

# Imm1\_bm\_interview\_2023-04-12\_001

Wed, Apr 12, 2023 6:09PM • 2:01:16

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

lesbian, trans, queer, feel, people, judaism, friends, lesbianism, class, talk, world, love, community, started, high school, relationship, wrestling, growing, good, organizing

## SPEAKERS

Olivia N, Bina

00:00

Okay.

**Olivia N** 00:03

Today is April 12 2023. I'm Olivia Newsome, interviewing Vinay and virtually over zoom. Do I have permission to record this interview? Yes. Do you know you can stop recording at any time?

**Bina** 00:16

Yes.

**Olivia N** 00:17

Can you say your name age and pronounce?

**Bina** 00:21

My name is spinna. My age is 21 years old and my pronouns are she her they or anything other than he?

**Bina** 00:30

How would you describe yourself? I am a queer Jewish, communist, lesbian, non binary transgender woman. Yes.

**Olivia N** 00:44

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

**Bina** 00:50

Yes, so I was born in a hospital in Brooklyn, New York. But I don't claim to be from New York at all, because all of my living memories. And all the time I grew up and spent, like, just being a person was in Maplewood, New Jersey, which is a small suburban town, about 10 to 15 minutes outside of North New Jersey. And that's where I consider my home to be. Um, my childhood was beautiful and easy in some

ways, and very difficult. And, you know, the more I reflect on it traumatic and other ways. My mother and father did not have a good relationship with each other for any part of my life.

01:37

And I know that

**Bina** 01:39

the way that he treated her created a lot of anger that was then taken out on my brother and I, both before, during and after their divorce. A lot of my childhood memories at home are affected by that anger. I was a child who loves school. And unreflecting, most of my friends at school at that age were girls, I love to run in between houses and around the neighborhood with other kids. I was adventurous, I didn't really care what happened to my body I was I would just throw myself anywhere and everywhere and anything. I spent a lot of time around adults outside of school, much more than I did other kids. I was a very self conscious kid. And I remember really wanting to wear louder, brighter, colorful and different fitting clothes, but being very concerned about being different my physical appearance from even from elementary school. Um, I enjoyed different like physical activities. I played a few like I tried to play this and that I played actually hockey for many years, which ended up being like a source bonding for myself, my dad, I was a musical kid from a very young age. I could like hear melodies. Like I think at like age three or four, I could hear a melody and play it back on the piano without much reference. And I didn't really know what music was at the time. I just had that in me. But I loved music. I loved art. I love sound. I love being outside.

03:18

And I

**Bina** 03:23

yeah, I think those are some good baseline details for my childhood.

**Olivia N** 03:28

What was your relationship like to your brother. Um, when I was

**Bina** 03:36

younger, my brother and I had a very strained relationship, specifically all throughout elementary school, he was a big bully. And he would like mainly he he doesn't, he wasn't he isn't really like a physically imposing person. But he was very very like, verbally like super suit like he would always constantly make fun of me especially like my appear my physical appearance actually is something that he would really pick on me for and that really got to me and he just incessantly he would use the fact that he was older and therefore have like more wisdom and more knowledge just as an as a way to like manipulate and always he always knew how to push my buttons. And so like our relationship a lot of the time was him saying mean things to me or pushing my buttons are calling me this and he asked me to stop stop while you're doing that stop, stop him not listening. And so eventually I realized I can't beat him with words, so I have to just start hitting him. So that's what I did, because I was I think I was the more athletic of the two growing up. Exactly. And our dad was a boxing coach. So he taught us he was always trying to get us to be like fighters calm or he knew no about combat sports. So I remember there

was this one memory where my brother just kept on We were in the car and he kept on hold me fat over and over. And I was like, Why are you calling me that? Let's stop. Because that's it. That was his favorite thing is to talk about my weight. And so eventually, I just, I just punched him in the nose in the backseat of the car, this left hook, he started bleeding everywhere. I am like, admittedly, this is very, like, little sibling passionate me. I was like, no, no, don't hit me back. But he had it coming. Like, I couldn't use my words, I was a small child, I didn't know how to use my words, I had already asked him to stop, I'd use that, that was all I had, that was my only my verbal weapons. So after that, I just learned that I could like, like, hit him or like, tackle him to the ground, and he would stop. So that was our relationship for much of when I was growing up, at least. It was strained, I didn't feel comfortable around him. And I was like, just very angry at him all the time. Um, since then, you know, through middle school, it was hard, but then, you know, I will say that he he definitely bore the brunt of not sad didn't, because I definitely bought my mom's anger for sure. But he got more of it than I did. Because he was older. And so he became very, like distant in like middle and high school. And, um, we had like, still a rocky relationship through that we didn't really have much in common.

06:27

And

**Bina** 06:28

there was a point where he was like, very dangerously involved with like, different like drugs and whatnot. And I think there was a point where he, like, almost died. And I got very, I was still very young. So I was like, very resentful of him for that, um, which I regret tremendously. And I've expressed, like, I've apologized so much, and expressed so much regret to him for that, because I definitely I was resentful and angry when I, when he needed granted, I was, again a child, but he didn't need resent or anger in that moment. But since then, I think we finally in the last three years or so really found a balance and a good relationship that works for us. And it's, you know, he's grown a lot, and I've grown a lot and the bullying, he's a very sweet person. So the the mean, streak has gone for sure. So yeah, I feel like we found, we've evened out.

07:21

We've even though at a certain point.

**Olivia N** 07:24

We'll talk a little bit more about your relationship to your parents. And, like you mentioned how they were like super angry and fighting to each other and abusive to y'all. So like, how did that continue, like before, during and after the divorce?

**Bina** 07:41

Um, yeah, so I think, you know, as I grew older, and you know, this is also part of just like, growing and coming into my own, like self, like gender wise, and my gender identity, it's also like reflecting critically on how I perceived my parents growing up, because so many situations like that. And not to absolve mothers by any chance, because there are a lot of really terrible awful mothers out there. But a lot of abusive dynamics go the way of the mom will always get the brunt of the blame to. And usually, that's partly because by design, like, it's a front that the dad puts up, and convinces the kid that the mother is

to blame. And this is not a universal story. Again, I don't want to make excuses for awful mothers. But I definitely was scared of my mom as a kid. And I didn't think about like, for an end, it wasn't constant, but it was enough where it was like, I was always like, walking on eggshells around her. And she yelled, she was a big, her, she was yelled a lot and it was very scary. But, um, I didn't really realize how much of that was like hurt and anger that was because of the way that she you know, my, my dad was and definitely can be bullied. Um, and I've come to see that in the way that he treats he can treat myself or others He's very kind. He's very, he's very calm, but he can also be very intimidating and imposing and a bully. And so my mom had a lot of anger and a lot of hurt from that where she didn't really have an outlet for it. And so my brother and myself weren't out but um, luckily, you know, weren't physically abused or anything of that nature but she was always very angry at us and always screaming and always like over the littlest over the littlest things and that continued for through the divorce definitely made it better. Um, but it definitely still continued through I would say like middle school, but had a dark better over time, honestly, like once they separated for real, it was like that was what needed to happen in the first place like, because as long as they stay together, it would have been that same dynamic. When I was a kid, I definitely I, you know, I loved and felt good around both my parents, and they're very generous people. And they care very deeply about myself and my brother. And they did a lot for us. And

10:28

for all the

**Bina** 10:29

mean and scary things that happened, they were people who

10:35

don't know, what's what I'm thinking of,

**Bina** 10:38

who I knew loved us so deeply and who I love to. And I feel myself like, I consider myself like very lucky in that sense, and I definitely you know, there are so many cases of abuse or kids that are so much worse than what I had to endure. But it's only been over the last couple of years that I really started to reflect on how my relationship with my parents has shaped me today, and I think made me like a very timid person. And the very that sort of quality that I said of walking on eggshells, I've definitely maintained in many relationships and that fear of my dad and I will say like out of the two, my mom is the one who's put a lot of conscious effort in into sort of working to repair a lot of those damaged relationship dynamics. So I want to give credit to her where it's due because she has apologized and like really committed and tried to be better consciously, and like identify ways that she messed up and the ways that she still sees it. I have become a lot more like my mom. In many ways. I've inherited a lot of her qualities, both good and bad. I've inherited her self consciousness, and I've inherited her tendency to be too hard on herself and to uphold this vision of others in comparison to yourself. But I've also inherited so much so many great qualities from her like her ability to talk to strangers to relate to people her social skills even though she would, you know, she knows her social skills her ability to and you know, as I said before, I was hanging around like mostly adults when I was a kid. Many queer kids

have that it's like what is my gender? Oh, a pleasure to have in class or a pleasure to be your child is such a pleasure to be around.

12:41

Like, her

**Bina** 12:42

ability to talk to strangers her music tastes, so much of my music tastes comes from my mom. She played so much music like all my all my favorite art like Stevie Wonder I got from my mom, Erykah Badu I got from my mom. She encouraged me to do things to do things that, you know, made me happy. She encouraged and supported various artistic endeavors like piano and piano playing, you know, she, the piano, the little upright piano, we moved from her parents house to our house, and she never complained about me playing.

13:21

And, yeah,

**Bina** 13:22

I've inherited her love for gardening and flowers. She's an excellent florist. Um, I think a lot of my kindness and consideration for others comes from her, along with a lot of my insecurities and a lot of my flaws. So I always, that's, it's like, such a delicate balance. And I always I like thinking about, it's interesting to think about just how similar we are. And also, I just look exactly like her if you saw a picture of her when she was my age, especially I was like, I stole her face, I steal her hair, all my best physical attributes come from my mom to, um, I'm glad that I looked like her and not my dad. But, um, and my dad now I have a fairly good relationship with my dad, that was definitely strange over the last couple months, just because of transness. And same with my mom, and we can get into that more, but I sort of am just now as this interview was going on in the throes of reflecting how transness might permanently alter those relationships. But um, yeah, that's, that's I'll probably whenever you asked about parents, and I'll probably focus more on her because I've definitely spent more time around her since the divorce. So she's the one who's been most influential in my life, I think.

**Olivia N** 14:40

So can you talk about middle and high school? Did you like attending it? Did you hate it? You mentioned how you were a student or someone who loved going to school.

**Bina** 14:49

So yes, that was an elementary school. It immediately stopped and middle school. Elementary school was great. Elementary school was really nice. I had my all Measure school was, you know, I don't want to sound cliché, but it genuinely did form a good community. There. It was, it was a majority black school. And it just a lot of the teachers I had, not all of them but many of them really genuinely loved and cared for their students and really put in a lot of effort to make their students feel safe and loved and nurtured. And Middle School, oh, boy, middle school was like the worst three years ever, for many people not original and saying that, but like, I hated middle school, and I had some good memories in high school, but you couldn't fucking pay me to go back. Um, middle school was a time of intense

bullying. from others, at one point, like, especially during eighth grade, like, I don't think that like the entire grade at felt like was trained against me. And it was being led by this group of like, 10 or so boys who were like, really, really intent on ruining my life in every way they could. It was like, the torment was creative. And I was like, How the fuck are y'all even y'all must be dedicating your entire lives

16:12

to tormenting me.

**Bina** 16:16

I tried. And I had a group of really inconsistent friends throughout middle school, all of them were boys who were mean and rough and exhausting. And, like the only the positive memories I have from I loved their parents, I love their moms, their moms loved me. Their moms always seem to single me out from the group and be like, Wow, you're so wonderful. And I'm like, yeah. Anyways, the only the positives I remember from that group were, there were there were some one on one, a lot of them, they could be very tender people. And I remember like, getting to just like, there was this one, one friend of mine, who like we would, he was like, kind of like, we'd like hypermasculine list on the outside. But then you get them one on one. He wants to like cuddle all the time. I was like, Yeah, I liked you. And so like, um, we had like a very close relationship. We did everything together. We were just like, very, like physically, like, touch wise, very close, and separable. But even that it was like, could flip on a dime if you're in a group of people. So I was always very confused about that. But in terms of the stool, it just felt like torment all the time.

**Bina** 17:30

Um, I always remember. I just remember craving something kinder, and easier. And gentler. I didn't know where to look. And I also felt that I really needed to fit in and conform. So I tried to be rough, and I tried to be mean, and I tried to be awful. And I was mean, and I was rough. And I was awful. I was all of those things. I hate the person I was in middle school so much. I don't think I can ever forgive myself for it, which is like, it's part of life. But yeah. I'm so not that, anyone.

**Olivia N** 18:21

So when you're talking about being bullied by the whole grade, not that anyone brings on bullying or deserves to be bullied, but why did you feel like this group of guys are like the whole specific school like why were they not? Why did you feel like why were they specifically targeting you? Because it's not a feeling. This is like a real thing that happened? Like, why would they target youth specifically?

**Bina** 18:45

i That's the weirdest thing because I didn't know at the time, I had no answers. Like, you were like, What are you doing? I asked them at one point, like I asked him, like, Why do you hate me? I asked him that. And they had no good answer. They laughed. They were just like, lightly they laugh when I asked that. And I would remember I was so confused. I was like, you don't even have a good answer. Like, why? Why do you do this? And I didn't know. And this is why at several points in the interview I say other people knew something was different about me before I ever knew before I ever knew I didn't think anything

**Bina** 19:23

was different about me. I thought I was just I thought I was a 12 year old boy. 13 year old boy, I didn't know anything was fucking different about me. And I didn't really part of me was like, I didn't bother doing much reflection. Just I'm like, wait a minute, this isn't. I tried to tell myself this isn't my fault. Like, what am I doing? Like asking myself why they're doing this to me. They're, they're the ones doing it. Unfortunately, oftentimes manifests in me being like, I a lot of the times like I would, for instance, I'd be talking to a friend. I felt like this almost felt like I was being spied on because I would say something to my friend and suddenly like, oh, like a few days later, this group of kids will be making fun of me for that thing. I'm like, How the fuck do y'all even know? I said that, like, Where's this coming from? Do y'all have like, are your microphone in me? And so I just stopped talking to people about things I like about who I was, I just, like stopped everything. I was like, if I don't say anything, if I don't do anything, they won't have ammunition. And so, um, but like, I remember I was walking in the hallway like anytime I walked in the hallway and I would see on the past me or see on the behind me I would like start sweating like freaking out like, Oh, God, like what are the so it was just a lot of paranoia all the time. And like, just trying to make myself as small as humanly possible. And it never worked. Of course. Um

20:52

yeah, I, I, you know,

**Bina** 20:56

I in so in middle school, like most of the people again, most of my friends were girls. But I wasn't able to form a lot of close friendships anyway, because I just felt constantly like I didn't, I didn't feel safe socializing with anyone I would go to school, I would go straight. I eventually I started going to the gym because I was like, I have to I got this like paranoid like, I was like, I have to be able to physically defend myself. So I have to be like, which again, I think is like, related to like my brother, for instance, like that was the only way I could defend myself as a kid. So I was like, I have to become like, physically stronger than everybody who is tormenting mentally. So I started going into the gym really often. I don't really randomly strong in eighth grade, like I was like, deadlifting, almost 400 pounds. I was like, I was like, it was like a tree trunk of a kid. I don't know. Exactly. So that was my little I would go to school, I would go to the gym, and I would go straight home. I didn't really socialize much with people. Beyond that. I had friends who are girls mainly. And I would like lie to them. I would say like, this is happening. These people are really being horrible to me. And I don't know why. And I would sit with them at lunch. But that was about it. I never really figured anything beyond that. Um, but I started to discover that I like much prefer to be around girls anyway.

**Bina** 22:15

And I was able to relate to them easier. So,

**Olivia N** 22:21

can you talk a little bit about high school?

**Bina** 22:27

Yeah, um, let me pull up my notes real quick. Um, so in high school, my first year of high school, I took up wrestling, because there was a boy I had a crush on and I was really wanting to impress him. And he was really good at wrestling. He was really good at wrestling.

**Olivia N** 22:45

Your thought was we should vote wrestle.

**Bina** 22:48

We should wrestle together. Oh, okay. Yeah, like, like there's this name. That's like, what would you do? Here? Let me I'm sorry to detract, but

**Olivia N** 22:58

show me. Yeah, no,

**Bina** 23:00

I need to pull this up. Because this is this is very important.

**Olivia N** 23:03

Oh, the trans Masks always want to wrestle each other and then fuck and I'm like, Y'all are so funny.

**Bina** 23:08

No one wants to wrestle Jimmy their numbers what they want their

**Bina** 23:12

numbers I can, like that's all of them. They all there. They're like, look for dominance. And then we like an artist and fuck afterward that I'm like, I don't want it to be my dream. This is a dream. So wrestle with a bunch of bitches. Yeah, no, this is my dream.

**Olivia N** 23:29

I want to do it too. But they want it to be like an actual fight like no, I want to lose. Like actually do it. And I'm like, That's not

**Bina** 23:35

I would I would actually wrestle them. I this thing. I'm good. Now I'm good now because I'm good. I would wrestle butches. And I would like I would put up a fight.

**Olivia N** 23:46

Whereas this was which isn't the point of their wrestle. They want it to be like an actual fight and like the issue was that I like lift a lot of weights. So I'm pretty strong. But then that's not fair. Because I don't want to win. And then like the wrestling isn't like fair, because it's obvious that I'm just like,

**Olivia N** 24:02

Oh, no.



**Bina** 24:06

You're You're just too strong for every for all. This is a meme. Yeah. What would you do if we got in a play fight and we bite and we bet and scratch to each other? And what would we do if at the end of the fight, you won and got on top of me? And we were all flushed and sweaty and tired. And I was looking up at you as you held me. And I was growling super hard. What would you do if that happened?

**Olivia N** 24:34

You have to send that to me. I know like 17 bitches who had this thought. I feel like they're always like, it's like t for t like wanna wrestle on legs and I'm like, Jesus Christ. What happened to what the fuck? They're all fucking trying to wrestle there used to be like a dike wrestling. But then I think the person that did it is like not a good community member. Oh, okay. That I think I know they're not a good community member. So I don't go to like jello, or take wrestling but it used to be like jello wrestling. I would

**Bina** 25:07

I want a date wrestling club where literally the only thing we do is go to like wrestling mats and just like duking it out for three hours. So

**Olivia N** 25:15

I was I can say this, it's fine.

**Olivia N** 25:18

I was thinking, I was like, who listened to the live my parents are gonna listen to every oral history. I, I was at I was at, I was at a kink event and they like had a wrestling mats out. And there weren't bushes wrestling, but they were like sexy dog ladies, like, like, for submission choking, like the shit out of these men who would like challenge them. And I was just like, maybe this just sparked something in me. Like, I was like, what kind of play is going on here? Because like, it was just like, like, max out on the ground. And I was like, Oh, I wonder what they're going to be doing. Like maybe it's something with like, fluids because of a vinyl mat. And then they and then they just like start stretching. And I was like, I'm interesting. And then they just start wrestling. I was like, oh shit. It wasn't even like kinky wrestling. It was just like, it was just rattling and they were like, sometimes naked. And I was just like, oh, not all of them. Were naked. Some of them were like, Let's go like full ghee. And I was like, rice.

**Bina** 26:25

Yeah, I mean, that's like the origins of wrestling, like a wrestling and like ancient Greece was all naked. And, you know, wrestling is very homoerotic. That's just something you can't deny. This problem is like that homoeroticism is like a big contention and like boys in high school who wrestled with it like no, it's not. So it creates a very like machismo kind of environment, which is one of the reasons why I quit after two years. Because that machismo but I missed it. I missed the sweat. I missed the bucket. I missed the blood. I

**Olivia N** 26:56

need to make the fucking legs post. I was like, there's 17 likes post right now with your name on it. That are all asking the wrestle and they need it. They want to wrestle?

**Bina** 27:05

Yeah, no, I believe them. I believe that. Oh my gosh, yeah, I'm gonna make Alexa town. Anyways, thanks for that.

**Olivia N** 27:12

Yeah. Did you send me the meme? Don't

**Bina** 27:17

Hey, I have to. Yeah, sorry. I'm gonna get it. My camera roll. Don't worry. Yeah. So while I'm doing that, I'm texting. Me It's such

**Olivia N** 27:26

an I was like, I need to send this to like seven people that just

**Bina** 27:31

sign my name at the bottom of it.

**Olivia N** 27:33

Well, no, I look, look. I know. I know through proxy, which is who want to wrestle? Not that not the cat girl.

**Bina** 27:46

Yeah, oh, yeah. I forgot that detail.

**Olivia N** 27:49

Anyways, keep going. Yeah. So you were talking about there was high school, high school. There was

**Bina** 27:59

a boy who I said I craved like gentleness. And like kindness earlier, he was all of that. He was so kind and like easygoing, and very, but like also was like really good at beating people up. But like very, very just so nice, and sweet and gentle and kind. And he was also a really good piano player. And we bonded over that the first time we met. And I didn't articulate it as a crush, but obviously had a crush on him. I was so in love with him. Like I wanted to be around him all the time out. Anytime my friends would gather. I was like, where's Blake? Where's he? Is he coming in is like coming. Because Blake's not coming. I'm gonna cry. And then, like, when we were all together, I would like just like, sort of like hanging around him like hi, hi. Hi. Hi. And it turned into a two year long bit this wrestling crush, because I stayed in wrestling for two years, and I'm not quite good at it all initially to impress him. So if anyone ever asked like, Yes, I do commit to the bet. I'm extremely so like, I went to every summer practice I went to every training I did. Like I was so damn committed. It took on a life of its own after a little while, I will admit because I also liked being good at things I liked him but I liked even better being good at things. And even more than that, I was a people pleaser wasn't am so the coach Coach was super emotionally manipulative. That whole you know, getting into some darker territory now. Oh my God gave me such a bad eating disorder. Many such cases for high school wrestlers or combat sports of

any kind, but it was really bad and the coach was like encouraging it the whole time and like super minut manipulative about it. But I threw myself Body and Soul mind into it. And ended up quitting my junior year because of buying the machismo culture and to to pursue a career in music, which I've been playing piano since I was seven. And at some point in high school, I really decided I wanted to be a professional musician. I'm throughout high school, especially in the second half when I left wrestling, a lot of my friends were girls or queer people, I was heavy in my ally phase junior year, beginning of junior year, then I end of junior year, I started going by like either non binary pronouns, but like to a small group of people. I'm more publicly in senior year, but I wasn't correcting anybody or like enforcing it in any kind of way. Um, I graduated in 2020. And at the beginning of 2020, I had been ready to go to music school, and then March, the pandemic happened. And so by the time I graduated, was June, the uprising had started. And I kind of never looked back. And I never went to music school. Because I was like, I want to do something. Musicians or musicians, unnecessary artists are unnecessary. But they don't need another like white musician from the suburbs, they don't need that, like, let other people be artists and musicians and cultural workers, I want to do something a little bit more useful with my life. So that's how I ended up in nursing school. But there's a lot that we missed there. So we'll get to that. That is high school. There's so much I could like a lot of I went through a few friend groups in high school and really developed a very strong fear of abandonment because of all of them. Because there were just several times several different friend groups that would just up and disappear overnight, without explanation. And I was always the odd one out of those left in those friend groups. I remember there was one time where I was friends with a group of people who the only thing that really kept us together was that everyone wanted to smoke together. And so that's what we do, we just do drugs together. And there was a point where like, I got much closer with one girl in the group. And we just hung out all the time together. And we were both sort of ostracized from the group. Over time, especially when like drugs became less of a fun thing. Again, like sort of overnight without explanation ostracized. And all the times I remember trying in all these different issues to try to get to the root of the problem that hey, what's going on? And I never got an answer. So that's sort of definitely developed a lot of my social the way I move socially comes from high school.

32:29

But I feel

**Bina** 32:31

like I'll probably uncover more I want to talk about high school as we go on. But for now, I feel like that's a foundation that we can work off of.

**Olivia N** 32:45

So can you talk a little bit about class and how class affected you growing up?

32:49

Yeah,

**Bina** 32:50

for sure. So my classroom class background is very much that of like, suburban labor, aristocracy, petite bourgeoisie, to define some terms, to ZBrush. YZ just is a class standard. I'm not saying you

don't know this, but just for the people listening. CPGs it just refers to, you know, Bucha was the petite, which was the proletariat working class, it all refers to your relationship to means of production and capital. So I grew up in a house, you know, where my parents were homeowners, were like, grandparents had been saving for college for a while, and retirement, things like that. So I'm, you know, not members of the ruling class, but also like capital to spare money to spare assets to spare. And so not working. I wasn't from a working class family at all. Um, and both of my parents worked. But then my mom is a public school teacher, my dad is a lawyer. So both professionals dad is in a job where, although he's a working person, it's very much like labor aristocracy, like nobody should, you know, he, we had a class acted as a shield from all of the worst parts. Where did I read this? It's very much, um, it acted as a shield from a lot of the worst aspects of the worlds for me class and race. As Fanon said, You're rich because you're white, you're white, because you're rich and that's very much true. And so it also gave me a lot of opportunities for enrichment and social development that others didn't like grandparents take you out to see this or to dinner here or go you know, spend time here away from school like there wasn't, there was like I wasn't confined to the house to you know, in terms of like relationship with like domestic labor or things of that nature because I had the time and ability in class. I standing to basically have freedom and opportunity to explore the world and do things and explore my own interests and talk about those kinds of things. So class acted as just a shield from all of the room a lot of difficulties and hardships that a lot of other queer children, especially racial, racialized queer kids go through. Um, that's the way I've been thinking about it. And all of these things shaped me as a person tremendous me and allowed me to grow up in the way I did. So like everything I every every everything I am today has been facilitated by my class background. Even my politics, which are very much like my politics are very firmly and principally that of communists like the reason I had time throughout the pandemic throughout the past 345 years to do so much organizing, and go like be so rooted in these different community organizations and actions and political education invested into it, because like, I had jobs throughout high school, I was working, but I didn't like I wasn't required to constantly worry about, you know, going making money for myself or taking care of a house. Like I had time and space to explore these places. And you know, when I wasn't going to college, when I was taking gap years, I didn't have to work. So I had time to organize. I had time to explore that, so. Yeah, class was everything. It is everything. Yeah.

**Olivia N** 36:31

So can you talk a little bit about maybe I can talk about race. So I'm going to skip the question. And then I'll come back to that other question just because of the continuation. Mentioned the Phenom. So if you don't, you don't talk about Fanon again, but like, you could talk about race and how that affected you.

36:51

Yeah, I could,

**Bina** 36:53

I could talk about Fanon all the time, but I feel like that'd be like distracting or depersonalizing all of this, like, if there's one thing I'm good at, it's like not talking about myself. And instead of like shifting toward like, oh, let's talk about this book I just read so yeah, let me scroll to this. I just have notes for this. So I want to race define my relationship to gender class sexuality. Again, it whiteness acted as a bulwark

and a shield against the worst aspects of gender based homophobic transphobic, violence, bullying, it still does very much. So I think it always will, no matter what other precarity is I might encounter. And that's never to say that, like whiteness will protect me from all violence in the world, but it will make it so that I'm much less likely to encounter and deal with a lot of the same violence is that racialized queer trans people have to go through, um, whiteness, also, you know, in terms of class.

37:59

You know, the well.

**Bina** 38:01

Sorry, I got distracted by Dan from my computer. Um, a lot of, you know, the reason why, you know, myself and a lot of other white kids are in the class standing we are is because of our race. Because of the fact that whiteness begets generational wealth and whiteness is the reason why a lot of us are from like upper class backgrounds. And even with the fact that like, for instance, like my grandparents, on my mom's side, were the first of their families to like ever graduate high school. On my dad's side, it's very different. His family has been here because my grandparents on my mom's side are Ukrainian Jewish immigrants who fled the pogroms. Which is also I think, interesting to think about is sort of and we'll get to this later, but reflecting on Jewish identity, like every Jew alive, especially in United States is like to send a different Holocaust survivors or people right before who were survivors of pogroms in Eastern Europe, and who wound up here. Um, and so like, there's no escaping that violence. But, you know, back to the question of race, like, the reason, a big reason why I was able to grow up in like, comfortable wealth was because of my race, and because of the generational wealth that is afforded to white people in the Imperial core. Um, and I became conscious of race much later than most racialized people have to become conscious of race. I started becoming very conscious of race around like 1314 1212 1314 11 Yeah, 1112 Middle School, I'll say middle school. And then in when I became conscious of that eighth grade in high school is when I really started to want to get more involved with like organizing. And at first that was manifested in like, local anti racist organizing because my high school at the time was under this huge \$32 million lawsuit or something for a segregated classrooms

40:07

so

**Bina** 40:07

I joined a bunch of local campaigns for that. and met a lot of really great teachers and community community members like local black community members, elders, one of them who later to form a very close relate to them, I would later form very close relationships with Mr. Whittaker, who was a high school English teacher and Mr. Mana right, who I just maintained a very close relationship with and always volunteered at her different. I think it was like voter registration events around town, different marches, she would organize, and we just became very close. But yeah, um, I'd say like, I became conscious of race around that age. And my, I think, that I immediately like, I think, did the was overcome by that sense of like, white guilt. So I was like, Oh, I have to organize around this. I have to do. Yeah, I have to join something. And then eventually, I wound up at a politic around three years later, like, oh, I have to destroy America. But we'll get to that later. But yeah, whiteness defined my

relationship to gender, my relationship to sexuality and relationships class, it still does, and always will, in ways that I need to continue unpacking. And,

41:19

but yeah, yeah. So

**Olivia N** 41:26

let's talk about gender theory.

41:30

But

**Olivia N** 41:34

can you talk a little bit about your understandings of gender and how that affected you

41:40

growing up? Yeah, I think I played

**Bina** 41:44

a lot with gender growing up, even if I wasn't conscious of it. Um, I felt like I was constantly put into like, various different situations, where people would tell me like the importance of growing up to be this grown up to be a man by the law, I wasn't really thinking about that, as a kid, I mainly just wanted to be liked by people. And so if somebody was telling if I got the vibe from somebody, because I was very conscious of what other people were thinking, feeling and like, thinking of me as a kid. So like, if I got the sense that somebody wanted me to act tough and manly to end, they would like me, if I did that, I would do. Um, and I will do my best approximation of what I've been taught that that meant, and if someone wants to be gentle or feminine, or to guitar and soft, I will do my best to what I had to do what I've been taught that that looks like, and my best approximation of that, or what I knew it to be what I had been taught it to be. I would, I wanted to dance and be sexy, like Lady Gaga went home and I want to I love Lady Gaga. As much as I wanted to, like have like the coolness I was like obsessed and kind of a pretentious way with like Frank Sinatra. When I was in elementary school. I was really anxious about it when I was in, like, elementary school. Like, I was like, Oh, I'm whatever. It was all a performance to me. And when I got to middle school, but especially high school, I really started to feel like the world knew I was different before I did, and I started to like, feel more dissociated from body and gender in general. Um, everyone assumed, throughout high school, a lot of people assumed I was just a gay guy. Um, because of how they perceive my style and personality and relationships to people. Um, I remember, like, I didn't, people would ask me and tell me they thought I was gay. Or like, Are you gay? I was like, I don't think so.

43:37

doesn't feel like it. I

**Bina** 43:38

don't feel any kind of. I mean, I was wondering, like, I did have crushes on dudes, but like, I was in denial about it. But like, I genuinely didn't feel like I knew what being gay was. And I was like, that doesn't feel like it's me. I don't know, I need a different word. Like, I'm not that, but I'm not the other thing, either.

43:58

Um,

**Bina** 44:00

so now here we are. But I, I remember, like I really desperately wanted to be friends with girls and the way the girls were friends with girls. And I remember like, wanting things that I didn't name and I felt like out of place no matter what I did, or what I said, I was never felt right. I think I started identifying, like when I was like, bisexual, and I was like, 1617. Just because like, I wanted to, like, put a placeholder there. And it felt easier than doing like a hole coming out there. I've never been a dramatic person. I've never been a person who likes to be the center of attention. Like,

44:36

I don't

**Bina** 44:37

I loved when my friends had been coming out on social media that I never want. I was like, terrified. I wanted nothing to do with it. The only people who I cared about to, like understand me were like very close friends. And otherwise, it was like I will be perceived by the world how the world perceives me. I have no control over it. And so I'm not going to try and take control of it because it To exhausting. So all the more respected people who do but that's not me.

45:05

Yeah. So

**Olivia N** 45:11

we're going to talk about religion. Can you talk about being Jewish and growing up Jewish and what that was like? Yeah,

**Bina** 45:19

so I grew up in a secular Jewish household that celebrated like high holy days went to temple occasionally read the Torah. I always enjoyed it, like my parents made Judaism fun. But when my parents got divorced when I was like seven or eight, it completely severed my connection to that aspect of myself. Because like, we stopped doing it as a family. And like, still, we would get together like my mom's side of the family for high holidays, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur war, Passover, Pesach, etc. Like we would get together for Hanukkah, we would get together for those holidays, we would sometimes go to temple, but I just didn't feel a connection to it anymore. It just felt like a thing that my family did. I didn't want her. Like I told some people I was Jewish, I didn't really know what it means I didn't really care what it meant. I didn't have a personal connection to it. At that point, I became a I became like a bar mitzvah. But even then I was like I didn't, I just think 13 is a bad age to do like such a

spiritually significant event. My cousin, my cousin just had his bar mitzvah when he was 16. It was beautiful. It was moving. I like wanted to cry the whole time, because he came to it on his own merit. Because he would have been 13 during the pandemic, so we didn't have to have a dance. So we had it when I was 16. I'm like, God, this makes so much more sense. He's speaking beautifully. He's coming to this from his own spiritual standpoint, because he wants to, and I was like, why do we do these ceremonies at 13? Why? It's like this holdover from biblical times were like 13, where a boy turned 13 Or someone turned 13. And you were already a third of the third of the way done with your life.

#### **Bina 47:02**

Like 13 was the age that you were eligible to be handed a sword and like sent to die in a war. So like. Like we we can update it, Jews are really good at updating traditions. Like, that's the one thing like, anytime this is just okay, this is all talking about it. Anytime someone tries to tell you, this is what Jews believe they're lying. Because that's Jews can't agree on like the smallest fucking detail. You think that we're all unanimously decided on life, something as big as like a B'nai Mitzvah, no, Two Jews, three opinions. That's the rule for any given issue doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what it is like There's an old joke in Judaism, where it's like two Jews are trapped on a desert island. And they don't have any synagogues. So they decided to build a synagogue for themselves, they built three, one for that guy, one for me. And the third one none of us want to go to, but it has to be there. Then there's another version of that joke because we can't agree on that either. The comes to Jesus trapping desert island, they build three synagogues. One of them is so orthodox that they might as well be in the Stone Age, one of them is so reformed and they might as well not even be Jews anymore. And the other one, well, the rabbi is a little annoying, but what can you do? So, um, Judaism was always it definitely did leave me with some interesting values, like the way I looked at family and religion overall, like religion was never something coercive. Religion was always something that just was secular Judaism is not so much a religion. Judaism isn't even a religion, Judaism is many 1000 year old community relation that has sprung up throughout the world. And, you know, it has it has related core tenants, but looks so different everywhere around the world. It's not a nationality. It's not a religion. It's somebody described in a really good way recently, but there's a reason why the majority of Jews around the world are secular, or even atheist, like atheists, Jews are a big, big thing because you don't need to be religious to be a Jew. It's about a set of community values and relationships. The entire reason why Judaism is able to persist is because it's a religion that is built on interactions and relationships and community with others that you build like God and holiness is something that has to be constructed between your interactions with people in your community. And that's something that's very present in the Torah and that's something that was a value that really stuck out to me as a kid and that I really internalized as a kid. God isn't like an all powerful being who you are guilty to for the rest of your life and who you can also use as a absolve er of your sense means it's a big part of Christianity as if you wronged someone you pray to God as an individual. And as a way to absolve yourself in Judaism we don't really Have that, at least not the way that I was taught Judaism one prayer, individually, yes, it's important, but it doesn't have nearly as much value as it does in a minion, which is a group of 10 or more. And that's where prayer is really said to have value or meaning is if you're in a group, and you're able to hold each other accountable to not only prayer, but also principal, but also observing laws and observing, practice and observing community relations. And more than that, it's like, one of the things I remember learning as a kid is that the holiday for is basically a day where you're supposed to require to seek out directly from the people you've wronged over the past year forgiveness. And one of the things that's written in



the Torah is they are not required to forgive you. So but it is your job to ask. They don't have to forgive you, you have to ask for it. Or you have to beg for it. You have to make yourself apologetic, you have to come before the people you have wronged and take accountability for that wrong. And so values like that, which is love asking questions and being annoying, annoying to wasps to waspy culture, we're very annoying people. Because, again, not really agreeing on anything. We don't really like pleasantries, and all of that. And we can come off kind of mean and nasty sometimes, because we really like talking about things that we don't like. And we really like vocalizing when we don't like something we love given the opportunity to talk about things we don't like. So all of those different cultural values, I think, are very big in me. And then like, for a while middle school, high school didn't have much of a connection to Judaism. And I started missing it a lot in high school, I was like, I am so regretful of the fact that I don't have any practice, or community because I saw others around me have a community and a connection to Judaism. And I didn't feel that it was only once I really started coming into queerness and transness. And also my politics, that I really started rebuilding a connection to Judaism and rekindling it on my own terms, and studying the Torah and becoming more committed and doing the fasts at holidays and things of that nature. And it's been so healing and wonderful to form that connection on my own and also keep, it's also, you know, strengthened and rekindled my family's connection to Judaism as well. It's like holidays are more meaningful now. And they're more involved. And we talked about the religion, we talked about the culture. So it's been a way to connect with myself with a community of trans common issues, and also with family, which is it's like a three pronged sword that's been very, very meaningful and extremely useful and good to me. So,

**Olivia N** 52:44

can you talk about who or what influenced you the most growing up?

52:49

Yeah. So politically, I

**Bina** 52:53

think one of the most radicalized interest and generally influencing things at a young age for me, and I'm sure many choose, this experience was like learning about the Holocaust. from firsthand experience. I had family who are survivors. We have friends who are survivors, family, friends, who were survivors, we had, you know, obviously, lineage going back to like escaping pogroms. So just like learning about all of these things in very like, in a very uncensored way. In a very just like, This is what happened. And these are all the this is like the testimonies of your family of your family member who survived like this is everything, like just read it. And we read it together. And like it's something I was like, I think I was like the fourth grade was when Alan Kieron who's a part of the Muskoka, which is the Yiddish Word for family, but it captures like family beyond blood as well. So like I volunteer on, and we also had, Alan Kieran was very close to the family. And he passed away in his 90s. And he was a survivor. And I just poured over his memoirs and diary entries and documents that he wrote, because he was taken to Auschwitz at 13. So I read all of that. And that was like really meaningful and impactful for me growing up, just learning about that aspect of Jewish identity. And like my blood connection to genocide, not only cultural connection to genocide, but like, blood connections, genocide, familial connection, I'm internalizing that Judaism in general had a lot of impact on me and the way I view family and authority and the world. Beyond that my parents relationship and subsequent divorce

definitely was a huge part of my childhood and was foundational to our relationship with myself and my family, as I discussed before. There was a lot of anger in the household, but I always want to try and solve those problems. And I've maintained that instinct to always want to solve that

54:59

and Other influences? Um, God. Yeah, I remember,

**Bina** 55:10

again, going back to the Holocaust and World War Two. I remember like watching when I was like seven, like nine, I think like a documentary about Stalingrad. And like, it was the first time that I learned about like the Nazis getting defeated. Not just an abstract, but like, Oh, this is a genocidal empire that read some much havoc around the world, but they lost badly here. And like they could be, they could be beat. And I think I really, that lesson really stuck with me is like, like, what the last line, I think of the last line from a Scottish corps book, which is like the cowboys and bandits don't really own the world. Um, and so I think I really, that lesson really stuck with me. Um, other influences. I really liked books. When I was a kid I was really influenced by my brother was a huge reader, my dad the same way both of them could just read and read and read. And I always want to try and catch up with them. I don't remember much about the books I read as a kid. I really was really into Percy Jackson, which is like so much many such gay kids really love Percy Jackson. Um, I remember I had a crush on two of the characters, the brother and sister, Talia and Nico. I had a crush on both of them at different times.

56:24

But I Yeah. I can't really

**Bina** 56:30

remember. A lot of the major influences I have my child has been that I think, what about music? Oh, my gosh, thank you for asking what a thoughtful question. Yeah. Music was all over the place in my house. My mom always was playing music. My dad played guitar and sang to us. My mom just loved music and encouraged us to take on music. My dad also was very avid about us, like becoming musicians to some capacity. I liked to dance a lot I liked. As I said, like I had kind of a natural ear for music, which I just wish my family discovered when I was like three, four. Because I had to just start playing things from ear. And they sort of nurtured that talent, which was very kind of them, and very smart of them. Because it gave me a lot of joy and safety grant and like a sense of self and safety and like something I could always run away to. Um, and also confidence, like some a little bit of extra self confidence. Like I was good at something I had skills. I always thought I was worse than everyone else. But I knew that I at least had something

57:45

Um,

**Bina** 57:45

and yeah, the love of my love of music persists. You can't catch me in. Like, I hate silence. You can't catch me in a place without music on. I like sitting outside and listening to like birds and wind. But like if

I'm in my room or walking, or, like just cooking or just sitting around my house, or talking to somebody even like, I gotta have music in the background. It's so important. I love it just augments any situation.

58:12

Um, I am like,

**Bina** 58:15

I'm inseparable from music. I'm always thinking about it in a pretty analytic way still, but just because I've studied it so much, which is cool, which is fun. It's also dude like info dumping source. I can always like, whenever I'm, like, hanging out with somebody, and they're like, Wow, I love this song. I'm like, Yeah, let's talk about it. And then what chords what chords are they playing? Oh, that's it. Anyone who's ever walked down the street with me and listen to me, like, heard me listen to bird calls, like I'll start imitating the bird calls. But oh, that's a major third and stuff like that. So music is a big part of my personality and a huge part of the ways that I cope and deal with and experience the world. I'm always talking about life as a metaphor for music and music as metaphor for life. So it's been just so tremendously influential. And one thing that I have to thank my parents for is the fact that they nurtured that

**Olivia N** 59:16

so now we're gonna move on past just pimple like right under my eyebrow. Like an eyebrow pimple. She'll kill kill. I'm gonna kill it. Okay, now right out, my hands are dirty. Why are you touching?

59:30

Whatever.

**Olivia N** 59:31

I'm now moving on to the second section. I'm going to ask you, your Oh, don't forget to drink water and stuff in between questions.

**Bina** 59:40

Yeah, can I go fill this up? It's no,

**Olivia N** 59:43

you're fine. Go fill it up.

59:44

Thank you.

**Olivia N** 59:48

What are your earliest interactions with queer spaces like witnessing queer spaces.

**Bina** 59:56

So in high school, I was in and out a lot of friend groups as I'm mentioned before, and I never really had consistent friends very alone. And but as time went on, I started to get to know more and more queer

people, especially in junior and senior year and what wasn't the first times I had been in or around queer space to queerness. But it was the first time I felt like I was a conscious participant in them. And it was the first time I was like, I want to be in these spaces. And I had a lot of crisis because I was like, I don't know, I feel like I belong, but I don't know why I belong in that.

1:00:32

And I want to belong in them,

**Bina** 1:00:33

because they feel at home to me more than any other place.

1:00:37

Can you talk about

**Olivia N** 1:00:38

what queer or lesbian friends you had growing up? And like, where you found them? And like, how did you meet each other?

**Bina** 1:00:47

We found through a shared love of music, both playing music and listening to music and the first time I had a friend group of, like, majority queer people are like more queer people. Um, was like when I was 17 or 18. Um, but I had like, friends, like pretty good friends with like, several with a lot of queer people, a lot of lesbians throughout middle school high school. I remember one of my friends came out in like, sixth grade and we were like, as a lesbian, we were pretty good friends all the way through just hanging out with each other a lot. And I remember just like getting along with and having friends let a lot of queer friends again big ally phase and then beginning of high school.

1:01:26

So yeah, that was Yeah, yeah.

**Olivia N** 1:01:33

Um, do you remember what you're also what music were you listening to back then? Like, where you wouldn't connecting over music? What was the music that you guys were listening to mostly?

**Bina** 1:01:44

Those 1718 A lot of jazz. A lot of bossa nova. We were really into bossa nova. I loved I was really I was in my bed like, like Erykah Badu FaZe D'Angelo. I was really into like Norah Jones, Roberta Flack. I listen to a lot of music. As I said, like, we connect we connect like Amy Winehouse, we were all really into. We all really liked just anything to do with like that. No, you because I was at the time. That was the music. I was also playing and that was the music that we were singing and listening to. A lot of yeah, a lot of jazz for sure. And like jazz descended music. We would like try and a lot of Stevie Wonder like we would try basically like that whole friend group like a lot of like me and two other girls in it would always try and like show each other stuff that the other people hadn't heard before. Like that was like the goal. We were always trying to like outdo each other with our music tastes. It was like fun.

It was like friendly. But yeah, it was we liked that. We I know people say this, but we really did like everything. But a lot of our connection originally came from like I was like the biggest Erykah Badu fan in the world. And like, people were like, Oh, I love her. Like what other music do you like? So then we connected upon all of that. And like, yeah, yeah.

**Olivia N** 1:03:15

Do you remember what your first exposure to lesbianism was?

1:03:19

I think it was

**Bina** 1:03:20

just being friends with lesbians throughout the middle of high school. I knew I think I knew a few people with them two moms in elementary school, but I just thought it was just how people lived. I didn't think much of it. Conscious exposure to lesbianism, I'm thinking of everything in terms of conscious, like, times where I, where I knew what it was and could understand this such. So the friends I had in middle school, was my first exposure to lesbianism.

1:03:47

Um,

**Olivia N** 1:03:48

can you talk about around what year you started identifying yourself personally as a lesbian and how you arrived there?

1:03:59

Oh, um, yeah. Um, so

**Bina** 1:04:09

I didn't know I was lesbian until I was in a lesbian relationship, which started in June 2021. I hadn't really even considered it much before then. Mainly because I was I actually I'll get to the reason more later, because we're coming up on a question that we can get to that.

1:04:28

Um, can you

**Olivia N** 1:04:32

talk a little bit about how like clothing, jewelry, makeup, tattoos, piercings or other body mods assisted with affirming your identities and your lesbianism? Yeah, no,

**Bina** 1:04:44

sure. I mean, we were talking about looking at my tits earlier. So this is a great opportunity to talk about my tattoo.

1:04:49

Exposing me you're exposing me

**Olivia N** 1:04:56

we started

**Bina** 1:04:59

on the wreck. was that I? Oh,

**Olivia N** 1:05:01

I didn't do it guys. It wasn't me. No,

**Bina** 1:05:05

it was said it was okay. So don't worry. I also put that on the record is yes. I said it was cool

**Olivia N** 1:05:12

consensual, consensual, consensual watching I was just bearing a little it was

**Bina** 1:05:19

a bird called like a tip now so when I think of like bird watching now that's what I'm gonna think of watching sorry but anyways, um yes oh my gosh my eyebrow piercing has been very affirming this was an aftermath of a breakup actually. It was like almost a two year long relationship so this is like pretty small for like how big of a breakup it was pretty small then still in recovery from that because that wasn't but eyebrow piercing dressing more openly found dresses, spirits, floor prints, patterns, lots of jewelry, eyeliner glitter, I have this three year old glitter palette. That should not be using like it gave me a eye infection like last month. And I went right back to using it while I still had the infection no less. So I really want more tattoos and piercings like this. My friend did this. I got my friends who else had a crush on Vandy. She did this when I was on my 17th birthday. She did this. In her basement. It was the first tattoo she ever did. It was \$10 and she killed her she killed it. Still going strong to this day faded a little bit but she did amazing. I want so many tattoos. I love them. I love being covered or uncovered in art and jewelry that like clips and plaques. I love catching my reflection in a window and like seeing rays of sun reflect off of like rings or eliminate glitter or necklaces or bracelets. Like lesbianism is inextricably linked to my gender and my gender is very much trans lesbian. And that's so expressed in all of the different style choices. I make body language the walk the walk is very important. I'm so conscious of how I walked out is like like walking can be a source of dis slash euphoria for sure. Posture like sitting down like I feel like when I sit down outside anytime in public, I spend like 30 minutes like shifting and like find out

1:07:26

after all that

**Bina** 1:07:27

shifting my posture is still trashed garbage. So because I'm not worried about backstamp I'm worried about looking cute. And feeling good. Um, so yeah, that's my that's what I have to say about that.

**Olivia N** 1:07:44

So now we're going to talk about forms of art, like, like photography, paintings, music, movies, like TV shows, other kinds of things like that, how that have helped or assisted and affirming your lesbianism. And anyways,

**Bina** 1:08:03

I love poetry so much. I'm like such a Sacher for a saccade poetry. I don't write at all, but I just love reading and I love when other people read it to me.

1:08:14

Um,

**Bina** 1:08:16

to be honest, though, and I'll project lesbianism onto anything that feels right. I'm, like, anything that I like, like, I'll be reading like, like, like, um, my, my favorite. My favorite poet is not new Darwish who's not a lesbian who is a man. And I'll be like, Oh, lesbian, lesbian, like, it's so like, don't be like, Yeah, that's what that's how I feel. I'm not in a parasocial way. Like, there's a Twitter thing that's going on right now where people are doing that. But like, I'm talking like, I can I understand that. Like, it's okay to relate to straight people. Like sometimes they can write very well, but like, yeah, in a joking way, I'm always projecting lesbianism on to things but I love mocking Darwish. And like Richard Richard second. And like listening to Stevie Wonder or like even like reading like combat liberalism by Chairman Mao and being like, ya know, this all feels like very relevant to my experience in my life as like a lesbian. Art music literature has all been so crucial. And as time goes by, like, specifically things made by women and lesbians, especially, like books like stone, Bush blues, of course, which is like lesbian Bible. I know for many people. A letter to Harvey Milk, which is a collection of Jewish lesbian short stories that I really love that are found in like a used bookstore up in western US notes of a crocodile, but it's only on sin, which is this book. It's a really angsty, devastating lesbian novel by a Taiwanese author or Taiwanese lesbian author, um parable So where Octavia Butler by the lead of my father smile Alice Walker albums like glue by Joni Mitchell was just like so big for me that album, The fragments, Sacco that I told you about earlier, like shows like Otona Revolutionary Road tena letters to and from friends. There's just so much media that has helped me connect with lesbian art and thought across history and space and made me feel a part of something bigger than myself. And made me feel like there's a very big and what's the word? It makes me feel like this community has longevity, across time and space. It's like also a really great way of connecting socially with others, especially when you're talking about like barely niche pieces of media that can almost act as like identifiers for other queer people or lesbians. Like, not a lot of straight people are watching Utena all the way through. They just aren't. Because like, and if they are, I'm like, What did you

1:11:02

get from it?

**Bina** 1:11:08

I don't know. What did you get from that? Man? I'm like, I don't know. Um, so yeah, it's a great way to connect me socially with others to like, I love sitting around like a table with other lesbians just talking about media. Yeah. So

**Olivia N** 1:11:26

how does the art making process influence your gender or sexuality? So

**Bina** 1:11:32

lesbians are awesome, and so creative, and very artistic. And I think part of the reason is like, playing piano or painting or writing, they all serve, like they all they all serve as a way to express and give voice to feelings that come with discovering and rediscovering yourself and your gender and sexuality. And also just like, it's a way of expressing and giving voice to feelings that can be so damn, suffocating and heavy sometimes. So art making and creativity lends itself to that. Because light, it's like, it's like a survival mechanism. For us, it becomes like we do this because it's a way to channel feelings that are too much to hold by themselves. And so artmaking can be very painful. It can also be very cathartic, it can be both. It For Me, it's just a way to make sure I don't drown. And it just makes me happy. And it's a way to connect with others.

1:12:27

So can you talk about

**Olivia N** 1:12:34

coming out? And if you believe in it coming out multiple times coming into your identity? And can you talk about what it means to be received into queerness? And how that relates to growth?

**Olivia N** 1:12:44

Yes,

**Bina** 1:12:47

so as someone who has been in the process of trying to come out to family multiple times, I've given up on it doesn't work, whatever, not for me. So I'm just gonna end I don't think coming out works in general, because if people are gonna accept you and love you, they're gonna accept and love you. And I've never had the energy to explain and articulate myself over and over again, in hopes that somebody will get it. So I, it's not for me. For some people, it's very important to them that the world No, and they make an effort to stake that claim. I have so much respect, I will support people in that as much as I can. I can't do it myself. For me, it's much more about like, coming in being accepted into a space into an environment that felt safe enough to grow, experiment and ask questions and have crises like as time goes on.

1:13:45

And that was all done

**Bina** 1:13:49



by other queer people. It wasn't so much my efforts as it was other people making that space for me. So coming out, quote, unquote, wouldn't have been possible without somebody pulling me in or not pulling me in, but making the space for me to enter. And I've started to try to be more active about bringing other people in, which is its own form of coming out, I guess, but like it's more selective. Um, it feels very strange and directionless, and I'm trying my best to make my identity comprehensible to people, many of whom will never be able to comprehend it. So it feels fruitless, and doesn't feel good to try and fail over and over again to make yourself palatable or comprehensible to a world who will only ever see you as at worst agenda freak and at best like

1:14:38

slightly off.

**Bina** 1:14:43

Again, like being received in preparedness has been so much more important for me because it reminds me that coming out shouldn't be a laborious process. It shouldn't have to be like being received is like, you tell someone like you're feeling a certain way and they'll like we'll hear him out. arms are open. And that I have experienced that. So why would I ever want to go back to the other option? Um, so yeah. Which comes at a cost because then you just have to move through life kind of in this weird area between like not scalping, but like, yeah, like I dress like this around my family. Nothing really changes in the way they dress me it's just like really? So you think that matches? Doesn't that be like cognitive dissonance to you?

1:15:32

But um, yeah, that you know. Yeah. So

**Olivia N** 1:15:40

can you talk about if you've ever struggled with your identities? Or if like identifying as like a lesbian or like a dyke ever felt scary? And if you've experienced any isolation or disconnection from the broader queer community?

**Bina** 1:15:57

Oh man, I'm so scared all the time. Ah yeah, primarily because I'm trans though. I still, like grapple like and struggle with public identifying as like, as a lesbian due to like internalized transphobia. And like, that's constantly questioning like the legitimacy quote, unquote, I haven't staking my claim as someone who's a woman, someone who's not a man,

1:16:23

much less a lesbian.

**Bina** 1:16:26

I was just talking to a friend and I expressed and like sometimes I feel like turfs already beat me. Like, every time I think about going through like a lesbian bar, I talked myself out of it. Every time I want to join like any activity that's like for women and like I talked myself out of it. So yeah, the Turks won in that sense already. Like they beat me. Not forever, but for now they beat me. And I've been lucky

enough to be surrounded by like, wonderful queer community, but it's easy to feel isolated or disconnected when you spend as much time on the internet. I do. Like I just I just in the break. When I went to do a water bottle, I looked at Twitter and my friend who's like a trans Butch tweeted like, when you wake up as a transgender woman and look at the news. I'm just like, yeah, no, literally.

1:17:16

So

**Bina** 1:17:17

yeah, a lot of fear. A lot of struggles with that identity. I do not wear it on my sleeve. I like do not like go out and like tell people like that's not the first thing I ever tell someone. It's not if I have a dating profile, I don't list it there. It's just Yeah, scary. I you know, if people are comfortable with me, then I'll let it hang on I'll be honest about it. But like, I it's not something I trust with the world to just let go yet. I don't think a lot of lesbians feel that because it's like, dangerous and hard to identify as a lesbian, whether you're trans or not so.

**Olivia N** 1:17:57

So can you talk about your first encounters with lesbian sex both directly and indirectly? So like maybe like to hearing about lesbian sex like lesbian porn, and then you having lesbian sex?

1:18:10

Or like queer sex? Yes. Um, yes, is the answer.

**Bina** 1:18:20

I've had encounters. I've encountered lesbian sex indirectly a lot through like reading various tweets and infographics and things of that nature as well as before that like hearing lesbian friends or just seeing like lesbian. Like, maybe I wasn't super into fanfiction, but like seeing here and there, or hearing friends talk about like, lesbian sex is kind of like a mythical thing. Almost. Um, I was looked at like, or in, you know, everyone spoke about it as this like mythical thing or like fun loving, nice, better. Everyone who's lesbian at least, but everyone else was like fetishizing in a very sick and twisted and like pornographic and disgusting way. Um, so those were the, like, the two sides. I was always very curious. Granted, when I wasn't really identifying as a lesbian, I didn't really think much about it. Um, but like, you know, once 2020 came around, I really started leaning into queerness and trans Ness. I was very curious. And I was very shy about my identity. Having lesbian sex for the first time, especially being with a partner where we were learning about it together and experiencing a new way and guiding each other through it was very special. It was like fun and nice and pleasurable, and gentle when it needed to be and explorative and kind of silly and hot and essential and exciting. And sometimes they're just really nice, and it makes really good memories. That definitely stay with you. So I'm really grateful for those memories. Even though like I am like super duper sexless right now, like capital and no bitches which is fine with me honestly.

**Bina** 1:20:04

I'd switch. No. But yeah, I that's that's what I think about lesbian sex is it was mystified a lot growing up because of how fetishized it was. But now it's something that represents a very nice memory for me.

And it's also just kind of silly. Like lesbians are just so silly. I, I couldn't hear I'm gonna tell you a funny story.

1:20:25

NSFW warning.

**Bina** 1:20:27

So I think one of the times I was having sex with her, it was like, I have this necklace. Here's what it looks like. It's very gingerly and like bright and colorful. And it goes around like that. And they sort of start playing with it. And like their zoning out and playing with a necklace. And this is the question I'm, I'm about to say, was based off a lot more thoughts than just this, but I just kind of looked at them. And I was like, Are you autistic? And that is like to me, like I was like, so that is my little bit of I don't know what to call that. This risk term charisma is that the root word of risk, it's my least favorite word in the world. I hate the word risk. But I think it comes from Charisma. I don't know. That was how that's how I flirt is asking people I'm having sex with their autistic in the middle of sex. Um, but yeah, so but it's been such a silly, we laugh a lot. It's like super funny and fun and pleasurable and nice. And it makes really good memories. So yeah. And it was also something I was very nervous for. And I didn't really have a name for. And as I said, I'm very lucky to have been like, discovering with it, and learning about it with somebody I trusted

1:21:41

and loved. So,

**Olivia N** 1:21:46

can you talk about how your views on marriage have changed before and after you identified as a lesbian if they did at all? Maybe your thoughts about marriage as a means of romantic unity?

**Bina** 1:21:58

So this question, I'm gonna read like, word for word. What I wrote was like, Yeah, I just like this. Um, I think being somebody's wife sounds great, amazing, wonderful. I think what I love about the idea of marriage as an expression, excuse me, as an expression of love isn't marriage itself. But the idea of domesticity. So like stocking spice cabinets, and painting walls and reading books together on matching shares, I'm learning to love the way the sun filters into your home with somebody in the same way day after day, year after year. Like spoiling a cat together and drinking tea together multiple times a day, and throwing meals together for with somebody and putting on records and dancing around the kitchen and bringing bouquets of flowers and new plants home, making a garden together, making cookbooks of your favorite recipes together. Being each other's confidants in terms of marriage is a legal agreement. I understand why people do it. It can help economic stability when people want to do things like buy a house or have children or manage finances for retirement or the future. I just don't think that acceptance into the legal or patriarchal class society structures of marriage should be the end goal or like lesbian liberation. For instance. I'm not saying that all marriage is inherently bad or inherently that but I think we have to be real with ourselves like that we are products of a class society we are brought up in and marriage is a huge part of reinforcing and reproducing the gendered economic base of capitalism and throughout the history of class society, including both feudal and slave societies, it

served a similar function of ensuring that women are kept in positions of domestic labor and also that property can be passed down in a certain way, in a patriarchal manner. At the end of the day, I want liberation for lesbians. So I'm wondering like what marriage might look like then, in this hypothetical worlds, that is worth fighting for. And in the meantime, lesbians should invite me to their weddings. I will never trash individual lesbians for getting married. I will cry happy, messy tears for you and dance so much, and eat all your cake and bring you beautiful gifts and cards, and I will dress to kill for whatever theme you pick. And I'll play piano as you walk down the aisle.

1:24:14

So,

**Olivia N** 1:24:15

can you talk a bit about no moving on to the like, community section? So can you talk a little bit about how class informs your interactions with lesbians and lesbian community?

1:24:30

Um, yes.

**Bina** 1:24:31

So I guess it really depends on what lesbian community you're talking about. Because I guess there are many different lesbian communities. So it depends on if I'm with like other lesbians who are from a class background similar to myself or lesbians who are wealthier or lesbians who are from from like, less wealthy class or whom like working class lesbians, homeless lesbians. Poor or lesbians, etc, etc. Um, class interact interacts with my interaction with the lesbian Yeah, it it like influences my informs my interactions with various lesbian communities and like so like for instance like I'm always thinking about when I'm with other lesbians who come from a similar class background and myself like, I'm always like very hyper aware of the ways that like petit bourgeois class background sort of manifests in the way they talk about lesbianism and relationships in the world. And I'm sort of always like, you know, we got a, we got to be better than this. Like, let like, let's because I think a lot of mainstream lesbianism is very influenced by like petit bourgeois ideology and liberalism, where it's like, on Liberation is very narrow minded this idea, I'm like, no, like, lesbians have a big role to play in the world revolution. Um, and so I'm always thinking about that in terms of like poor lesbians who are poor than myself working class lesbians, just sort of being mindful about the fact that my experiences have been defined and informed by class and my access to certain spaces, including ones that are whether access to my access to spaces of people who come from the same flat current background as me but also access to spaces of like working class people report people are also negotiated and mediated by the fact that I come from the class background I do. So just trying to be mindful of that. Of course, like being in community with people also means like sharing. So redistributing, being mindful, always looking out for other lesbians always looking out for people, whether it be monetarily, if I have time to spare to like help people. I'm just being a good relative

1:26:49

to people. Yeah,

**Bina** 1:26:52

everything you know, I don't, nothing belongs to me. It belongs to everybody. share with everybody share everything you can share. Don't hoard things of this nature. Always look out for everybody first. That's just a be personally thing. But like.

**Olivia N** 1:27:15

So can you talk a little bit about how race informs you interactions with other lesbian?

1:27:22

Yeah, um,

**Bina** 1:27:24

so I think the more I've learned about lesbian history, is like to learn about the ways that like, for instance, lesbianism has been not as a whole racialized, but when I think of, like, for instance, how lesbianism was so and is so demonized today, that is, like a racialized demonization that, you know, like, and it's kind of related to like, the way the one of the ways I think about is like, do you ever talk to anybody? Any transfer? who's like, oh, yeah, there's like a secret group of people who are pushing the trans agenda, super wealthy people, they're talking about Jews. So it's like, um, there's like a lot of that for people who hate us who want to see us dead. They see it as all connected, they see like, racialized, especially like, like black people and other colonized peoples, but and also like, Jews, etc, etc, are all like spin on this conspiracy theory to turn people gay or to take people away from like Christian marriage contracts through the nuclear family. So like, to not negotiate with race, as a lesbian is to put on blinders as you move through the world. Because lesbianism is, you know, unless biphobia is a racialized oppression that affects racialized lesbians the hardest. And like, the reason why people hate lesbians is because of racism. So like, catching strays from that, as like a white lesbian is like, the way I see race and lesbian is it's like, one I have a duty to, and I have an obligation to, but it's also like, it's tied up with my own liberation, my own interest to and beyond that, how I negotiate it, especially in spaces where like, the majority of lesbians I interact with are also, um, either like racialized, like black indigenous, or like people of color, who are lesbian, as well as just the majority of lesbians I happen to interact with. It's just a matter of like, being conscious of all that, and also just like trying to not shrink myself in the way I was doing in middle school, but let's just not take up so much space. Not in a way where I just like, a shoe responsibility, because I think one thing that happened in 2020 is like white people were like, we can't take up space. So they were like, I'm just gonna go sit over here and not do anything. And I was like, that's a really clever workaround that you figured out. to absolve yourself of any responsibility is to just say that you're not taking up too much space. But I think just being mindful of these things, and I'm sort of trying to engage with and study as much as possible, so that I'm not taking like lesbianism for granted. And so that I'm not taking this identity for granted. But instead like really internalizing and walking it and living it in a way that is respectful and honoring of those who lived and suffered before and those who continue to live and suffer in order to state this claim as their identity, so,

1:30:29

yeah, I think I'll yeah. So,

**Olivia N** 1:30:34

can you talk about how religion forms the interactions with lesbian community and rediscovering Judaism with other trans lesbians?

**Bina** 1:30:42

Yes, and this will be a little bit of a long answer, so I can kind of go pee real quick. I'm so sorry.

**Olivia N** 1:30:47

Yes, go pee. I'll also go pee.

1:30:51

Dope s girl. So, um, I don't know if we already asked

**Bina** 1:31:00

the question on the recording, but I'm going to talk about how Judaism and lesbianism interact for me and have rediscovered Judaism has been important for myself as a trans lesbian. So rediscovering, Judaism has been explicitly with in the context of both communism and queerness, because I'm in a Torah group, and the name is called to double entendre, the abbreviation is t for t. It stands for Torah for tankinis. And it is mostly trans people. Hence the Tea Party abbreviation. It's mostly I think it might like if not all there, like a few people who aren't trans but the majority of people in our trans. So the environment that I have rediscovered Judaism isn't locked in is one where like, I am politically ideologically aligned with people. More importantly, everyone in that group is an organizer. So like, it's not trying to talk about CIT, from an overly academic perspective, the whole point of the group is to try and make tour relevant for our lives as organizers and as people who are trying to give history a push. So it's also just everyone there pretty much every other is queer and trans. And so it's an environment where like, we can all interpret the Torah, because that's all the Torah is it's up for interpretation.

1:32:17

It can mean anything. But we can interpret

**Bina** 1:32:21

it from our perspective. And so my entire reconnection with Judaism has been based in transmis. And based in my political identity, and now what I envision as a Jewish training, the is trans people are, you know, queer people call it politically, and people who are involved and people who are, you know, people who want to throw down, like people who are ready to throw down with the state. And like, that's what Judaism means to me. Now, it's this thing that has rediscovered its excitement for me because I can place it in the context of radical politics and queerness and transness. And so it's meant so much to me, and been so important to me, because it's also given me a huge sense of, like identity and connection. And like, not just to other people around me, but to ancestors and to a shared culture around the world. Because the wonderful thing about us is we love the written word. And we care so much about the written word. And we keep such detailed records about everything throughout history. So when people don't come and bring them, we have a lot to work with. And you can connect so seamlessly across generations. I guess that's one of the most frightening and hurtful things about the Holocaust is just how much we lost. And so I've been trying to, for instance, like, learn Yiddish with a

few of my friends, including putting power we both are trying to learn a little Yiddish. And it's hard because it's a language that's only really spoken and very insular communities. Because I think, what was it like before the Holocaust, there were 11 million speakers of Yiddish in Europe. And nowadays, there were by by 1940 steps, there were less than 2 million. Now there are even less just because of assimilation and integration. So um, a lot of Judaism has also been recovering, trying to recover what was lost a little bit and trying to sort through the bins of history to find evidence of Jews being there. Um, so it's become like a mission as well. And that mission connects me to others and my family and community and that shared grief and Jews are one thing I'm very thankful for the people is that we are very, very good at holding grief together. And grief is a very big part of the religion, grief and mourning. It's a collective grief is a huge part of the religion. A lot of our major holidays are very sad, and they're about grieving together. And they're about somber reflection together. And so it's just been very emotionally significant to To build a community who I feel I can do that with and also who are just spiritually connected, who, who not only connect through this shared history, but also like actively study and participate in the spiritual religious life and in the Jewish mission of tikkun olam, which is Hebrew for remaking the world or healing the world, the collective duty of Jewish people so and it's also been very important just to sort of revel in that Jewish Diaspora identity. Because it's a really defining thing for me. Um, and it's given voice and language to a lot of experiences and feelings and also just a way of viewing and looking at the world. Um, cuz you know, the Jewish Diaspora, we say we're a people and goal is the Hebrew word for a diaspora is gorgeous, which means exile. And it's not exile, not in a negative connotation. It's like, we are a people in our style. And so we will make a home for ourselves everywhere. And so it's given me a really good opportunity to create that home in my little communities, and with strangers. One of my favorite line the recent holiday of Passover Pesach. You know, what was the exact line from the Torah? It's something about you know, you know, the heart of a stranger for you were once a stranger yourself. Yeah.

1:36:37

So,

**Olivia N** 1:36:37

can you talk about how your gender informs your interactions with lesbianism and being a lesbian, being lesbian communities, and being a trans woman? And what about your experiences of lesbians and lesbian spaces that are trans inclusive? And can you talk about being nurtured while exploring your identities with trans and sis lesbians? Yeah,

**Bina** 1:37:00

absolutely. Um, I don't know. I'll be fair, I don't know a whole lot of sis lesbians. Like, I know, I'm friends with a lot of sis girls at school just because there aren't a lot of trans people here. Um, but none of them are really lesbians. Unfortunately, I've been trying, I'm working on it. I'm working on it. But I'm, I'm telling them like, there's another way, but my experience with lesbianism is like a lot of there are definitely trans exclusive. Lesbians like I get like TERT The thing about turfs, a lot of people paint turfs as like lesbians, like turf and lesbian is interchangeable. The majority of turfs are not lesbians. The majority of trans folks are not lesbians. The majority of turfs are straight women, heterosexual women.

1:37:52

The

**Bina** 1:37:56

majority of lesbians I've met SIS or trans are so at least I can speak for the ones that I've met who are my age are like the, like not transfer, but all they love trans people, most of them are trans, like most of the lesbians I know are trans. And once you start reading, like into lesbian history, you realize sort of how inexplicably it's like, inextricably connected transition. lesbianism is because like when have lesbians especially racialized lesbians ever been allowed to exist peacefully and a gender binary they haven't. The whole point of a gender binary is it's not just gender, it's also a sexuality binary, whereby the reason there is a gender binary is to explicitly like, the word I'm thinking of, also set into stone. That, you know, the reason there's a gender binary is because this group of people women are supposed to serve this group of people, men, so like, the the idea of like, women, loving women is like, not a binary thing, because you can't exist. And eventually, you know, you get lesbians can hate trans people, whatever, they're gonna come for you next. So like, you're digging your own grave, congratulations, hope it feels good. But as I said, the majority of lesbians I met are not transphobic the majority of trans people I met are lesbians. And that's for a reason. Because why would you want to trust or be around men? If this is what you are? There's no There's no reason why and it's why trans women make the best massage therapists because like we've been around them, we know what they're like on a very deep level because they're because there were times in our lives where they weren't afraid to be genuine about with us about how they really see the world and what and who they are. So like, we know exactly what they are. Men, this is the loud bang outside my room, sorry. And like most trans people, whether they be trans mass transfer non binary, they're just like, they want to get away For men, but they're scared and they want something else. And they're trying to be agents of that they're trying to have some agency and deciding who they love and how they love. And so, where am I going going with this question? My gender identity has been essential because like, lesbian is a gender identity for one thing, but it's also like,

1:40:23

my thinking.

**Bina** 1:40:26

I knew I wasn't a man way before I was an Android for anything else. So like, wanting to create that space and wanting something other than what manhood could offer me, was my first step because I just wanted something else. And lesbianism is the only way that I found offers that something else. It offers something as a counter to manhood as a counter to like,

1:40:53

I'm busy sorry. Um, that sidetrack there, but

**Bina** 1:41:03

I hope I answered the question, because I that just totally Yeah, that totally tripped up.

1:41:08

You answered it perfectly.



**Olivia N** 1:41:10

So can you talk about your organizing and activism? And how and if it relates to your lesbianism or your queerness?

**Bina** 1:41:17

Yes, so I'll start with this boat. So in the Philippines, there's an ongoing for the last 54 years ago, 54 years or so communist revolution, communist insurgency. And it's been led by the Communist Party of the Philippines and the armed wing, which is the New People's Army and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. And there was this documentary that came out, I think in like 2018 2019, and interviewed a bunch of fighters in the New People's Army, the NPA. And one of the things that the NPA is really heavy on is that they are more progressive than the rest of Philippine society. And so like, for instance,

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I think the first gay wedding officiated

**Bina** 1:42:00

in the Philippines ever in 1995 was the New People's Army officiated a lesbian wedding in 1995. And so anyway, this is all going into this documentary, there was a part where there was this young these like, pretty young, I think they were in their early 20s soldiers in the NPA. And they were all queer kids. I say kids nonsense, they were literal children, but they were queer people around our age. And one of them says gays must be militant and serve the people. And I think about that a lot. Um, so like, and like that line you, I see that everywhere, gays must be militant, so serving the people. And like, that's huge for me. Because like, not gay queer, is a big distinction for me always. Like not gay as in, like, who you have sex with. But queer is in what are your politics? And like, are you ready to throw down and like, like, fight for a better world, because like, queer is like queer and trans, like recognizing ourselves and lesbians is recognizing ourselves as our identities cannot be squared away with the way that the world is right now. So we're not, so what we're gonna do is we're going to build something better. And in order to build something better, you have to struggle against an old society, you know, the old world is dying, the new one is being born. And so we live in the time of monsters now. And that's been huge for me because my queerness my lesbianism is inseparable from organizing for many reasons. But I came into queerness over the past four or five years during this time, where I got much more involved with radical organizing, and over the pandemic, especially have evolved and grown in my transness, concurrently with my ideological and political development, and alongside the various projects and organizations, I am a part of, many of the people who are organized with are themselves trans. And that has informed our politics because like it's funny based on data like put like a very like sis hat, like almost like, like, one of the ultimate figures of like men like men like machismo like revolutionaries, like the the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love by a profound feeling of love. And that's what Che Guevara said, and I feel I have never known that sentiment to be truer than when organizing with trans people, especially lesbians, because like you want to talk about people who are guided by love, and who really are willing to throw down for that love. You talked about like queer and trans people don't realize bands. And like, that's when you read a book ledgestone Butch Blues, like that book is all about how people, these lesbians loved each other so profoundly and the pain of loving

people so profoundly and wanting to protect them from a world where you realize that you know that you can't actually protect people from that world but dammit, you're gonna try like you would do anything to try it. And that love that you have for other lesbians and other trans people. The love that I have history Have an ever reaction, like, and has driven me to places that I never would have had the courage or the thought to go before. Because like, and I never would have done for myself, but for others, like, I would throw myself into, like a pit of fire out of love for like the people around me. And that's an inequality that you just need when you're doing revolutionary organizing, because it's bound to happen where like, if you confront the state in a meaningful way, they're going to push back. And when they push back, it'll always be so much they have, the one thing the state has is a tremendous capacity for violence, um, that we don't, not in the same way, because like, they have the military and they have the police and they have fascists on the street, fascist proud was Oathkeepers, whatever. So like, and in moments where I've been like, most devastated or hurt physically or mentally, it was always trans people and lesbians who were there with me. And I was there with them to like, and that was the only thing. You know, one of the first lines I remember from stone, which blues from the first chapter is just Spielberg main character, right into Teresa. And she says, like, Did I make it out of there, they're being like prison, a jail cell? Yes, but only because I knew I could come home to you. And I think about that a lot. Like, that's true, like, i None of us would have survived any of this without the intense and profound. And that sort of it is it's, it's loving so much that you're willing to sacrifice for people. Um, and it's not exclusively, a trans or lesbian thing, like there are non trans people and non trans people there assist people. And there are like people who aren't lesbians who are capable of that love without a doubt. But I've just felt it most strongly around other lesbians and other trans people that love when you're, and it doesn't have to be a violent sacrifice, it just can be like, you just love somebody so much that you're willing to sacrifice for them in some way. And it doesn't have to be your life. It doesn't have to be everything, but it's something. So that's what I've noticed in organizing, like, when I like when I anytime something happened, it could be 3:34am Something bad happened, everybody, we were there in a second out of bed into our cars driving wherever needed to be. And it wasn't just for each other. Like if somebody said like, Hi, we're getting word that like ice is like trying to raid this person's apartment and like potentially deport them for am everyone there on like, 30 minutes notice. So it's that kind of spirit. And the people who always showed up first were women were lesbians were trans people, the people who did like the grunt work of it all. And granted, this is also because women and gender press people are expected to do this labor. But it was, but it was always like the people who took it on with us, it was like, we were the ones who like if there needs to be cooking, or if there needs to be like emotional support. Or if there needs to be, like extra meetings or note taking, like just anything, there was always

1:48:07

that. And like I remember like,

**Bina** 1:48:10

the time I got, like, be pretty bad by let's jump right into, like some Nazis outside of an event. But it was like, all like all the people in my life who needed to be there. Were there immediately, no question. It was like, 330 in the morning at a hospital. And we were just waiting in the waiting room and my face was all bloody. And it was just like, um, those were the people who I knew were going to show up, and I knew we were always gonna show up. And I don't care if I haven't like talked to any of those people in two years. That's a hypothetical. But even so like, if I found out they needed me like tomorrow, on a

moment's notice, of course, I'm there immediately. Everything dropped. Time, money, food, resources, whatever. Like, you find a way and like, even now, it's like trans people are the ones who help each other get HRV who go to the doctors with each other, and who are each other's patient advocates. who help people get housing and food and who hold each other and like show up when you're crying like 2am. And you're like falling apart on your floor and like those, the people are going to show up. And that's an essential part of organizing, organizing, you know, that's step number one, because we're not at a stage where we can confront the state head on. So this is what organizing looks like now. It's a lot of stuff that it's a lot of what we were doing back then it's not all confrontation with cops.

1:49:35

It's love it has to be so

**Olivia N** 1:49:49

what's it like making in meeting lesbians making making lesbian friends meeting lesbians and you're sitting down where are you meeting them? It's almost like you're organizing

**Bina** 1:50:00

Meeting them. So that's one of actually, that's one of the things that's made this year so hard is how isolated isolating this college campuses, I did not get a chance to make many new lesbian friends, I did not get a chance to organize much. I didn't really get a chance to go. Yeah, I have not, I was very lonely. This year, I made a few friends on campus, only one of them was trans. Most of them are sis girls who are not lesbians. So it's been a very lonely year. And I've craved that. But I haven't just I just haven't gotten the chance to find it. Or to look for to seek it out. It's a very isolated campus. And I plan to more as time goes on. But I don't really have an answer for that other than I haven't been able to, and it's

1:50:46

it sucks.

**Olivia N** 1:50:49

Can you talk about organizing during the pandemic, and if you've noticed, or had any struggle building in person, physical lesbian communities in a pandemic, and COVID-19?

1:51:01

Yeah, so

**Bina** 1:51:05

I was involved in a lot of local organizing before the pandemic happened, but when the uprising happened is when everything kicked into high gear. So like,

1:51:14

because it was the summer and everyone was

**Bina** 1:51:16

outside. I just wore a mask and I was like, Okay, I'm outside. And I was always paranoid about it. But I avoided COVID For like, almost three years. And I still masked everywhere, but at the time, I don't go to super big and person gatherings. Actually, that's been like a source of contention for me is like I see like people going like clubbing again until the patella like I'm not interested. One I don't want to get sick and to like, everywhere I looked like is like disabled people saying like, what, like, please stop and I'm like, I'm gonna listen to y'all. I'm, I'm gonna listen to you, I'm not going to these big events unless like, as long as I can avoid them. Um, but throughout the pandemic, I met a lot of people, because we were all outside. And we were all in such intense conditions together that we like. Whether it be in the summer or later in the winter, when the Bergen County Jail struggle started, when we were trying to get we were trying to support and get freedom for a bunch of hunger strikers who were detained by ICE. That was when I started forming a really, really close relationship with a lot of other queer organizers who eventually became my closest friend group, one of them, I dated for almost two years.

1:52:28

This eyebrow piercing

**Bina** 1:52:30

but before that, I made community a lot of lesbian community. But like my best friend, we were, like inseparable for the first six, seven months of the uprising pandemic. And I still love him, we're still very close friends that are lesbian. And we just, it was small groups, it was very small groups. And it was it felt easier that way. I don't do so well, like big like, going out, like to clubs to meet people or things like that. I do much better in smaller and more intimate environments. So for me, it felt very natural and easy. And since we were all working toward common goals, and had shared interests and shared values in mind, that made it even easier like we had, we were focused on something and their friendship sort of just came naturally as a result of

1:53:21

that. But organizing a pandemic, like

**Bina** 1:53:26

none of the organizing I did would have been possible without pandemic, the pandemic was the reason why the uprising exploded as much as it did.

1:53:37

So,

**Bina** 1:53:39

although it stopped me from going into like big indoor events,

1:53:43

it was like the most social I'd ever been.

1:53:50

So can you talk about

**Olivia N** 1:53:53

the importance of identifying as a lesbian and what that means to you?

1:53:58

Yeah, um,

**Bina** 1:54:02

it's important to identify as a lesbian. I can't speak for others. But I think it is important to identify as a lesbian, I think more people should do it. Because it is a conscious choice to dissenter men in all areas of your life. That to me is what lesbian is if I had to, like do a sentence definition of what it is do you separate men from all aspects of my life romantic friendships, familial strangers, who I read what media have to assume the way I view and navigate the world. And it's a conscious choice and it's a choice that anyone can make. Um, there's no prerequisite Don't be a man. But like, but like other than that, there's no prerequisite there's no, there's no hoops. You have to jump through. There's no like nothing of that. It's just it's a choice that you can make. And it's important that people realize they can make that choice. Um, and it's important because, you know, once you make that choice also like, it also recognize that it is a commitment, like, do the reading. I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm big into this, like,

1:55:14

I think everything,

**Bina** 1:55:15

I'm always telling people in life like read, everybody needs to read more fucking books, because then maybe we wouldn't be having the same stupid discourse over and over again. What like, it's a respect thing as well, like, there were people who were lesbians who suffered and died to fight for liberation, and they were having these conversations like 4050 or more years ago, they didn't do all that, for y'all to talk like that on Twitter, for y'all to get on Twitter, and talk about by lesbianism for y'all to get on Twitter, and talk about, like how Butch femme dynamics recreate patriarchal systems of gender, they did not do all of that for y'all to get on Twitter, and talk about how masculinity is predatory. They did not do all of that, for you to be talking out of your assets the way that people are. So I think it is important for people to identify as a lesbian, and recognize that it's wonderful and it's amazing and they should do it and like don't even do it, do it, do it. Also recognize the weight of it and recognize the historical significance of it and read the fucking books. And be a good relative theater community member. Listen,

1:56:32

I'm bent over.

**Olivia N** 1:56:37

So can you talk about what lesbian spaces you wish existed?

1:56:44

I'm

**Bina** 1:56:48  
wrestling clubs.

**Olivia N** 1:56:51  
Or any fucker?

**Bina** 1:56:54  
I never what do you say about horny? I said I wanted I miss wrestling. Look, if if people want to fuck afterwards, that's fine. But I really I want to like fight people in a controlled environment. We're hurting boxing as well. I love boxing. I'm a big Boston fan. Even though it's a pretty brutal sport, I just I can't get rid of my love for boxing. Anyways, so I'm lesbian. So anything in the world that people do, there needs to be spaces for lesbians to do it with other lesbians uninterrupted. Um, so you know, I think whenever like, I'm with Brian, like painting and listening to music and being weird and team sports. And

1:57:40  
I just, I mean,

**Bina** 1:57:42  
what was namespaces? Do I Who do I wish existed?

1:57:45  
Um, you said the world. Um,

**Bina** 1:57:50  
I think every everything under heaven belongs to us. So, let it all be for the people. And that's the only thing I want some I want. I don't I think in my perfect world, we make everywhere home. We we don't have to make our own spaces because everywhere is ours. Maybe that's like an overly simplistic or idealistic answer, but that's where I'm at right now.

**Olivia N** 1:58:18  
Can you talk about lesbian joy and when you're happiest as a lesbian.

**Bina** 1:58:23  
I am happiest as the lesbian when I am. in community with other women and lesbians. I'm happiest as a lesbian. When I am experiencing and giving love in its highest in its grandest and its smallest forms. I'm happiest as a lesbian when I'm writing letters to other women and lesbians. I'm happiest as a lesbian when I'm doing things I love and sharing them with other women lesbians. When other women lesbians are sharing what they love with me. I'm happiest when we laugh together. I am happiest when we dream about a world worth fighting for together. I'm happiest when we dance together. Lesbian Joy is about.

1:59:25  
experiencing

**Bina** 1:59:25

everything that life has to offer, together and without fear of retaliation or without fear of punishment for it, or without fear or hesitation or guilt or shame. It is about learning in community with others

1:59:52

and it's about

**Bina** 1:59:55

Tikun Olam, remaking the world healing the world with each other in all of our Your day to day interactions.

2:00:01

And never, ever, ever, ever, ever throwing your friends under the bus for men.

**Olivia N** 2:00:15

Is there anything else you want to talk about?

**Olivia N** 2:00:17

Before we stop the recording?

**Bina** 2:00:22

We do have a minute until five. So it's okay.

**Olivia N** 2:00:23

It's okay. I'm already logged into work remotely right now. So we're so good.

**Bina** 2:00:29

Anything I want to talk about God um

2:00:44

yeah,

**Bina** 2:00:45

I'll end with another quote from that New People's Army documentary where they're still talking about what it means to be gay and militant and sort of the people. It's kind of funny, funny little moment, but, you know, these are very these days are very talented, you know, they're very artistic and creative and good at design. So, let us go design the world of our dreams

2:01:05

in our revolution.

**Bina** 2:01:09

What is your design the world we want to live in?

**Olivia N** 2:01:12

Well, thank you very much.