom's hair was curly like it was not curly to the extent that mine is curly and so she did not know what the fuck to do with it. And I know from my pictures like Sir sorry bye Since day girl It was cute. Not cute.

**Olivia** 25:06

It was Yeah. Black woman going to in public Lego bless her heart. I

25:09

know. Yeah, I know. That's what was going on. And I was like, I was like, Why did you do me like that? Like,

**Olivia** 25:16

you couldn't watch a YouTube video?

25:19

Yeah, like y'all should have just y'all should have just honestly like, because even though like it was so hard for me to sit still for people to do my hair, I was like, Y'all should have made y'all should make me sit me down or something. Yeah, the date we

25:33

please

25:34

like put a little whiskey in the milk. And yeah, it's not like that was not that was not cute. So that is taken up. It took a minute for me to like figure it out on my own. Like, I definitely got into like, and it's weird to write because like, we like have YouTube now. But like in what was it like the early 2000s? Like it was really just on the come up? weren't really like that many to

**Olivia 25:58**

know someone? Yeah. Onto like a beauty supply writers.

26:01

Yeah. And so it was just, apparently that was not on the agenda. No, that was just it wasn't. And so I like I in high school, I started to like, learn how to do my hair and how to like how to take care of it. Because I was like, I'm about to start getting a receding hairline from having to pull my hair back. traction alopecia was from like, I would put my hair and like it down. I would put it in a bun and then I would stick it down and also the swim cap. So on Ask swim cap on my shit out. And so I had to figure out how to do it. I was like, this is not I like one day like got like a wool. Like, I pulled my shit back. And there was like a, I was like, Oh, it was getting a little bald, like scary. I was like, Oh, shit. And so I had to figure it out. And so I did, like, I got into my and this was like, you know, the natural hair movement was like, was like, was coming up. And so I was like, okay, like, let me let me get to videos, like, let me get into this product. And then I like figured it out. So I feel like that's like really like, like my hair definitely is like quintessential to my experience of like of blackness and of being like, the only black person like in my like immediate family that I talked to. There's a whole lot of reasons why like my, my dad's side of the family. They're primarily in like Atlanta, Chicago. Like don't like talk to me. It was like a very, it was like a weird situation. Like, I think that like my my older brother, I have three three older brothers. They are 40 in their tour in their 40s I don't know exactly how old they are. And one is, like literally 17 days older than me. I'm like I'm July 20 2001. And he's July 3 2001. So Oh, okay. Okay. Okay. Like literally, for Schwinn. So it was like my older brothers like, like, I don't know, like, they didn't really want anything to do with me for reasons I understand now, but really did

**Olivia 28:14**

not like I'm a child.

28:16

Yeah. And then my, my other brother Kyle like it again, it's like, it's the one that's like, my age is it's complicated. Like, I've like we've like had like one phone call, but it's like, I didn't know about him till I was like 15. Like, who's you know what I mean, that's a really and we didn't live in the same state. Like, it's not an easy relationship to cultivate. But, but my dad's sister, my aunt Sherry, um, we've definitely gotten gotten a lot closer over the years. I visited her in Chicago a couple years ago, like two summers ago. And she invited me for Thanksgiving this year, and I in Atlanta, and I was gonna go but then I looked at my knee and I couldn't go but like, that's, like the fact that I'm like, starting to reconnect with like, with that side of the family is really nice. But yeah, so yeah, super, super complicated. I feel like there's so many so many, little like, things that I had experienced that were like, that were like, racially motivated, that I really just was not picking up on like, I didn't pick up on it. Like my, my parents were very like, like, or my aunt my mom or like they're they raised me colorblind. Love me. Yeah. And so they didn't really acknowledge that I was going to experience discrimination or like, or racism. And so

like, we just never talked about it and then like when it started happening, like they kind of just like pretended that it wasn't because of that. And especially like, even still throughout like, recently like, like, with like the Black Lives Matter movement and like all the protests and I was like part of part of organizing in my hometown We got into a lot of fights like about, about that. And then I honestly like just ended up like, like not really like talking to to her about that for a while, and like still really don't engage like in any type of political like, like conversations anymore not that we were always doing it I feel like I always was just like so combative and like wanted her to see like, what was all like going on but now I'm just like, listen, you're not gonna change and no and and that's a lot of my energy and a lot of my hurt feelings that I could be sparing myself but yeah, but yeah, the fact that I the fact that I exist as a black person is was not was not a very, very accepted in my family. Like my uncle did not want my mom to have me. But she said, Fuck you and she had to. She was like what? B? So can you?

**Olivia 31:01**

Can you talk a little bit about how religion affected you growing up?

31:07

Yeah, so I'm Jewish. Um, I never had a Bar Mitzvah or anything though. My mom's Jewish. So I'm Jewish. And she didn't raise me religious partially because we couldn't afford Hebrew school. And partially because she wanted me to be able to choose as an adult, whether or not or like as a teenager slash adult, whenever I started questioning about religion, whether or not I wanted to identify with the Jewish faith, I think that her heart was in the right place with that. But I think that I really do wish that I had more exposure to that because it's really hard to just like, be an adult and like, tried to, like, integrate yourself into like, any religion really, but like,

**Olivia 31:52**

don't like you're, you're like someone who is like learning about Judaism or like learning as in a sense where you are supplying this other word I can think of signing up for do you and I'm talking about people convert. Wow, yeah. It's not like you're converting to Judaism. You are. You're like, ethnically Jewish, like your mother. Your mother's Jewish. Yeah,

32:14

my grandfather was a Russian Jew, like see, like a long costume. So yeah, it's very, like, the yeah, there is a history. And so I feel like I wanted to connect closer to that. It's also harder like all the shifts like in Hebrew and stuff like that, learning that it's so much harder as an adult than like, when you're like, brain is still viable. And my sister was put into Hebrew school and she was she went through all of that. Always the younger he gets the most Oh, she she got it. Like we like, again. My mom had different parenting philosophies. Like we grew up in the same house, but it was very much separate families. And so she, she got all of that, like, she's been to Israel a couple of times, which like birthright trips, yeah. Or not. Yeah, on birthright, but like, there was like, one, I think one that they we they did through like the our congregation and like the second one was like at the end, like when she completed her, like Hebrew school, like whatever, they they took a trip, like, over the summer. And then she also had like a bar mitzvah. And so it was just like, there's so many cultural, like, things that she is immersed in, and that she has a connection to, and I just like, don't, so I feel like I kind of got the short end of the stick there. Yeah, they did. They did. School. I know. But there's also not a lot of black Jewish people.

**Olivia 33:40**

Oh, yeah. And your sister is white. Yeah,

33:42

she's white. Yeah. So it's very, like, I don't know, I feel like I. And it's especially weird too, because like, out of all of the religions that I've like, looked into because I really have explored a lot of them. I wanted to make sure I like even though I'm ethnically Jewish, I wanted to make sure that I identified with the faith. Like and its principles, and I and I do I feel like if I wasn't ethnically to Jewish, but I was like shopping around for a religion, like that is the one I would choose. And so it's like, I don't know, it's just kind of weird to like, feel so connected to, like, a religion and like, like, the ways that it's practiced and like also, like, I feel so disconnected in terms of like, racial identity and like, the fact that I wasn't raised within the faith.

**Olivia 34:35**

of chronic pain affects you growing up.

34:37

I've always been very inflexible, like I've experienced a lot of a lot of chronic pain, like throughout my life, mostly related to my legs. Like I there are like certain things that people can do with their legs that I really just can't do. It's usually like, it's, I've since figured out that it's like patellar mal tracking disorder which is where like my, my kneecap, just don't sit still, like, they just don't want to hurt my, my like groove. It's like there's some where it's like, like due to like injury or like repetitive motion or things like that. But like mine is like structural, it's like my, my knee, like the groove that my kneecap sits in like isn't it's too shallow. So like it can't, like, there's no place for it to like stay. So it's always just kind of like moving around and being tugged around, and ever really tight IT band. So it like is always just kind of like trying to pull my kneecap out of its like little, little groove. And so I like they're just like so many like instances where it would get like, pulled out. But I didn't know that that's what was happening. So I just been in so much pain for a long time. And like in the winter, I just be so stiff. And just like not being able to like even, like lie down comfortably or anything. And so that just I don't know, it kind of affected a lot of what I did, especially with swimming, like, it was both like a blessing and a curse because it's swimming is so low impact that I was still able to like Excel athletically. But then like, we had to do so much running, and I just could not do that shit. Like, they were just fucked up. Like, I just could not I would get like, I would start and I would try so hard, but it just was not giving. It was not giving. And then there's been a lot of like, going to doctor's appointments and having them tell me to lose weight instead of being like, oh, like let's look and see if there's something wrong with your legs. Yeah. And like and so I definitely think that's that that's also part of it. And even now like I'm starting to get a handle on it. I had like a, an injury recently that like really, like, was very traumatizing, but also made me kind of have to really start to finally get an answer. But also just think really intentionally about how I'm, like, existing in my body and more than I have in the recent past. And so, so yeah, it's always it's always something that is something that I'm aware of.

**Olivia 37:11**

Are you using any mobility aids at all yet?

37:14

I'm not. I used to try to use crutches, like for a couple of weeks in New York and like, literally decided that I was done with them. Because it was so hard to get around. But I've been definitely considering getting a cane. As of recently, I mostly just because like when I first got my injury, I didn't think that this is something that I would have had to deal with. But I'm so off balance. Like I feel like especially because the leg that I had the injury on most recently is my good leg. It was my good leg before. And so now like I like will just like fall over like or like just like lose, like toe. I don't know if it's just like my core strength is off or like why glue sticks or whatever. But like, My balance is off. Like I just keep falling and so I've especially since it's starting to get more slippery out. I've been like my friend

**Olivia** 38:12

Jinx there in the project. And things like a four legged cane that turns into a seat. Yeah, yeah,

38:20

I've thought I've like looked into those and I think that that's something that I'm going to be trying to like experiment with to see if it's helping me any. I am also like, you know, trying to do my PT like trying to get get like my strength back but like I think that like yeah, I've definitely been looking into to getting a cane. My partner is very jealous because they they want like, I want a cane. I think it looks so cool. Like,

**Olivia** 38:47

I have I have chronic pain.

38:49

Yeah, but isn't cool. No, I know. They've definitely had some mobility aid. Yeah. Cool looking, which is Yeah, which is really cool. And all that it's bad. Yeah, no, they they definitely they also like fractured their knee last last year. So like, they definitely know what like what it's like to try to, like deal with and like it's left some like also like chronic, like lasting issues or whatever. And so it's definitely something that's like that they know is like not like not not necessarily the moment so I think that it's just it's Yeah, but yeah, so that's that's really how that's, that's impacted. There's just always I always am just having to assess like what I can and can't do I also get migraines, specifically from jumping on trampolines or in bounce houses like the jumping motion. I don't know what it

**Olivia** 39:47

is that out.

39:48

I like the first migraine I ever had, I think was like my 10th birthday or 11th or something I had it at like you Sky Zone. Yeah, the trampoline, indoor trampoline park. And like, I like felt so sick afterwards. Still had to go to swim swim practice, though. Like it was very, like your water. Yeah. But it was like, I was like, oh shit like, what do we feel so sick and then like it happened again like, like, cuz I fucking loved the trampoline. So you went back so obviously I went back and like it just kept happening, but I was like, Why do I keep getting these migraines and it was always like, and so I don't know, I think it was

like the fifth time maybe I was like, let me like, try this out like let me see like I went like we were doing something for my class like a class field trip to skies on at the end of the year. And I was like, Okay, I'm gonna take like Tums, I'm gonna take like, there's this, like, I forget what it's called. But it's like the specific like medication that you can take that like neutralizes your stomach. And so I was like, let me take that and then like, let me see if like nothing happens. But if something if I still get a migraine, it's definitely the fucking trip. Neurological or something. Yeah. And so it was I like I did it. And then I felt myself start to get a migraine and I had to stop. I was like, I'm gonna get I'm gonna get a migraine. And so I stopped like, stop bouncing. I was like, I'm gonna go. Yeah, and I've definitely had some sense like, I like swinging on the swings is also something I can't really do. Like I like again, it's like any slight like back and forth motion I have I assuming it has something to do with like, my neck specifically and how that's moving. Um, but yeah, super weird. But they can be pretty debilitating. I think my longest one. And like now like, like, you know, like, sometimes they're like, stress induced, whatever. But I think my longest one was, like, 72 hours. I was just incapacitated. Like, it was horrible. So yeah, like chronic pain, like, like, has definitely been like a bit of a and I feel like it's really being talked about now. But I it's like, it's so crazy how many people like especially like women who are like, like really like, experiencing chronic conditions like in chronic pain, like all the time. Yeah. And it's like, it's like, just something that like no one talked about, and also something that doctors do not take seriously until you're like, dying, dying, literally. As a black woman. Yeah. Especially like, and I definitely experienced that with like the EMTs, who I had to call to my apartment to like, help me with my knee. Because like after my injury, like I was sitting there in pain for like an hour because I couldn't move it because it was like, what I now know what that happened was it partially dislocated and then it got stuck. And so it was just like hanging out, like half out of my leg. I also think there's some sort of like tendon like issue that like, whatever, but like the EMTs like they're both men like they just came up and they did not believe what I was saying. They said that I had a cramp. They kept trying to move me like talk over me. They weren't listening to me when I told them that I literally could not move my leg. One of them literally I think like, like, like, pushed the wheelchair that I was supposed to sit in into the back of my injured leg, like to try to get it to move. And like didn't move because it was locked. And then like they got me down the stairs. But like, the only reason that like anyone has actually believed that like the like, thing like even like the injury or whatever even like happened was because one of the guys literally had his hands on my leg while it like accidentally like, like, reset itself, like back into place. So like and he was like you've like he had his hands on my ankle. I was holding my thigh and he was like, I was like, did you feel that? And he was like, I felt that all the way in your ankle. Did you feel that? And I was like, Well, it's my body. So yeah, I did feel it. He was like, all the way up in your knee. I was like I literally have been telling you this whole time that I couldn't move my whole leg. I don't. I don't. I don't know what you want me to say to that. But yeah, yeah.

**Olivia 44:13**

When did you realize that you were a dyke or lesbian?

44:16

Oh, shit. Um, I was I think it was either seventh or eighth grade. I don't remember. I had like, fallen in love with my best friend. And like as you do you know what I'm saying? She did not reciprocate, unfortunately. But yeah, I had. Not that I didn't even know that like being gay was a thing because I didn't know it was a thing. Like I have to. Like, great aunts who are like in there. I think one's like 85 and

one's a 75. They're married up in Portland, Maine, but like other than that, which that's like a whole thing but like, like didn't really know like any gay people like growing up, like I'm like, besides them, I'm the only like, gay person in my whole, like family that's out, at least that I know of. And so it's like a little, like, I didn't really have any exposure to that like, like it wasn't on TV or, or there wasn't as much social media, like when I was in my formative years, like those formative years, as there is today. So I really just didn't know what was going on. But I didn't know that I didn't like boys. Like, that's something that I didn't know, like, for sure. But I just kind of thought that you, like picked one. Like, I remember this one day I was in it was like elementary school. And like, I might have been in like, sixth grade or like, fifth grade. And like, we were all like, standing in this like, circle, like trying to talk about like, guys that we liked. And I was like, I don't have a crush on anybody because I didn't at the time. And everyone was like, come on, Rachel. Like you have to have like, you have to like somebody's like, who is he? Like whatever. And I was like, I had a friend like, like a friend like named Charles. And I was like, okay, like, I like him. Like I like Charles. Like he's fine. I guess it's stuck with me for so long after that, like, God damn. Like, I like they really did not leave me alone about it. Like I thought I was just gonna say that. And like, I would just like get them to stop asking me but. And yeah, it was just like a whole thing. But But yeah, I thought you just I thought that that's kind of just how it worked that like people were like lying, when they said that they had a crush on someone just because or like that. Like, it wasn't even like, I don't know.

**Olivia 46:48**

No, yeah, that makes a lot of sense. A lot of people have been talking about that. Yeah, I think everyone almost everyone that I talked to so far has been like I picked, I picked a boy. Yeah, that's what you did. And then they would follow up and then be so confused. You're like, this wasn't in the script.

47:02

Yeah, that also it also had I had a boyfriend. And I say with my air quotes, because I had like, his name's Jeff. Also gay, by the way now. But he, he, he dated like this, my friend Sasha, who I had a crush on, and I updated him afterwards. And then like, it lasted for like three days, because he's like, we made like a huge deal out of it. And like he said, like, he like asked me out and like, whatever. And then I was like, Oh, I don't want to have to date this man. This is I didn't think this I did not think this through this is like, oh, like I didn't even we didn't even kiss or nothing. Like I was like, No, hell no. And so I asked my mom to tell me that she said no, so that I could tell him that my mom said, so that I

**Olivia 48:01**

asked him, my mom said I can do Sorry.

48:04

That's literally what I said. I was like, sorry, my mom said no. It was like, okay.

**Olivia 48:08**

Yeah, it happened. But it was so funny. So funny. When were you like, did you have any gay friends growing up?

48:21

Honestly, no, I don't even think I think well, no, actually, yes. Because my friend. My friend Arielle is bisexual, but she has like, only more recently come into her bisexuality. So I think I feel like I had a lot of gay friends going up and trans friends who like didn't know that they were gay or trans.

**Olivia** 48:36

Did you guys find each other then? Like,

48:39

we just kind of gravitated toward each other? I feel like I feel like there is always this sort of like like, I don't know, just like this otherness like this distinct like feeling of otherness and that like kind of rots brought me to them. Yeah, that's really do you remember what

**Olivia** 49:06

your first exposure to lesbianism was?

49:13

Aside from my aunt's because not that I don't think that it's exposure to lesbianism, but I really don't think I understood what like them being in like a relationship like meant I don't think I I was like, Oh, they like are in love. Like I didn't understand. And I saw them so infrequently. So honestly, probably the Fosters. I can't even lie. Like we we had talked about it somewhat in my sex education class actually in in Montessori School.

**Olivia** 49:46

They brought up dikes and it's Montessori. Yeah,

49:49

okay. And it wasn't even really like we talked about, like sexualities necessarily like I knew what lesbianism was or like what being gay was, but like really in the Fosters. was like the first time that I saw any type of like positive, like lesbian, like, relationship or like relationship period that was like, not in like a sex context

**Olivia** 50:19

have clothing like makeup tattoo? tattoos, jewelry piercings, or the other body mods helped you with assisting your gender expression or affirming your lesbian in any way your lesbianism in any way.

50:36

Yeah, I feel like I. I don't know. I feel like as soon as I realized I was a lesbian, I was like, I'm a dyke. Like that. Just, it was what it was, like, one day it clicked. I think it was like 13 or something. I was like, I'm gay. Like, this is like, I'm not I'm not bisexual or nothing like I am gay. Like, period. And then I thought my family would be fine with it. So I was like, Hey, y'all, I'm like, No, you're not I don't know why I thought it was gonna be all cool. Like, like, we were chilling. And that was not the moment and then they weren't No, like not even a little bit. And so it was like, I mean, a little bit like it wasn't like Bad, bad, but it was like, not great. It was like, Oh, shit. Nevermind. Let me be bisexual. I guess I'll send you were

bisexual. I'll keep one door I yeah recanted my lesbianism. I was like, I'm bisexual. Like, I like I'll leave a door open for a potential future man that I know. It's never gonna come to like a my family. Sure. Um, but like I so I think that in order to like, make it known that I was unavailable to men. I was like, like I was I was definitely giving the 2014 tumblers like, like Dyk like swag. No, I wasn't I was it was it was giving flannel like it was. It was giving like, I mean, it was getting like, buttoned down. No, it was giving like, it was getting like red and black, like checkered flannel with a beanie with a 1975 Yes, that vibe. Like it's grunge vibe. It was like the grunge Yeah. But like also, again, like being trained to become like a professional like, like swimmer at the say so I was very much also really athletic at the same time. So I was like grunge meets like like little like scrubbing little jock like

**Olivia 52:43**

to slap hands on. Yeah.

52:46

And so that was like, that was the vibe. That was the that was like I was like, Yeah, I'm not You're not gonna mistake me for a straight person. Yeah. To me, but at the same time, I still was like, we're into wearing dresses at the time. Like I very much liked to like, like get like all dressed up and shit. So yeah, but now I feel like I I have a couple tattoos I have um, I have this first one I got is oh, you can't see it here. Um, let me take me. Let me take my like this often that nice green string. I literally might have to but yeah, I was like, oh, yeah, you just show your arm. Oh, yeah, check all the way up it No, I don't think well it'll go i This is the first one is just I love you with my mom's handwriting. I got this. Like, I think I've had it for like three years or so now. So I really like this one. It's cute. I wear my rings. I think my my industrial like piercing really like affirms my. I got that in high school. And it was like no one had this piercing. Like, I mean, I feel like more people have it now. But like no one had that piercing when I was in high school. Yeah. And so like it was V moment. Yeah, and I really I really enjoyed that. I was definitely like, did something for my for my Nike this for my sexuality. And then I plan to I've always wanted to be fully covered in tattoos. Like it's a finding out that it's a lot more expensive than I ever dreamed that it would be. So I but I think like literally since I was probably like 10 years old. I've always just wanted to be covered in tattoos. And I think that that definitely has something to do with my sexuality. So this is my other tattoo that I have.

**Olivia 54:28**

Yeah, that's really nice.

54:29

Thank you. Um, this is Sammy Sammy. He has been with me for just over a year year in a couple of months a year and some change any

**Olivia 54:39**

shade is really nice. Yeah,

54:40

I love I love him. He was a flash piece but I Yeah, but I was like one artists that I really wanted to get tattooed by Emma Jane Maris at tenderfoot studio, I think. Yeah, but I think that so expensive as hell

yeah, but \$1,000 I think she just moved. Yeah, it was. Honestly it was. It wasn't \$1,000 But it was definitely giving, like 600 Yeah, so, but I had saved up for it. So it was definitely something that I was like ready for me it was. It was a treat, but so yeah, I feel like I'm like, I always wear my rings like I wear my necklaces. I feel like they're they're definitely like, part of like my earrings. I'm always like an asymmetrical earring girly. Like I have one tie.

**Olivia 55:26**

And I was like, oh, it's like beautifully would like this handmade

55:29

like I always not by me but um, but yeah, I usually always have like on like the the left on the gay side. I always have like a like a dangly earring or like a standout piece of some sort or like and then like, gay earrings? Yes. Is that jellyfish? Yes.

**Olivia 55:44**

It's a lesbian jellyfish.

55:46

Oh my god. That's so cute. But yeah, and then just like a simple one on the other side. So I feel like there are certain like jewelry elements. Yeah, for sure. That affirm my, my sexuality?

**Olivia 55:57**

What were your first encounters with lesbian sex? Like you having lesbian sex? Maybe like us? You stumbled across lesbian porn? You heard about how lesbian had sex in like the ether in society? And what were like, how did your views on lesbian sex change before and after you had it?

56:17

I think that I, I had always read the first like lesbian like sex slick thing that I heard of was I think, again, probably in my like, my, or that I registered, I guess was like in my, my second class. But like, we didn't really go, I think they mentioned a dental dam. But like, I didn't, we didn't really go into like specifics. And so I looked at I was like, I was like, let me turn to the internet to enlighten me. And I watched lesbian porn. And I was Yeah. And I was like, I don't I don't like that. I don't know what this is like, this is like, not that I like thought that. Like it was weird because it was lesbian. But I was just like, This doesn't look yeah, I was like, it does not look pleasurable. Like, I didn't know how to look for things like that. I would like be not super like, like, I mean, it's all scripted, and like, whatever. But like, I didn't know that it was gonna be so like, I don't know, it just felt so fake. And so like, I was like, just like that does not look, that does not look very comfortable. And so, so yeah, that was probably my first like, my first encounter with lesbian sex. I definitely think that we need to do so much better. And exposing our youth to positive and healthy sexuality before they turned to geography. Yeah. But yeah, and then my perception on like, lesbian sex before versus after I had it. I waited until I was eight teen to have sex not because I like, like, really wanted to wait, but to happen. Yeah, it just happened. It wasn't really giving. Like, what's it needed to give? There weren't a lot of out like lesbians. And when I was in high school, like I think I was one of like, four and the other like three were somehow Republicans. Oh, scary. Yeah, very odd. Like white, like conservative like lesbians. So I wasn't really in into that. And yeah, I going into it or like

before I had it, I honestly didn't even really like know what to expect. Like I had, like, seen like porn, like many times at that point, like had had conversations with my friends like about about sex in general. I guess I like not really lesbian sex as much. But um, but yeah, I just like it was in it was in NYU Goddard. Oh, fourth floor room for one for a twin XL. Like bed. This I was nervous, but like I really wanted to, and at that point, I was just like, like the other person had had more experience than me. I were about the same age though. And like I had just like, I don't know, I was like, yeah, like I got it and I felt right yeah, I felt ready like it wasn't something that I was like afraid to do. I like during that like encounter i think i ate them out. I think that's like what what all went down Yeah, but like I had a good time. Like, I enjoyed myself like it was fine. I had always been very reluctant though to have anyone like reciprocate that or like touch me in any kind of way. And I think that that experience like not that it. I think it ignited my curiosity about because I enjoyed that so much. I was like, okay, yeah, giving I enjoy giving so much that I was like, okay, like, maybe being on the receiving end isn't like all that bad like if I'm having so much fun doing this, but I still had like a shit ton of body issues like after that, but then like that the same person that I had my first like lesbian sex like experience with like would go on to be like one of like, my first it was my first relationship period, like ever. And it was also like, probably one of the worst like, acts like relationships I like it set me up for failure. Like it did a lot. It did a lot of damage. It was like it was very toxic borderline like abusive. I was like, saved by COVID. But it was very like, I feel like well, like if I don't think I would take it back. Like I don't necessarily think I would take it back. But I think after that like like the experience of being in that relationship, my relationship with sex change direct Stickley, like I had no really no issues before, like, lingering body issues, kind of but I had worked, like done so much work in therapy and like so much work overall to like, like, be more comfortable with myself and like get over those I had really like I was kind of a blank slate when it came to sex. And like that experience was like a positive experience. But like, like, almost every single thing after that was just like, like, in like the span of like three months undid almost, oh, like four years of like, love like that. Yeah, that kind of work. So yeah, it was bad. It was bad.

**Olivia** 1:01:54

Your first lesbian relationship? I feel like a lot of people have a misunderstanding that lesbians are somehow better or like literally chips will be inherently better in some way or free of problems or abuse. Yeah. So I'm very happy that like other lesbians in the oral history have talked about like relationship abuse and emotional abuse and manipulation and DD. Really, like from like early relationships, I think that's really important to highlight. Yeah, with an understanding of the community like we're talking from ourselves. So thank you for sharing that. You. Have your views on marriage changed from before and after you identify as a lesbian?

1:02:43

Yes, I never wanted to get married. I never wanted to get married. I thought that it was bullshit. Like I was like, absolutely the fuck not. And I think that that had a lot to do with just like gender. Like expectations and like the fact that I just didn't want to marry a man like I did not want to do that. And like, like when I was coming up like gay marriage wasn't legal yet, like in like us. Like it was It wasn't Massachusetts, but like, it wasn't in Yeah. And so I was just like, oh, no, like, Fuck marriage, like fuck the patriarchy like all that the sudden the other, which I still definitely very much like, but like, I think as soon as I realized that I was a lesbian. And as soon as I started experiencing, like, positive relationships, not even romantic relationships, or just positive lesbian friendships, then like seeing

healthy lesbian relationships around me and in the media and everything. I was like, oh, like, like, being with somebody and like getting married. Like, it's not, it's not what I thought it was supposed to be, like, supposed to be like, it's it can be whatever I want it to be. Um, and so yeah, I definitely think that that's like, changed my perception on marriage. Like now I, I don't know, like, what kind of I would like to be married, like, at some point someday. I don't know. Like, in what context? I still am like, oh, do I wear a dress where we're suit? Like it whatever. But like, I definitely think that like, like, there is like a marriage that I like situation that I can see myself having. Yeah.

**Olivia** 1:04:27

Has your lesbianism been influenced by fear your academics in any way? Hmm, um, it's okay if it wasn't

1:04:40

Yeah, a little bit like I think that I'm a sociology major. So I'm all up in there. Yeah, I read I actually read Leslie Feinberg's Lake stone but blue. And a couple of years ago, like sophomore year of college like maybe whatever it was 2019 2020 Yeah, probably like 2012 It was I think it was 2021 I think it was like,

**Olivia** 1:05:09

losing COVID So sad. Yeah,

1:05:12

I read it in COVID I thought that I mean, it was a lot. There's a lot going on percent, but I had very much, I think, not looked into my, like lesbianism intellectually before, like, it was very much. I was like, Oh, I'm a lesbian. Like, I, at the time had kids even though I was always like, a slightly more masculine leaning, and I think I like will always be, had always considered myself like, only into fems. Like, that was like the whatever. And I that book definitely just shattered that for me, like I was, yeah, but it was also just because I was like, damn, like, I am really like, have a lot of internalized like, homophobia towards butch lesbians and like the, like the not wanting to be associated with like the man hating like, but like, man, Lee like Butch like mask. Lesbian, like, trope, like it was mostly because I saw how they were treated in real life. And I did not want to be near that. I didn't want to expose myself to that out of fear. And I now have a bunch of girlfriends. Yeah, and I. And

**Olivia** 1:06:29

I was just here. Yeah,

1:06:32

they were just here. And I am like, so. I love like, butch lesbians. I love studs. I love just like, mask lesbians. Like, I think that I have felt most understood by them. And I think that I understand them. Like it's just there's so there's just something about like that element of like, like, people who are more masculine of center that I really, really vibe with, especially when they maintain their connections to womanhood and like, it's just so like, I don't know, I just, I just love it. And I was like, damn, I was I was I was kind of a I was kind of a bitch before a little bit like, low key. Like, I didn't really know what I was talking about. So, yeah.

**Olivia** 1:07:31

Um, how does class and how do class and race inform your interactions with the lesbian community?

1:07:39

Yeah, class, I feel like, I don't know. I feel like in, like, in New York, especially within like the college lesbian, like setting like, at NYU, or, or, or whatever. Like, it's, it's a lot of rich, rich people like, and it's just always like, a like, there's just always that little like, barrier there. I feel like, people grow up so differently. And like, can just, I don't know, just like not not understanding that struggle of like, yeah, yeah. Just like growing up, like lower income and like, feeling like, you always kind of have to prove yourself. And I feel like that has almost like, infiltrated how I interact. I feel like there's always an element of like, feeling like, I have to prove something like, I don't know. I don't know if it's related to like, like, I feel like once you enter lesbian spaces, like there's so many cool people doing cool things, but a lot of the time, they are doing really cool things because they have the leisure time, and the money to be able to, like get into that kind of thing or like take on certain hobbies. And so yeah, I feel like that's, that's also a thing. Um, in terms of race, there's so many people who fetishize like mixed black, like lesbians specifically, like it's very weird. Like, a lot of people partially why I'm not on Tinder anymore. A lot of people like who would be interested in me, I would like kind of like, go through their Instagrams or, like, try to take a look at their dating history if I could, oh, friends of color, no friends of color, but a lot of the have dated a lot of people who look like me. Yeah. And I. Yeah, like, and it's so or like, even if like, like, even if they're not white, like it's just very like, I'm like, oh, like, like, this is like I feel like I fall into a specific type. And it's very odd.

**Olivia** 1:09:47

Or like, some of us were talking about us as in the other people. Were having discussions about social capital. Yeah, and how sometimes like white lesbians or other lesbians will identify with you or want to date you, because they feel like they're doing a good deed or something. I don't know if you've ever felt that way, but

1:10:09

I don't know about doing a good deed. But I've definitely experienced like, especially in like that first relationship that I was talking about being used to gain proximity to blackness. Yeah.

**Olivia** 1:10:21

Yeah. Like proximity to blackness or thinking like blackness is like a cool thing that you can use to say shit without having people critique you because no one can't. Yeah,

1:10:32

yeah, it was very, like, that was definitely like, the situation. So I've experienced that a lot. And I feel like also, like, for whatever reason, I feel like, like, you'd expect a lesbian community to be like, more inclusive. I don't want to say inclusive, because that's so like, you know what I mean? But like, but to like, not be like to not Yeah, to not be so like, racist and like, and yet there's so many, like, all white lesbian spaces in existence? And I'm like, No, I don't want to go to that.

**Olivia** 1:11:08

Yeah, like, No, I will not be at Kobe, I will not be a cubby hole. Yeah. Can you talk a little bit about how chronic pain informs your interactions with the lesbian community?

1:11:21

Yeah, I think that there is like, especially in terms of like dating, especially as someone who's a little bit more masculine, there's like always this like expectation that like, of like, strength, and like of toughness, and like, things like that, but like, especially, like, I had tried, I would try to, like, hide that from like, people that I was involved with, and like from the community, because again, I feel like the pressure is so reinforced even by like other other people who are like, a little bit more masculine.

**Olivia** 1:11:54

Yeah. And so you'll be always strong,

1:11:57

always strong, always. Like, that, like element of womanhood is already removed. And so I feel like, like, I don't know, it was just very, like, if I couldn't be, like, feminine, I couldn't be weak, you know, what I mean, it was one or the other. And I feel like and especially because I had such like, an athletic background, and I'm still like, involved in those spaces, that it's just like one of those things where I felt so like, awkward, like about, but it's definitely informed. Like, like, when I have sex, like physically, there are a lot of things I can't do. Like, due to like, comfort level, and pain or like times, I've had to stop because of my, like, pain or if I'm like, in a flare up, and I can't like do certain things. Definitely, like, I'm like, What's it

**Olivia** 1:12:48

like working through like working like building community in with chronic pain or working through flare ups? Or maybe like, how you learned how to have sex with chronic pain? Yeah, are like, building like, a disabled community with lesbians or, like, chronically ill lesbians with similar with similar issues and struggles?

1:13:11

Yeah, honestly, not like in terms of community, like, I still am very, like, I mean, after, like, my injury has, like, led me to have to have like a physical, like mobility aid and like, has like, definitely drastically changed like, my, like range of motion and like, how I like, long I'm able to be out for and things like that. I feel like I'm kind of just coming into, because I was kind of able to just barely skate by enough that it wasn't relevant. I never really brought it up. And so now I'm trying to like figure out like, like, I would go out with a lot of my friends like, now I can't stand really for long periods of time like that. It's just not possible. And so I have to kind of like circumnavigate that and so I'm still I'm still looking into, into building that community. Really, I think that like, I was really of the mindset that I would just really although I really deeply, like, cared about, like, dislike issues regarding like disability rights and liberation, I just like never really saw myself as really a part of that community and still struggle to like, you know what I mean, like this. Like even though I struggle with chronic pain, and like mobility and migraines and things like I never really considered myself especially with lack of diagnosis, like official diagnosis, like I never really considered myself part of that community and definitely, like, wouldn't want to be and even still would be very reluctant to be like one of the for me, like, like core core people in like

a disabled like lesbian community just because I feel like I I don't know a lot like I'm very I'm still like reckoning with that. That part of my identity. Yeah. But yeah, so it's, um, Still, I'm at like a turning point. I feel like I'm, uh,

1:15:03

I have a book for you do, yes. Okay, talk about it later period.

1:15:08

Um, I in terms of like learning how to have sex with like, chronic pain I've gotten me into like, not like some trouble. But again, that relationship that I had was not that good. And so when I felt like I couldn't do something because I was in the middle of a flare up, it was not received well. But I have since like, if there was like, what was one of my first experiences after that relationship had, like, I mentioned it to like, the person that I was having sex with. I was like, I Oh, like, I can't actually physically, like, do this. Like, I have like this issue. And they're like, oh, okay, like, let's just, like, figure out how to do this instead. And I was like, I was like, Oh, shit, okay, comedy. Yeah, I was like, Oh, you're gonna be like, I don't have to be like, in pain doing this. Like, that's cool. And so now I'm like, Really, just more, especially with my current partner, like, knows about all my, like, chronic pain and issues and stuff like that. And it's like, so I don't know, just like understanding and like, like, like, always like, and like, even checks in which is like, nice, like, because sometimes I'll catch myself like, like, in pain, but like, not wanting to, like, ruin the vibe or something like that. And then I think like, almost always, like, when I'm thinking it, they'll literally be like, Are you like, is your need, okay, like, are you doing like, Are you in pain? And I'm like, actually. And so, like, it's happening less, like less frequently that, like, they'll need to, like, say something before I do that, where I'm just finding ways to like, like, move on the low, like, I'm getting to know my body a little bit more, especially in like a sexual context. And so I like like, I already know, like, which, which positions I'll be able to get in like, which I won't, like if I see that we're like, going to start doing something that I know, I can't physically do I literally just move us so like, I'm like, I'm not even gonna, like we're not even we're not even gonna do this. And it's also made me feel a lot more comfortable with with bottoming like, I never used to do that. For like, a lot of different reasons. But now like I like it's, it's it's one of the only ways that having sex is comfortable for me. Yeah. And so like shit. Yeah. Period. Yeah, like I guess. Yeah, I guess that's what it's giving. I guess I'm in my bottom areas. Hey, I'm not complaining. No, no complaints here. No complaints from me.

**Olivia** 1:17:42

Can you talk a little bit about how your gender presentation informs your interactions? the lesbian community like gender presentation and size? And?

1:17:49

Yeah, that interplay. So I feel like part of the reason that I do present, like, more masculine is because of my size, like for whatever reason, like I, I don't necessarily, like, again, as my like, someone whose weight has fluctuated drastically for like, most of my life, like, I don't, like whenever I'm like, thinner, I feel slightly more inclined to dress in a feminine way, like not necessarily that I don't feel feminine all the time, or, like, have elements of femininity that I feel all the time or I'm connected to. I just feel like it's more I like, the way I look more when I dress masculine. Like, when I'm bigger, like that's just really how it how it is, I suppose. Yeah, yeah, it just looks better. But I also think that like, presenting slightly

more masculine, like, it just makes people assume so much shit about you. Like, like, it's crazy. Like, I just get into so many conversations with like, especially other masks loves me as I'm like, can we do better? Can we do can we do better? Like why are why are people so weird? It's like always, it's either like, a competition like gyms or like, people just come at you crazy. Like even if you don't know them, like I'm just looking for friends. Like I love like hanging out with other like masks like lesbians. And so I'm like, I just want to be all's friend like, and it's always like, like, I feel like so many times like there's so much hostility like one of my friends. So lay it's kind of like yeah, like we're really good friends and so we'd be like apply I told her to I literally sent her the link. She do it she was she was like I'm too busy. I know I know she was like I'm too busy I'm not gonna apply but I definitely tried to convince her to but yeah, she's like definitely pictures of

**Olivia** 1:19:45

herself and stuff. Yeah gallery exhibit that's okay anyways we're off topic no but you're talking competition so late I know so late

1:19:50

Yeah, so lay. Also lay she was like focusing on like trying to build community with like mask like lesbians, especially Mass Black lesbians. The mics doesn't like, like I'm like I'm like no, no, Joe because because, like, like I am one, but I'd be looking like, Hey, how's it going? Hello?

**Olivia** 1:20:28

Sorry. Sorry. Anyways.

1:20:32

Oh, like building building mass candidate, because I feel like it's so hostile for no reason. I'm like, I'm not looking at you because I want to fight like armwrestling something. And I feel like there's also like, I've had so many combination conversations where it's been like, oh, like, we got to look good for our fans and like, whatever. And I'm like, That's not first of all, I don't know who my girl is. Like, That's not. That's not my, my, my type and necessarily, and so I feel like there's just a lot of or like an assumption

**Olivia** 1:21:06

about Yeah, or like, look good for your fam. Yeah, something like they say

1:21:10

it was more. Yeah, it was more like in a group. And I think it was this particular situation was one it was a white person. That's it. That's me, too. It was like a weird situation. Where have you ever heard of like, Fosse?

**Olivia** 1:21:25

I know who bosses I was.

1:21:30

We could talk about that more. But like, there's like, a, they were there. And so say that? No, it wasn't them who said that? But I think that like sometimes, like, vicious can get into like a chest puffing out. So

it was like that sort of moment where like, everyone, I think we're honestly not, I don't want to say everyone because whatever, but like, definitely not me, but like, a lot of people probably felt intimidated or inferior or like they had something to prove. And so like, definitely a lot of that kind of like, comes out sometimes, but like, and also like other lesbians. Like there's also just like, this certain assumption about like, what your, like, your actual sexuality is going to look like in practice, like I like was like, like a lot of like a, like a girl master lesbian. Like you have to be a top or like, you don't like to be touched certain ways. And I'm like, that's like, I'm like, just asked me like, I'm not, like, don't make that assumption. Like, I'm very much like, enjoying being in my bottom era. And like, I've always really been more of like a switch, but like, has been, like, people don't really offer like or ask like about preferences because they just like make assumptions. Yeah. And so I think that that's like, also something that's like, kinda like, kind of shitty, but like, also, when I do find other mask lesbians, like especially So lay like that I can feel in community with like, that's such a great feeling. Like, again, like I've all like I was talking about having like, like, just really, like, feeling connected to, like, masculine lesbians and like, I love I love that I love like feeling in community like that. So I feel like that's a lot of the way my gender presentation has come into. And also like, while I would identify as like gender queer, because I feel like like, but I also am very connected to womanhood like yeah, black womanhood. Yeah, black womanhood, Jewish womanhood, like, like, that struggle of like, like my being raised by like to like single moms, like you know what I mean, there's, there's such a strength to womanhood and such like a connection to like, like black women and to like, like just women who be struggling and hustling, like, like and there's there's that like, I could never never divorce myself from that entirely. And I think that like that comes in the form of like, me choosing to keep like she her pronouns, like I, I tried they them for a bit it didn't really work for me a lot of people assume that I use they them pronouns or she, they are like some some sort of iteration but I really I really just don't and I will correct people like if they if they misgendered me in that way, because I think it's an important part of my like aspect of my identity and I feel like my connection to womanhood is already so forcibly removed by a lot of people like, whether it be visually like in the way that they understand how like I showed, like presenting or presenting or identifying based on my perception, like presentation are their perceptions of it that like I am, like, I very much hold on to like those like she her pronouns, it's like a like a tether. It's important to me, and also I shaved my head had like a couple your the last time I shaved my head was a year ago I shaved it for my cue shaved it for my 20th birthday. But I kept shaving it because I liked it. I thought it was the moment and then a lot of people like mistook me for a man like immediately he had all and then Tony Utley.

**Olivia** 1:25:19

And I didn't look like a man. I was just a black woman was.

1:25:23

Yeah. And I felt that the weird thing too is I felt so feminine bald, like it was I probably felt the most feminine like because you know, you're full faces on this way. Like you just feel so like, I felt so feminine. And then like, like I was just getting and I again, like, didn't really want to dress more feminine. So I was just dressing like I dress and I was getting hemmed. I still do, but I was getting hemmed consistently, which nevermind. And like sometimes I like first it was okay, like I didn't really mind. But then as it started happening, like more and more and like in earnest. I was like, I don't really

love that. And especially when it would make like a lot of people mad like sometimes like they, like he hit me and I'd like sometimes I just go with it, I'd like drop my

**Olivia** 1:26:07

trans or something. I don't know, like transphobic

1:26:11

I really I definitely got some of that. But like, I really don't know, there are a lot of ambiguous interactions or like, like, my voice is already naturally pretty lower. So like sometimes if I like wanted to, like tip the person off I would like be like, Oh, thanks like tight be like, oh, have a good day. Like it was like as like a way to kind of like signal that they were like missing something. Yeah. Or if they were confused, but like, but also I like to play with people sometime and make them uncomfortable. So I just be like, yeah, like I'm not gonna give you any clues like you just you're just gonna have to figure it out or just gonna have to follow through in some way. And yeah, but yeah, it was very it's very interesting. Like that level of androgyny was not something that I ever thought I would be able to achieve like yeah let alone without trying. Yeah, so like it was just so odd be like

**Olivia** 1:27:10

what's it like making a meeting lesbians in your city? Now you talked about people like so les who a black lesbian that we both know. We're building like mask lesbian stud, lesbian, black, lesbian. Mass presenting black lesbian communities. How are you like making a meeting lesbians? Like where are you finding them? How are they finding you? How are you guys forming community?

1:27:37

We I feel like I meet a lot of lesbians at NYU. Like, accidentally a lot of the time actually. I yeah, I thought I'd be more through like my major. But sociology is very straight. Apparently. I did not. Yeah, really? Wait. So I may have I'm, I may have made an error. But, um, yeah, like I, I mean, I'll go to things like sometimes I go out, but like, I also will go like to, like queer haul, like queer holiday markets, like, this has been like the move, like, around here. I feel like COVID made it kind of difficult. I wasn't really, I don't really do social media like that. Like, I don't really like to be online, I don't have Twitter, like, it's just very, like, I don't, I don't really be online like that. So it's really a through a lot of like, people who I meet and like happen to be lesbians and then like, just kind of adopt me into their community, which I really like. But I think it's difficult a lot of the time because, like, the person that I was in that relationship with is still very much integrated into especially like the NYU like lesbian community. And like a lot of people don't know they were shitty, that they were shitty that they were shitty to their most recent partner who like like, the kind of like abuse in that situation escalated more than it did with me. And so a lot of those and like have been continually shitty and like manipulative anytime I see them and people don't know and they either don't know because like there are a lot of the things that like were like, like the worst that happened are things that you don't like to share or like value like proximity to or like don't like they're so integrated and like core lesbian community that like the people who I'm still friends with who still interact with this person because I just don't think that they want to divorce themselves from that community. Like it's not it wouldn't be worth it. Do

**Olivia** 1:29:47

it because of the community and this person has to be central to the community. Yeah,

1:29:51

or not central but just always, always right. And you don't know

**Olivia** 1:29:53

what to do about it. Yeah, doesn't make interacting with like that part of the community difficult.

1:29:58

I've avoided a lot of it since then.

**Olivia** 1:30:00

in that community, yeah, there was a little bit to say.

1:30:03

No, I definitely think. And I definitely think that you dodged a huge bullet there. But like I like yeah, I've spent a lot of time like, oddly enough, like of what like desperate for lesbian community but also avoiding it. Because I'm, like, really scared to like, interact with this person. I don't know what this person has said about me like in other contexts like, like, I don't like anything

**Olivia** 1:30:30

about you. Yeah. And I also don't know this person. Yeah. Like, I know this person,

1:30:35

like in like, like, even like going into a like a lesbian bar, like I fear like running into them there. And there are so few, like, you know what I mean? So it's kind of just like, pick your poison. So that's definitely like, like, it's, it's weird, because I don't want to say it's forced me to isolation because it's definitely been like a self inflicted, like, avoidance. But like, yeah, it's like, it's weird friends. We don't know this person. Yeah, I would love to I don't think so.

**Olivia** 1:31:01

It's just like us on the floor. Yeah.

1:31:03

But it's always it's always also like, like, when meeting like new people, like new lesbian friends, like, I kind of have to see if they know this person. And if they interact frequently, you're like, No, this person like, I'm very likely to not Yeah, like, form a friendship, which I know is like, even even like three years later, you know what I mean? I feel like, it's been so long since the relationship was over. But it did so much damage that I'm like that I still try to cut ties. But then it's like, it's awkward. And also, like, I'm just only 21 now. So it's like, like, like the slightly older lesbian communities. Like, I feel like I'm not quite in there yet. You know what I mean? Like, I want to hang out with the 25 year old girls, but they don't want me like, they feel like a predator. Yeah. Or they just feel like a like, like, I'm a baby. And they don't want to do it. Like I want to

**Olivia** 1:31:51

be babied. It's weird. I'm like, you're 26 you're not that much. Yeah, it's

1:31:56

really not that different. But like, I so it's like, I'm like, kind of straddling that, like, I want to, like, be able to and I am like trying like now to break away from like, feeling like I have to stay connected to this particular community and like, branch out and like, honestly, really like Not like trying to, like shed that fear of like, I'm that like, person, but it's so weird. Like, when a lesbian community that like you think like, you know, like, oh, like lesbian communities, like should be like safer spaces or whatever. But like, are some of the spaces that I like, feel most unsafe? So that's like, it's kind of odd.

**Olivia** 1:32:36

Community you want but then, or you had but can't

1:32:39

Yeah, or I want or can access but like at a personal cost? Yeah.

**Olivia** 1:32:47

Um, what was your first visit to a lesbian related place or event like,

1:32:54

oh, I don't even remember. I think like, first I think it was like, I definitely went to like, like a camp girl meeting, like my first week of NYU. And I did not like it. It was very, I don't know, it was just like a lot of a lot of white people. And to just like, I felt I had felt like I already was very comfortable with my lesbianism before baby queers. Yeah. And so I was like, I don't know, like, Y'all are just y'all are out and about. I've been to I don't know, I like I've been to gay bars and stuff. I think I went to like Henry or cubby hole was like one of my first like, but I was also like, kind of strange because I was like, I don't know. Like, it was like, when I was 18, and I like slipped in there with my fake guy the way that they shouldn't be checking. No, it was like my little fake ID I went in there and I think I ordered like a gin tonic. Yeah, and then like, I don't know, it was like small and like, crowded and like, overwhelming like, yeah, lots of white people. I was with a couple of like, friends but they're like new friends. You know what I mean? It just wasn't like, I don't know. Like, I feel like a lot of lesbian spaces now involve like, substitute substances.

1:34:25

Oh, yeah ones

1:34:27

and I like I drink like less so now I'm more of kind of like a stoner. I like I'm more like kind of like low energy or whatever. So like when I go out I'm not really but yeah, but I've also like struggled with like, with using like substances more than I should and things like that. And so like I definitely don't like to have to like tie in community with like substance substances.

**Olivia** 1:34:54

You're in a space and it can be so uncomfortable where you feel like you have to be drained. Yeah.

1:34:59

Because sometimes I'd be in those spaces sober that is, and then I leave, like immediately I'm like, yeah, here like terrible like I

**Olivia** 1:35:11

don't like going to bars it's sensory overload. Yeah, sensory

1:35:14

overload is a huge one.

**Olivia** 1:35:17

I just, yeah, I would rather be at home

1:35:20

for the most part when I go out to a bar I have to be like crossed like mostly I usually get like when I drink I usually can't just drink I have to like smoke like to balance myself out in some type of way shape or form. But that's neither here nor there. But like, but yeah, like I have to be like, like if I'm going to Henrietta like, I am not sobered in that establishment ever been

**Olivia** 1:35:42

to Henrietta's? Or Woods Wednesday. Don't go to the Yeah, I've heard it's bad.

1:35:47

To not go to the woods. I won't

**Olivia** 1:35:49

lie. It's just vibes.

1:35:52

Horrible, horrible. It's just a really horrific vibes. Like or at least for me, like,

**Olivia** 1:35:57

Lex post about like, like, like fat dikes and like fat lesbians and like, darker skin lesbians. And then, like mask lesbians getting like Che on like, there'll be like, awful time at the woods. Someone wouldn't talk to me and said it was because I was fat. And I'm like, Oh, damn,

1:36:16

yeah, it's just like, for me, there's like a back patio area. And then like the inside one, the music inside, not the moment to the back patio out there. Like it's just a lot of moving in and out and in and out. There's like a crowded like a passageway that's like really crowded and like it's always like a ranch. Like it's just not as like an outside everyone's smoking. So it's just like, you can't breathe outside. And

then yeah, it's just not it's not the vibe. I don't particularly like it better, but there isn't a lot of there isn't space. There's not a lot of sitting space. I was just at a queer holiday like Mark. Yeah,

**Olivia** 1:36:53

what time were you there?

1:36:54

I was there we were. Michelle and I went, we were there. So briefly, it was probably like it was after work. So it was probably like four

**Olivia** 1:37:00

or five left. I was there for 10 minutes. Because it was so it was like water walk. No, we

1:37:06

were there for 10 minutes.

**Olivia** 1:37:08

I had I had like two masks on Yeah, I bought six stickers. Like I bought this sticker. Nice for and then I left.

1:37:15

Yeah, we I got like a poster from the like Butch for hire booth. i Yeah. And then we, we were we were out of there. I was like I like especially since I work in like the Columbus Circle Holiday Market like. And so it was already like interacting with so many people all day. And then I got there and I was like, it was I have to go. It was so I was like I have to go. So

**Olivia** 1:37:39

what does lesbian community mean to you?

1:37:43

Oh, that's such a broad question. Um, I think that I don't know, lesbian community. Like, there's like this, this particular understanding, I feel like that only lesbians can give each other like the experience of like, not centering your romantic or like, most of the time social, like life around men is just really not something that you can find anywhere else. And I really value that like it gives me like, it makes me feel I don't want to say like, it makes me feel normal. Because I feel like that's so like, yeah, content. Yeah. Is and like, and I feel like yes, stabilized. Yeah. Yeah. For sure. And I think that like, as like, it's just like people who move through the world. Similarly, to me, that is really, really important. Like, I like me. And so les were talking one time about like, like, just like being like, masculine black lesbians. And just like some of the experiences that she had that I was like, relating to, like we were talking about, and she was like, I've never had anyone relate to this experience before and like, and, and like, just like talking about, like, certain things like that. So it's really just being able to be I feel like being able to be seen, like, especially but I feel like I've definitely felt a lot more seen in like black lesbian spaces or like masculine lesbian spaces, especially, especially with like fat. Masculine lesbians.

**Olivia** 1:39:35

Oh, have you heard of the Butch boudoir project? I have heard of it. I'm about to buy their calendar. You are Yes. I would like it for my wall. Yeah. That's real like a New Year's present to myself.

1:39:49

That's real period.

**Olivia** 1:39:51

Yeah. Also like a bush for Bush like erotica reading. Come on. I can show you later. Please. Yeah. Which things are likes a mask lesbian things. Okay, so what lesbian spaces do you wish existed? Who have fun fantasize,

1:40:11

I would love like, a like a, like a, like a butch Beach Club. But like, or like a mask, like, beach club, like during the summer, like you get together and you just like, have fun on the beach and like go swimming and like, I don't know, just hanging out, like kick around. I feel like that is so I love the water. And I love I suppose be and so like, why not? Why not put them together? Like I feel like that that would be that would be the moment I feel like also just like in general more like sober, like lesbian spaces that don't involve strenuous physical activity. Because I feel like if it's a sober space, it's a lot of the time you're doing a sport, or you're doing like something that requires movement that I can't really do this so also just like taking that into account, like maybe like a, like a cute little like lesbian cafe or something like that. Like where people can hang out. Um, we're like I don't know, like a bookstore with only like lesbian books.

**Olivia** 1:41:26

Those used to exist in the 90s. Interesting, yeah. When it comes to the archives, I can show you I have a lot of their collections. Cool. Yeah, sad. But if the archives is a huge bookstore, it's not like a bucket not like bookstore you can buy but like book collection you can sit in, um, what does Leschi enjoy mean to you? Big Question. Big Question.

1:41:54

Lesbian joy to me is like, I think it's freedom. Like I there have been a few moments like not a lot, but like a few, where I haven't felt like I've had to feel overtly aware of, or suppress, like, any aspects of like, my, my lesbian identity in like, Whatever way like I haven't had to be like overly conscious of like, how my blackness is interacting with a certain space or how my chronic pain is interacting with a certain space and when all those guards are down at the same time, like that is when I can experience like lesbian joy or when I'm like really just hitting it off with someone and relating to them like so hard. That is like, that's like lesbian joy because again, I feel like it's so like, it's so integral to the lesbian experience to to seek out being seen. Yeah, so I think that that's that's really like the carefreeness of of that of finding that is less be enjoyed.

**Olivia** 1:43:06

Is there anything you want to talk about that maybe like we missed or didn't cover?

1:43:13

I don't know. I think

**Olivia** 1:43:15

are thinking I've one thing I don't know if it's something that you could like relate to at all, but you talk about being in community with lots of mask lesbians? Do you guys talk about what it's like being visibly queer or visibly a lesbian and thinking about being like visibly mask and visibly a mask lesbian out outside and like negotiating safety, while also being visibly die? Kita other dikes like balancing that?

1:43:43

Yeah, it's hard. I feel like this one conversation I had, again, was so late because we really just be talking. Not like bestie besties. But like, whenever we see each other, like we see each other, like, you know what I mean? We like went on this like, we had like a little picnic one time and like Brooklyn Bridge Park. And we were just talking. And we both related to like, we were kind of just like talking about the first time like, we were aware that somebody else was afraid of us, like in a space like, like walking outside or like at night or like something. And so I think that a lot of the times for me, my safety is in danger when other people perceive me as a danger because they misinterpret like my gender identity. A lot of the times people think I'm a black man, and I think that scares a lot of people. Um, and then like, and so as soon as I know that I'm perceived as a threat, like the one who's actually in danger is me like, and so I've been aware of that a couple of times. And so I think that there's always like this moment of like, like, I want to be perceived as queer, but a lot of that's also when I'm not even really trying to be perceived as queer. I'm just like out in a bout existing like in my, in my state like natural state. So I think that that's where it gets kind of hard. I think that sometimes people can determine whether or not they're perceived as queer based on the way that they dress or like certain things that they do. Yeah, but I think that other other times, like there's just this at least no, like, it's just not possible. I can't really shed any of it, especially since my hair shorter. Like, like, yeah, I definitely used to have a lot of people think that I was straight, like, when I was first coming into my queerness. And, like, I don't know, I had, I had longer hair, like I was almost hair, I'm a slightly more like, masculine side, but like, again, like not as much as I am now. Because I think that was still holding myself back with regard to that. But like now, like, especially since I'm like, like, just like physically larger as well. Like, just, there's no real I feel like that also determines like, size almost as a factor into whether or not someone is queer. Like, I think that like a lot of the times like, like people think of like, like, when they think of mask lesbian, this isn't what I think of at all. But like a lot of people think of mask lesbians is like, skinny like, you know what I mean? Like the skinny like, why, like, you know what, I mean? Sick? Yeah, hail, yes. But that's just like, not how I look. But there's also like, a, like, an other ring, and like a queering of like, fat people. And so I think that that also has a lot to do with it. So I think that like now I'm sort of at a point where like, like, my existence as a, as a lesbian is like, that's just a gift, like, it's a given like, and so I don't think that there really is much negotiation that can be done. And so I think for that specific reason, I don't try to downplay it at all, because it's almost more dangerous to look like you're trying to conceal something than if you're just like, existing as as dorky as possible, I guess at least that's my experience of it.

**Olivia** 1:47:12

Is there anything else? And I sprung that question on you last minute? No. Okay.

1:47:15

I was thinking about like, I guess like, I forget whether or not you explained to me like, if like you didn't include any questions on like, coming out specifically. But like you can talk about coming in? Yeah, I'll talk a little bit about it. Because it was, it was how

**Olivia** 1:47:33

you came out. But then you're, you're like,

1:47:37

oh, yeah, and then I came right back. We'll talk more about that. Yeah, well, like the first time I ever came out was I told my best friend that I had feelings for her. And it was because this is a white girl. And she, which is important, because she had a crush on this boy in our class, his name is Cedric, and he was black. And she overheard him talking about the fact that he only liked black women. And this was like, I think probably like seventh or eighth grade. So like, that's pretty. That's big. Right there. And so, but I was the only black girl like in the class, so and so she did the math was like, well, it has to be Rachel. And she kept asking me and asking me, and it was like definitely getting to the point where it was like threatening our friendship a little bit. I was like, I don't want your man like, It's not my fault that he doesn't watch you like it's, it has nothing to do with me like, and and then she was just like, leave you must like him. Like who else would he be talking about like this, that and the other thing

**Olivia** 1:48:48

is like another black girl outside of school. Exactly. Nothing to do with you know, I

1:48:51

know. And I was like, I was like, Well, I don't like him actually. Like you like, in kind of like a like, get it together girl like, please. And she was like, okay. Yeah, she was like, I was like, to like me back and she was like, No. And I was like, I was like, Yeah, I kind of figured that you wouldn't. And she was like, we were like, not like in person for this conversation. So she was like, let's see what schools are like, Okay, I was like, okay, yeah. And so yeah, that was like the moment but yeah, I feel like coming out. I don't know. I feel like a lot of people have different like, feelings about coming out. But for me like I don't I'm not of the abolish coming out mindset. I think that I think that it's a it's in a way a big moment. I think that it should be shifted like you're geared towards coming out to your community and so that they can welcome you and celebrate that like I definitely think that that should be the focus of it rather than like, like the coming out to your family and like The like, the stress and pressure of like, being accepted, I don't think should be a thing. But like, I feel like kind of almost, like perpetually coming out like every day like, even if I'm just like casually talking about my girlfriend to like someone, like even at my job, like, people will like talk to me and like asked me questions about like, my personal life and like, I'm like, oh, like me and my partner because like, we live together. So it's so difficult to not like me and my roommate. Yeah, like, it just feels so smooth. Yeah. And they were roommates. So I feel like there's I feel like that's, it's just always gonna be be a big part of that. But the reason I kind of wanted to talk about the first time I ever came out was because it was I didn't I never really like thought about how, like until recently about how, like, how much like my, like, racial identity also, like factored into that. And it was so like, because like if that if, like, if such a credit hadn't been a king, and only I'd only book with

black women like we wouldn't like, I don't know how long it would have taken me to come out to anybody. You know what I mean? Like it could have gone so like, I probably would have gone like, years without saying anything. And not because I wasn't like I don't know, didn't want people to know, but just because I didn't really otherwise wouldn't have found it relevant to talk about I

**Olivia** 1:51:24

don't know why I had to bring it up.

1:51:26

Yeah. So who knows? But yeah. Well, thank you so much. Thank you.