

Imm1_interview_finn_2023-01-27_001

Fri, Jan 27, 2023 7:24PM • 2:04:11

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

lesbian, friends, started, feel, person, point, queer, gender, good, dating, thought, cosplay, mom, wear, pretty, parents, grew, women, part, talk

SPEAKERS

Olivia N

Olivia N 00:02

Today is January 27 2023. I'm Olivia Newsome interviewing thin virtually over zoom. You have permission to record this interview? Yes. Do you know you can stop recording at any time? Yes. Can you say your name, age and pronouns?

00:18

and thin? I'm 24. And any pronouns work? How would you describe yourself? Ah, I am a recent Smith College graduate. I am a fresh brand new New Yorker. I'm a humongous cosplay nerd. Super into pop culture. I am autistic. I have Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. And, you know, myriad comorbidities. I call it that. And I hope I'm a good friend.

Olivia N 00:52

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

00:57

So I was born in Washington, DC, and lived in Fairfax County, Virginia for like the first up until second grade. And then in part two to 911, the DC sniper and Anthrax all happening at around the same time, my parents were like, maybe we should not live here anymore. So we moved to Pennsylvania. In a relatively rural but wealthy area, it's the Westchester kind of area. My parents moved there, in part because it had the top. It was the third best public school in the state. And the only one of the top three public schools that was not located in the city, and they didn't want to live in a city. Unfortunately, they didn't think to look as to whether it was going to be a diverse area. So we moved to a completely white town with that used to be a sundown town. And I mean, it was also a stop on the Underground Railroad. So like, you know, with a lot of weight, like it's been through a lot. But it's very white, very wealthy and very Republican. And my liberal parents literally apologized to me at one point for having me grew up in a place like that. But you know, I don't know, it's, it's where I grew up.

Olivia N 02:16

Did you have any siblings?

02:18

Yes, I have one brother. We weren't very close growing up. And we're even less close now that we're both adults.

Olivia N 02:29

So can you talk a little bit more about what it was like growing up in such a conservative town?

02:34

Yeah. Um, so when I was little, my parents always talked to me like I was an adult like not that they shared inappropriate information. But they always they never dumbed down their language, they never use baby talk. And as an autistic child, a lot of us come across as very precocious, just due to the way we use language and like the hyper fixations we tend to develop. So I developed a reputation for being precocious, and also very politically active and politically minded. And when I was little, I liked growing up somewhere so conservative because it meant I got to argue with people. And when I was little, it was cute. People liked it. We actually, my mom pulled me out of school in the third grade. So we could go see Barack Obama's 2008 campaign speech that was in our town. And I had an Obama Girl shirt from from the meme. And it was my favorite shirt. And I wore it every single day until it got like, completely pilled and tattered and ruined. So for a while politics was just a fun way to prove how smart I was until I got older and like, learn some empathy and how politics are more than John Stuart dunking on Tucker Carlson. And, you know, and it wasn't all good. In that way. I started getting called a dike on the playground by like, third grade, I didn't even know what sexuality was. It was just a it was just a bad place. I don't know how some of the people I grew up with consider it. Like nostalgic or a place they'd want to go back to like getting stuck in my hometown was my worst nightmare. for a really long time. I used to come home crying from school, and my mom would say, Don't worry, you'll be happy in college. And when I would tell people that they'd be horrified but my mom said I wouldn't be happy till college. But to me it was really reassuring because it meant that there was a time I was going to be happy and it was true. I wasn't happy to college. At least not in like a genuine sense. But it was it was weird growing up with white liberals in an all White town and they're not conservative. When people hear conservative town in Pennsylvania, they think like pencil tucky very redneck very Hickey, but it wasn't a hick town, it was a, it was more of a, I care so much about not paying taxes that I'm willing to be racist about it type town rather than like them, they're foreigners type conservative. And it was very much an old money type place. So when people were conservative, they would put the like veneer of respectability over it, like people wouldn't generally admit to what they were actually saying. So there was a lot of double talk that would go on.

Olivia N 05:48

So can you talk a little bit more about what middle school was like for you?

05:53

Middle School was the worst experience of my entire life. I was so bullied, and so unhappy that I started developing an autoimmune disorder, my face was falling off in playing card size pieces. And I had to keep going to school like I was bullied before that started happening, and then my face was peeling off. So as you can imagine, that did not help. Now, to be fair, to my middle school peers, I didn't realize it at

the time, but I was actually really unpleasant to be around through most of middle school. Because I thought, I mean, it's complicated, because it goes into a lot of my family stuff. But basically, if my brother was going to be the nice popular one, I had to be the smart one to like, have a place in my family. At least that's how I interpreted no one ever, like said that to me. But I put so much stock into being the smart one, that I needed everyone to know how smart I was every second of every single day. So I was constantly correcting people, I was the most pedantic person to be around. So at the time, it felt like I was the most despised person on earth, when I would say about 75% of what happened was just people not wanting to be around the annoying No at all. And about 25% Like unconscionable bullying. And some of the bullying I experienced back then. Was like legitimately traumatic, like to this day. But mostly it was a time that was marked by complete social isolation. I didn't have a single friend, I would go days or weeks without having a social conversation. Which is part of why I wouldn't shut up in class because it was my only time to like talk. But yes, I was very much that kid and my disability, my Ehlers Danlos that was when I started getting like catastrophic orthopedic injuries. So I didn't go a single semester of middle school without needing a brace, a cast or crutches. So it was just a complete revolving door of pain and suffering and physical therapy. And I wasn't diagnosed with anything at the time, they just thought I was the unluckiest person in the world. Like, at one point, I rolled my ankle so far, that the bones hit each other, and they broke. And because I broke it by standing, still drinking Gatorade and rolling my ankle, everyone told me that it wasn't broken. And because it was winter, I was wearing socks all the time. And mind you, my pain started probably as soon as I can remember, but I complained a lot about it in elementary school and I would go to the nursery a lot. And I got a reputation for being a malingerer and people would tell me that it was either a growing pains or be not real. So by middle school, when people would tell me that my ankle doesn't hurt. I said, Oh, okay, I guess it doesn't. Until like a month later, my mom happened to see my foot and it was like turning black. And she was like, What's wrong with your foot? And I'm like, well, it's sprained. Everyone says it's sprain. This is what a sprain looks like. And it turns out that it was broken and it healed wrong. And that was just a funny story about how much God hates me like I was like, lol so unlucky, but no one was like, hey, it's weird that you managed to break your ankle standing still, like we should probably check into that but like, and then being on crutches so often made me extremely physically vulnerable to my peers in a way that made me very anxious it like it made going out in public, especially when I was on crutches or a cane. frightening to the point where sometimes I won't bring my crutches with me out nowadays. Even I know that they would make an experience better for me, because I'm too nervous about marking myself as so physically vulnerable.

Olivia N 10:11

Did your classmates ever like kick your crutches out from under you?

10:17

Mostly not. Mostly they would take them. And so they would end up across the room. And, again, because I got hurt so often, and I got hurt, doing things you shouldn't be able to get hurt doing. Everyone thought I was faking? Like, you know, everyone's like, oh, there was that one girl at our school who wore an ace bandage over her jeans for attention. Everyone thought I was that girl. So they would just like take my crutches and like, laugh at me as I would like hobble to try and go get them because everyone thought I was doing this like, elaborate bit where I was like, and like, again, to be fair, I was so unpleasant to be around. Like, I feel like, like, I don't want to like they weren't exactly

monsters. Most of them weren't a couple of them, I think actually probably are dangerous people who shouldn't be in society. You know, like I was, I was sexually assaulted in middle school by a group of boys. And that involves stealing my crutches. And I think that is part of what makes me so anxious about like, using mobility aids in public. But yeah, I was considered faking girl, especially because they'd be like, What happened this time? And I was like, I was playing Wii dance was like, Yeah, I know how it sounds. But that's literally what happened. And, you know, teachers, this didn't happen so much with teachers, but parents would start sending my sorry, nurses would start sending my parents out of the room to like, be like, Hey, are you getting abused? Like, no, I really was we dancing like I know, it sounds like I walked into a doorframe, but it's what happened. So Middle School was bad. And by the end, it got so bad that my parents transferred me to a cyber charter to start high school. And I hadn't tended to stay there the whole time. But the governor cut a lot of funding out of charter schools. So the education that that school is offering was no longer something that I thought could get me to the type of college I wanted to go to. So I transferred back to my public high school. But in 10th, grade, and transferring back, it wasn't great. But by then I had really mellowed out and wasn't so awful to be around. I mean, I pretty much burned my social bridges, but people weren't really mean to me anymore. They just like, didn't really want to be my friend and like, fair, but like, that was a lonely time, but not a not a time full of pain and suffering.

Olivia N 13:06

Can you talk a little bit more about your high school experience and that experience with loneliness? Maybe it's it's like coupled with your like, with your coming into your sexuality and your identities in those ways as well.

13:20

Yeah, um, so it was a pretty lonely time. For me, I did end up joining colorguard and by this point, I was getting injured less frequently. So there were a couple seasons that I got to do the whole season of. So I had some people that I considered, like, closer than acquaintances, but we wouldn't like hang out. Until eventually one of the girls on my colorguard team started being a lot nicer to me. And I was like, Oh my God, a friend for the first time in like four or five years. I'm so excited. So I so she was really into online gaming. So I was like, I guess I am too now since that's what you like. And through that, I got introduced to some people online who did become my genuine friends and I'm friends with them to this point, too. I didn't know I was a lesbian, like people. People told me I was a lesbian, usually through slurs like before I even knew what any of that meant. And I was like, Ah, yes, this is just another thing that they are bad and wrong about I am definitely not the thing they said because they are wrong about all the other mean things they said about me. And I literally didn't even consider that it might be true despite having what are in hindsight. So obviously romantic crushes on women. Like I remember picking my celebrity crush, because I didn't have one and I needed one because that's what girls wanted to talk about. And I picked Zachary Quinto, which is very It's funny to me, because he's so good. But I was like, Yeah, Zachary Quinto, he's my, he's my big first celebrity crush it was him and Jeremy Renner. Which is just absurd. And because I was so unpopular I didn't date much in high school, my first boyfriend, who actually ended up coming out as a gender variant person, I don't know what their current pronouns are. But at the time, they were using he him pronouns, and, you know, was my boyfriend. And I was like, oh my god, we're so in love. We're gonna go to separate colleges, but the same grad school and we're gonna have seven dogs, or we're gonna get married. And this is a long

distance relationship with someone I met over the internet, my junior year of high school. So, because I didn't date much, it took a lot longer to notice how much I didn't

16:00

like men. I didn't notice till college when I started dating men in person.

16:07

Um, yeah, was that the whole question? Or did I miss part? No, yeah,

Olivia N 16:12

you definitely you definitely covered it, when you were talking about like the loneliness aspect of high school. So how was that first friendship.

16:22

So um, her name was Rachel, she went by Ray, she was actually a really bad friend. My junior year, I had my most catastrophic injury of all time, I had to learn how to walk again, like I literally started from scratch, the dislocation, it just it dislocated my, my kneecap, my femur, and my tibia and fibia. So I had dislocated, essentially every single joint in my knee at the same time, and this happened at colorguard practice, like in front of her, and she never wants checked on me. Like she never asked me how I was doing. And to be fair to her at the time, one of the sprint, friends air quotes, friends that we had online, was a guy who in hindsight, was a pedophile who was grooming her, but at the time, we were like, wow, this cool, older boy that you're so into, and I was like, Oh, you have such a crush on him. I'm gonna help like, wingwoman for you, so that you can get together with this fucking 23 year old man. Yeah, so like, I do want to be fair to her because I think there was a lot more going on behind the scenes that I didn't know about. But pretty much our entire friendship consisted of me, like emotionally supporting her through like dating this guy. And when I needed it, it wasn't reciprocal. But through her I met some very genuine friends. Also online. Again, we're still in contact. We're still close. But yeah, it was it was a it took me a really long time to notice, like how unequal the relationship was. But, you know, what are you gonna do? Right? So,

Olivia N 18:17

can you talk a little bit about how gender norms affected you growing up?

18:24

Yeah, absolutely. So this was something that affected me starting super young. I have a theory and I guess it's not my personal theory. I guess it's a theory a lot of autistic people have, but like, because we don't do social norms. We also have trouble with like gender norms. Um, so like, very, starting very young I, I wasn't particularly masculine, but I wasn't particularly feminine either. So I wasn't masculine enough to be called a tomboy, but I wasn't feminine enough to do femininity correctly. And I think that's part of and I got attracted to queer signifiers really young, like I had one pair of shoes in middle school, and they were hiking boots with purple laces. Because a camp counselor who in hindsight, I had a crush on more hiking boots with purple laces, and I wear those shoes all the time. And like Alice Cullen from Twilight had that super cute short hair cut. So in fifth grade, I cut my hair to that super cute, short hair cut, which I did not realize at the time. She had 11 hairstylist to maintain that and I was in fifth

grade, so it looked wack all the time. But I had short hair, starting then continually until I actually in college when I started questioning my sexuality. I was like, I should grow my hair out and give being straight or real try. So I did but like I had short hair. I were practical. More practical clothing than feminine clothing. Most of the time, I wear a lot of hiking boots. And I think this is part of why people called me a lesbian. And I used to be like, I'm just a gender non conforming straight girl. It's so it's so mean and rude that everyone is, is doing this to me. And I think this also interacts with my disability. Because if I had been more capable of sports of being physical, I think I would have been able to slot into the tomboy, or like boys girl, like roll more seamlessly. But instead, I was just like, nothing like the worst of all worlds in terms of gender expression. As far as my peers were concerned.

Olivia N 20:44

Did you struggle with any gender norms that you felt like you should be going for? Specifically, like maybe from teachers, maybe from other

20:56

influences in your life? Yeah, um, definitely. So like, I think I mentioned I was pretty outspoken and class. And this one year, we I was in this English class with this guy who was very conservative, and obviously just repeating like the talking points you heard at home. So I would get into like, feminist arguments with him. And at one point, we got into such a heated argument that we essentially just derailed the entire class to scream at each other. And in my defense, what he was saying was unconscionable. And, and he started it, but like, I did not stop it. I kept, I was like, I will prove you wrong with the power of logic and reason what you are definitely going to listen to. And afterwards, my English teacher, made me apologize to him. He did not apologize to me he, I had to apologize. And then he said, I'm sorry, you felt that way. And I was mad about it. It Like It felt unjust. And when I talked to my mom about it, she was and this was a female English teacher. But like, I even told this English teacher like, I feel like you're trying to force me to apologize first, because I'm the girl. But like, I didn't start it. I didn't like, this is not fair. And I don't remember what the teacher said. But eventually, I did apologise first. And another way gender norms would come up is when I would complain about how like, lonely and unpopular I felt how ugly I felt how I wished other people thought I was beautiful. My mom would be like, Well, you can't do what you're doing, and the beautiful. And I'm not saying exactly right. But like what she was saying is like, if you want boys to consider you beautiful, you should do the things boys consider beautiful. And she wasn't saying you have to do that. She was just saying, either do that or stop complaining to me about how all the boys think you're weird. So I did kind of push and pull into femininity where I would like, like, for instance, in seventh grade when I was allowed to wear makeup for the first time. For a while I put in a really concerted effort to put in make a to wear makeup every morning before I went to school. But that didn't come natural. To me. It was so much effort, it made my skin breakout, I didn't really like it. So I would like fall in and out of being more or less feminine, just like kind of in a cyclical thing where I'm like, I should give it another try. So

Olivia N 23:44

can you talk about if you grew up religious and what that was like? Yeah,

23:48

so I did not grow up religious. Both my parents were raised Catholic, and they lapsed at different points. And they very explicitly raised us without a religion. Like they didn't raise this atheist like, they weren't like, okay, good night, there is no God, all your Christian friends are wrong. But they didn't tell us anything about religion. My first real experience with religion was when I was taking Irish dance class. One of the girls I was becoming friendly with mentioned something about CCD, and I didn't know what that was. So I asked her about it. And still me, it's like, oh, it's like this Christian thing we do on Wednesday nights to like, study for confirmation, I think. And I was like, Oh, I didn't know that. I'm not Christian. And she told her mom and her mom told her we couldn't be friends because I was going to hell. So I asked my son, I asked my mom, I'm like, What the fuck just happened? Because again, I didn't really encounter religion up until this point. So my mom got me this anthology of it was designed for children. And it was it was like a Children's Bible, a children's Koran, a children's copy of like the Vedic texts, like from Hinduism. So it was like a It was huge, and it was like Is picturebook thing and she said, read this and tell me if you want to do a religion. I'm like, I'm not like, she's like, I'm not gonna go into any religious buildings with you. But if you want to be a religion, just tell me which one and I will take you to it. And I read through it. And I'm like, none of these sound better than science. So I think I'm good. And I didn't realize at the time that like, I wasn't supposed to take it literally, like, it wasn't like, oh, I should believe this at face value, as these are what some people think the world how it started, like, these are faith communities. These are, you know, communities like these are places to have community. So I kind of didn't understand the point of it. And I was like, Ah, yes, I know, I'm gonna stick with the Big Bang Theory. Thank you very much. Not really understanding that that wasn't the question I was being asked. So

Olivia N 25:58

who are what influenced you the most growing up?

26:00

Definitely my mom. My mom is still my hero. She's still who I want to be. When I grew up. She was the the most competent person I've ever known. There was nothing that my mom couldn't do if you gave her enough time to put in the practice or learn the necessary skills. And, you know, in hindsight, like I've learned some things, you know, about like, like, obviously, she wasn't perfect. But when I was a kid, I didn't notice any of that. I thought she hung the moon. And I was like, Oh, yes, this perfect person who everyone else should be more like. And I and, you know, part of wanting to be like her is she would tell me the stories about her childhood. And I would be like, Oh, yes, this will be my life path, too. So for instance, she had two sisters. She had the troubles, the troublemaker sister and the pretty sister, and she was a smart sister. But by high school, other people considered her pretty too. And she had a very active dating life. And she kept telling me, like, one day, everyone's gonna realize you're beautiful, and like, everyone's gonna want to date you and this, that, and the third. And, you know, she would tell me stories from high school. And she's like, Yeah, I was kind of a bitch in high school. And I don't recommend it. And I was like, I'm not gonna have that problem, not realizing, and I was already much worse. But when I when I did realize I'm like, Oh, I did have that problem. I had it really bad. I was like, Oh, cool. I'm on the right, like, trajectory. But when I didn't hit the same, like life milestones that my mother hit in the fucking 70s. It was like, I'm doing a bad job. So

Olivia N 27:54

what were your earliest interactions with queer spaces? And what was it like making clear friends online? And what platforms Did you find them on?

28:02

Yeah, so my first knowledge of queer spaces was my middle school did have a GSA, but it was a GSA. That was no homo, like, like, people were like gay rights, but I'm not gay. I'm not gay. I'm Ally ally, obviously, like, as far as I'm aware, there was not a single kid who was out in middle school, except for the one kid who couldn't be in and I don't know if he was actually out or if he was just gay in a way that everyone had identified in the same way that everyone identified me as gay. But I wasn't out I didn't even know myself. So the GSA always struck me as like, kind of boring and self congratulatory, like I would sit there going like, yeah, obviously gay rights, but like, why would I sit in a room and say that with other straight people, like what are we even doing here? And again, obviously, since then, like on dating apps, I've seen a bunch like, obviously, my school wasn't all straight. There were a lot of closeted gay people, as it turns out, and a lot of them were in the GSA, but like, no one would really admit it until high school and even then I can only think of like, six to 10 people who I think were out. And then online, I met the gender variant person I ended up dating. We met playing Counter Strike Global Offensive, which is a first person shooter that Ray really liked. And we got, we got really close really fast. And all of our online gaming friends were at the time men who had a crush on Ray all of them, and oh, God, that was it was it was hell on my self esteem. To be in a space with only two girls, you know, girls air quotes, and no one have a crush on you and everyone have a crush on the other one. And she knew I had a crush on him. And we were homecoming dress shopping. And at that time, he decided to finally confess to her that he had feelings for her. And she went up, I can't even deal with this and just threw her phone at me and made me dump the guy I liked on her behalf. And I was it was heartbreaking. Oh God, and then we ended up dating like three weeks later. And I always had a lot of anxiety about being their second choice. And again, we were, again, as it turns out, deeply incompatible. But anyways, so I get I became very close with this person. So they invited me to this forum for artists called deletion quality. And like the gimmick of it was everything you post there is of the quality that you should have just deleted it. And it was, it was like a castle fan community. And I met other people there who were out and queer and happy. And we we kind of fell into a friend group. God, we would spend just hours just 1000s upon 1000s of messages on telegram like, at this time in my life, if I walked away from my phone for more than like four hours, I would have over 1000 messages to catch up on on the group chat, because we were all just so online. Now, unfortunately, these were adults. So me and the gender variant person they ended up dating, where we were 15. I was 15. They were 17. And then the rest of them were in their early 20s. Like starting to graduate college and stuff. So in hindsight, not the ideal, like power dynamic you want to have for such an intimate friendship, but they never behaved inappropriately. And in fact, when I would try because at the time, I was like I'm so mature, I'm unlike other girls, I'm I'm really an adult, I just happen to be 15. So when I would push the boundaries on stuff, they were mostly very good about being like, Hey, kid, I can't do this with you on the internet, like, you have to find a therapist to talk to you or something.

32:27

But it was a really positive experience. Mostly, we did have a falling out toward the end of high school.

32:35

Two of the people in that community had been sexually assaulted by a multitude of women in their life. And they had they gained some kind of misogynist tendencies from it. And at the time, I was like, Oh, I can just love them and show them that not all women are bad, I'm going to do that to them and etc, etc. But by the end of high school, I was like, I can't I can't accept this. Like, you have to respect my opinions more. You can't keep treating me like a kid. Like if we're going to be friends, we have to be on equal terms. So that we actually fell out of contact for about two years. And part of that, actually, at the time was I kind of fell in a turf ideology. I don't know how many other people can say this, but I got radicalized on Pinterest. Which is almost more embarrassing than having been a turf. But, I mean, obviously not because that's not harmful. Luckily, I didn't have social media accounts, like so I wasn't posting I think the only people I hurt were my friends who are gender variant people. And we've we've talked about it at length and I've apologized and I'm I'm really sorry and embarrassed about some of the things I used to believe in so Um, but uh, yeah, it was it was a bad time. I took to rad femme ideology pretty quickly. And I think part of that was that I was unwilling to investigate whether I was a lesbian yet or my own feelings about gender. And now I am a gender questioning person. I don't know if there's the label for my gender, it might be a gender, it might be non binary. But I've never identified super strongly with gender. I've identified with the political reality of being treated as a woman like experiencing sexism and misogyny. So I kind of assumed everyone felt that way. And therefore everyone else must be lying. All these trans women who say their women must be pretending to experience sexism because that's what woman is. Which is how I think I kind of fell into it and I was very much a think of the poor lesbians type turf, which I'll Wow. But yeah, that was uh, that was unfortunate. I feel. Um, and I don't want to downplay the harm I did because I had a Pinterest board. So I would pin a lot of RAD femme stuff to a board. So I know I boosted it in the algorithm. But I wasn't I wasn't posting I didn't post anything, like on Tumblr or publicly or Twitter, so I don't I don't think I heard two people, but it was. It was bad. I'm so embarrassed. And the thing that actually D radicalized me more than anything else, there's a YouTuber called Sean, who made reaction videos about anti feminists. And I had never watched anti feminist content, because, you know, obviously, but I started to notice that anti feminist arguments were formulated in the exact same way as turf arguments. And if they're as if they're so laughably wrong for a thing that I have, like lived experience in, then the people with lived experience in the other thing, who are telling me that my ideas are laughably wrong, are probably correct. And that opened the floodgates for like, engaging with actual like, that's when I first started reading actual queer theory like scholarship. And I watched a lot of Contra points and things like that. But yeah, I got D radicalized by a talking skull on YouTube and radicalized on Pinterest.

Olivia N 36:30

That's really, really, really funny. What other what, uh, what online platforms were you actively using? Because it makes sense why you would seek online community as opposed to like, in person community. So what online spaces were really formative to your understanding of self as a as a young person?

36:48

Yeah, yeah. So in high school, I had steam, where I would mostly hang out with really toxic sis hat, male gamers, and I was very much in my Pickney era. And then I moved over to deletion quality, where there were all these smart and cool queer adults just living smart and cool, queer, adult lifestyles. And I honestly didn't post all that much there either. I mostly lurked and would talk about the cool posts in our

group chat on Telegram, which is where I was most active. And then privately, I had a Pinterest where I would pin like, hair color ideas for when my mom lets me dye my hair and like, you know, all the and I had a board called feminism, where I would pin feminist things, mostly Tumblr posts, and I think that's what tipped the algorithm off to start showing me random stuff. And I think that's what started that. But I didn't have a didn't have a Twitter. I was on Tumblr for like a week. Until I got an A I got a mean a non from someone in who in hindsight probably definitely went to my school because how else would someone find a blog with like two friends and be mean to it like it was, it was very weird, but I, I got off Tumblr, the first mean message I got. And I was already off Facebook again by that point, because I got super bullied on Facebook in middle school. But now as an adult, I have a lot more social media because I'm active on Tik Tok with my cosplay stuff. I've gotten Instagram. I actually have a Twitter now not not that I tweet, but sometimes I read tweets now. But But yeah, so it was mostly these little group chats where I spent a lot of time and they were mostly comprised of the same five people in different permutations. So

Olivia N 38:48

how did class impact you growing up?

38:52

Yeah, so I grew up in a very wealthy area. But I didn't know that no one like pulls you aside and says, Hey, where you're growing up is different than everywhere else. So I thought I grew up in a regular area. And my parents were very frugal, very much for maxing out the retirement account before doing fun stuff. Very much. Like we didn't wear designer clothes, we didn't have fancy cars, we had new cars, but we didn't have like, the fancy cars that all my friends had. I didn't get an allowance. And so I thought we had a lot less money than everyone else. Though, in reality, it was just that my parents prioritize different things. Like I didn't know this, but we ate out a lot more than other people. Because we valued food and like we went on, we didn't go on more of it more frequent vacations, but the vacations we went on, we're more expensive. So I grew up thinking I was like, on the lower ish middle end of the regular spectrum of wealth that exists in America. Not realizing that, oh no, we're like definitely upper middle class. And like, most areas are not even remotely like this, like I grew up in an area where most families would have at least four cars, kids got cars for their 16th Birthdays, does designer clothes getting a new phone every time a phone came out? Like, I never really worried about money all that much. Though, in, in elementary school, when 2008 The the economy crash, we learned about it. And I remember going home and crying and like telling my mom like, Hey, you can have my \$112 if it'll help us save our house. And she goes, What the fuck are you talking about our house is fine. And my like my parents weren't laid off. But we had watched a news video about how the recession was laying off everybody's parents and people were becoming homeless and having to go, so I just like assumed, but in reality, there were no, there were no pressures for money, like my family's version of lean times, was not eating out, and only going to one week of summer camp, as opposed to our regular to, and like, not going on international vacations. So that just gave me a very skewed perspective that I became somewhat aware of by by high school but not truly aware of until I got to college. And at college, I met a broader range of like class backgrounds, because again, the school districts are created by property tax. So everyone who lives around you has about the same income. And I was loosely aware that there were the poor farming communities who lived near us. But I didn't really know what being like poor meant. I was like, Oh, they're fine. They just don't have nice cars. Like not like, oh, not having money is

a death sentence in this country, like so. class was an interesting one. For me. It took me a hot second to unpack how much privilege because I'm like, I'm middle class or like lower middle class and like, No, not even a little bit. So

Olivia N 42:23

do you remember what your first experience to lesbianism? What are your first exposure other than people calling you like died? Or calling you slurs when you were younger, like in third grade

42:33

for lesbianism that actually might have been Buffy the Vampire Slayer in the seventh grade when Willow and Tara got together? Um yeah, no, I think that was first.

Olivia N 42:50

I don't know, my parents,

42:51

I think just kind of assumed that their kids were straight. So they didn't go out of their way to like, show us representation. And they were they were not homophobic at all. But I just didn't encounter it. I didn't seek it. And I didn't have unfettered access to the internet until I was 14 and got to high school. So like, I didn't I couldn't find it on my own until I got to high school. But yeah, so I think I think that was it. And and I it actually it was a little bit damaging, because the first time they implied that Willow might be queer was her evil vampire doppelganger. So there was kind of this implicit thing, where I was like, Oh, yes, being gay, that thing that is kind of indicative of your moral corruption. And like, Willow had like two different corruption arcs, like where she became a bad person. And like, Tara was kind of perfect, but also not really a character. So like, like, she was just kind of there a lot of the time. So I actually think that that added some baggage to, even though they had a pretty beautiful relationship. But that was that was interesting, especially because, you know, the way she's written I don't know if she's meant to be bisexual or just meant to have really bad content. But like, I also didn't know I was gay until I did and like, dated men before that. So I guess I had a kind of similar like, trajectory.

Olivia N 44:25

So when did you start realizing that maybe your sexuality was different from you? What's from what was around you?

44:33

Yeah. So the first time I started realizing was I had this boyfriend in college. And he was so nice, and we had all the same nerdy interests. And he liked me so much. And I didn't like him. Like he liked me and it made me insecure all the time. And he was so good at being a partner, like whoever's dating him now. Probably has the best boyfriend like He would remember every little thing I said, like once I mentioned completely in passing that I love key lime pie. And he brought me a key lime pie the next time he saw me, like he was just so good. And I just never attached to him the way I was supposed to. And at the time, I was like very much trying to live by the same schedule my parents had, and they got married at 23. So I was already 18 and running out of time. So I decided that I wanted to have sex before I turned 19. Because 18 was a good age to lose your virginity at which is a great reason to start

having sex. So he was so good and patient, he didn't pressure me at all. But I hated having sex with him. And I couldn't figure out why like, and the worst part was, I was like, wow, I must be bad at this, I'm gonna practice more and get better at it. Like, he was not pressuring me, I was very much the driver of my own destiny on this. But I would like go to my mom and be like, Am I just the most evil, vain and shallow person ever? Who was only attracted to celebrities? Like he's a completely normal looking guy. And he's so nice. Why don't I like he loves me? Why don't I love him? And my mom would be like, chill out. You're 18 Like, why are you acting like a crazy person? And I was like, oh, okay, I guess. And so that was when I first I literally went to the gynecologist and it was like, Do I have a clitoris? Now part of this was because I got my sex ed through BYU. Because I took that online over the summer because I wanted to take AP Psychology. So I needed to clear up space in my schedule. And the only online option that my public school offered was BYU. So I didn't know what it looked like. And I was like, I don't think I have one. It's not doing any of the things that a clitoris is supposed to do. And like, do I have one? And my gynecologist was very nice, because she didn't laugh at me. Um, even though she probably should have. But I literally went there. And I was like, wow, something's wrong. And she was like, no, like, use more lube and like, Stop putting so much mental pressure on yourself. So when we finally broke up, I was like, God, I can't believe I'm asexual. This is the worst thing ever. It didn't even occur to me that there were other options that I might be I was like God that I must be asexual. This is so disappointing. This is not what I like. Because when I pictured my life, I pictured a healthy, like fun sex life. And then, at the time, I had this best friend. We we were close so fast. And we had this running joke that I was Spock from Star Trek, and she was Captain Kirk and our other friends were Scotty and bones. So like our little friend group, we were we were the command crew of enterprise. And we were both huge Kirk and Spock shippers. So we would joke that we were space husbands. Which is funny because we were both straight girls, but we were actually gay man. Lol. And we essentially were dating like, I didn't notice it at the time. But like, we went on dates that we called dates, like we went to get Chinese food once every two weeks to go on a date, like, and our friends would joke. Sometimes when the friend group was getting weird that we hadn't gone on a date recently enough and that like mom and dad were fighting. And none of this raised any alarm bells for me for fucking years. And she came out as bi pretty early. But I didn't I didn't it didn't even occur to me. I continued trying to date men and drain and I just I dated the longest string of losers. Losers and like people who are genuinely dangerous, I'm actually very bad at screening people on dating apps, which ended up being a persistent problem. But I finally started noticing she was a year above me. I finally started noticing as her graduation date was approaching. Now at this point, I had to drop out of school because I was taking care of my sick mom. So I wasn't on track to graduate but she was and you know, I started noticing as as she was going to move away, I started getting really weird and really possessive. And I would talk to my mom about it. And I'm like, Well, I feel so strongly about this. Like it's so weird. And she's like, yep, that's what female friendships and college are like. And I was like, Oh, I guess I believe you because I haven't had any good female friendships ever. And you know, but like the longer we talked about this, the I realized But my mom was actually probably by, like the way she would talk about the women that she had relationships, like the relationship I had with my best friend. I'm like that. For us. This was romantic. We just neither one of us admitted it. Like it wasn't sexual. But it was definitely romantic. And I think it was for you, too. She's passed now. So I can't ask her. But like, my mom telling me no, those are extremely straight feelings, probably delayed me figuring myself out by like, nine or 10 months, because I was like, yep, these are straight women hate men, and they love women. And that's how being straight is. But finally, at her graduation, she invited me and I was sleeping in her dorm room

on the floor. And I was like, and we woke up, and I'm like, I want to wake up next to you every single day for the rest of my life. And I was like, Oh, I think I'm gay and in love with you. Um, so I told her. And she did not feel the same way. Which, you know, I think I think I'm forever doomed to wonder if I had figured myself out sooner, if we would have been able to date and maybe work it out. And like, if the reason she didn't want to date me is because, you know, she, we had essentially already dated, and I kept calling myself straight. And, you know, I wonder I wonder if I ruined it for myself. Or maybe we were never compatible. Maybe it wasn't ever romantic on her end. But like, we were so close, it was absurd. Like, people would ask where the other one was when we weren't together. But yeah, she she did not feel the same way. And you know, after that my mom kept getting sicker. And I was probably a bummer to talk to because I was living in my terrible small town taking care of my dying mother. With no, I didn't know when I was going to make it back to college. It didn't know when I was going to have a life. But eventually, she told me, she like kind of stopped answering my texts and stuff. So at one point, I'm like, Hey, like, just let me know if you don't want me to text you anymore. Because I don't want to feel like I'm stalking you. So like, just let me know. And she was like, Yeah, I'm sorry. I just don't have space in my life to continue our friendship. Like, it'd probably be best if we didn't talk anymore. And heartbroken, I was crushed. Especially because I thought I did a good job of going back to being friends. But again, maybe we were never friends. Maybe there was no relationship to get back to since it was always so romantically entangled. Maybe I made her uncomfortable. I hope I didn't. But But yeah, I don't know. I don't know if I ever would have figured out my sexuality if I hadn't fallen so madly in love with her. I think I would have forever dated men and secretly been like, God, I must be kind of ACE and also mean for not thinking men are attractive. But looking back, I was like, I can't. And when the when the when the wolf like fell from my eyes. Everything about like, some past experiences started making sense. And now when I try to tell people about my life, they don't believe me that I didn't know. Because I don't even know how many levels of closet I was on. Like, it's it's kind of indescribable. Like, I have pictures from my childhood of me looking at some of my friends with the most adoring puppy dog eyes of all time. And it's like, oh, yeah, no, for sure. Okay, like I have photographic evidence of crushing on girls as early as elementary school. But it never, I never want stopped to think about it. Until it became completely undeniable. So,

Olivia N 53:58

can you talk a little bit about when you act like what like around what age you start identifying as a lesbian? And did it ever feel like a scary identity for you to claim? So you're sitting on the floor of your friend's dorm? You're like, oh, shit, I'm in love with them. When did you start identifying as a lesbian? And did it feel scary?

54:16

So it did feel scary, because I didn't want to be wrong, because I was very anxious about what if I say I'm a lesbian, and there is a man I like, and then people will think that you can change the lesbians man mind or like a lesbian just needs to meet the right man. Like I was so anxious about doing harm to the community in that way, that for a long time, I identified as maybe by but the maybe it was whether I was into men, not whether I was into women. So I held on to that questioning label for probably a year. While I was like, I need to be sure. How old are you? I didn't start identifying as a lesbian until after I slept with a woman. And I was like, oh, Yeah, no, this is different. And I okay in perspective, I never want to have sex with a man ever again in my entire life. So I was anxious about it because I was

anxious about being incorrect. Um, but I love the word lesbian. I love the history related to it. I love I love the community. I love the the people I just Yeah, I love being a lesbian. But it did take me. I went from questioning and when people would ask further what questioning meant I would go maybe by to lesbian. And I was and I haven't looked back. I think, even as I've started to deconstruct my gender, I don't think I will ever identify as anything other than a lesbian, even if I ended up like, very medically transitioning, like very far down the way because it's very important to me, and also, I think accurate. So

Olivia N 55:59

how old were you when you decided that you were like, Oh, shit, I had sex with a woman? And I'm for sure lesbian? I was 2121.

56:07

Yeah. Yeah. Or maybe I was 2222. Maybe? Oh, God. It was around my birthday. So I was late 21 or 22 At that point, but okay. Yeah, it took a while. Now, just curious.

Olivia N 56:24

So what were your first encounters with lesbian sex? both directly and indirectly, I can talk more about like, your encounters directly with lesbian sex, like, after you talk about the indirect one. But like, even be hearing about lesbian sex or like porn or something?

56:43

Yeah, so I never liked porn, like, I looked into it when I was about 14 or 15 When I first got the internet, because that's what you're supposed to do. And I didn't like it. And, you know, I've deconstructed most of the harmful turf stuff that I picked up. But I've never been able to look at porn without just horrible dread and anxiety about whether those performers actually want to be performing. So I never got into, like erotica involving live bodies, because I was always too worried about whether the women being depicted were being trafficked, or whether they were actually having any fun. And I just I just never got anywhere. But I did find fanfiction. And as a deeply nerdy person. I felt very deep into explicit fanfiction. I still love explicit fanfiction. But and like, like, going back to like Willow and Taro, they do have kind of a sex scene. But like, obviously, it was for television wasn't very explicit. But like, I don't know, there's like jokes about lesbian sex, like, oh, how do lesbians have sex? And I was like, ah, you know, actually, I kind of don't know, that's crazy. Um, and I'm very much the type of autistic person who loves like, manuals and steps. So I read a ton of guides on how to have lesbian sex, like, embarrassing amount, and I'm

Olivia N 58:25

still reading the same right now. I just read the like, lesbian sex book, and I read the like bottoming book and I'm like,

58:33

Actually, can I get those book recommendations? See you.

Olivia N 58:39

There's also like a lesbian sex like manual for like queer people. I got some.

58:44

Actually, that would be great.

Olivia N 58:46

I also wonder about queerness sex and disability too. Ooh, that's very interesting. Yeah. And you're starting to dry up topic. No, no. I'm suddenly annuals because you're autistic and like, manuals. Yeah, I

58:59

love them. I Yeah. And I've always had such a complicated relationship with my body because I have such I have chronic pain of chronic regional pain syndrome. I've had so many injuries, like my body has been a site of pain for me forever. And it is so very rarely a site of physical butter for me. And I think no, I don't mean to bash my ex, but I don't think I've ever had good sex. I'm really grateful to her. But she was uncommunicative, like, kind of prudish about it very shut down. And I was like, Please, I'm I am. I don't mind that you're a pillow princess. I really don't. But like, you have to tell me if I'm doing a good job. You have to tell me how to do this. Like I've never done this before. I'm getting no guidance. I'm having a hard time. Like, please tell me and like I tried to talk to her about it during and that didn't work. So I try I had to talk to her about it when we weren't actively having sex, and she would be like, God, it's so embarrassing that you would bring this up. It was just not great. In terms of like, like, obviously, it was good enough that I was like, oh, no, this is the only type of sex I want to have from now on, but like, not actually, like, officially good. And then COVID hit. Um, I just, I just didn't.

1:00:30

I haven't dated all that much. I think part of that is that I'm a pretty

1:00:37

particular person to get used to. I don't get along with all that many people. I tried to. But I think I'm not everyone's cup of tea. And because of COVID, it's been so easy to put it on the backburner and be like, Oh, I'll get to it. But I'm like, romantically lonely. I do want to date. And when I get to New York, I'm going to put in an effort that I haven't put in for a while.

1:01:07

You know, since my my first and only girlfriend. I just hate dating apps. I hate them so much.

1:01:17

But I don't know, maybe I'll maybe I'll meet more people in person. There were a couple of women at school that I got interested in. Since, but they weren't interested in me. And that's totally fine. Except one of them. I was only like, loosely starting to get interested. And like, she would constantly go, this is not a date. And I'm like, Okay, I believe you. I heard you the first time. And right around that time, one of my friends who's also a lesbian, told me God, I could never date you. In response to something about like, I'm close with her sister also. And our sister was made a joke that because she had just gotten out of a terrible relationship. So our sister made a joke that she should just date me. And she said, God, I could never date you. Like, I didn't ask but thank you for telling me. Um, so I think I'm, I

think I'm hard to date. And I had another friend that I got physically entangled with, but not romantically entangled with. And then it turned out that they were kind of a McAfee valiant sociopath who had been cheating on their girlfriend for five years. So, we had already been friends for a year at this point, and I didn't know they had a girlfriend. And then they introduced their girlfriend to us about a month after. We were physical, as like, Oh, I've had a crush on her since high school, I finally got the courage to ask her out. And like, we're we just started dating now in December. And then like for Christmas, their girlfriend got them a PS five. And I was like, Damn, that's crazy for only dating three weeks. But then when their web of lies ended up collapsing, which is a whole long and honestly kind of boring story. It turns out, it turned out they had been dating for five years. And it's like, Oh, that makes a lot more sense, right? Because like, a PS five is a much more reasonable gift for your girlfriend of five years, whom you're talking about marriage with. And oh, God, it was terrible. But I wasn't like romantically into them. But they were very hot. And as it turns out, me.

Olivia N 1:03:47

So can you talk a little bit more about fan fiction? You mentioned fan fiction, and we've talked about fiction for a really long time. So you're just gonna have to say it again. Pretend like I don't know. So can you talk more about fanfiction and how fanfiction has shaped your your gender identity? And also fanfiction, and sex and fanfiction and lesbian sex and queer sex and what fandoms you were in and where you were reading them?

1:04:15

So when I first got it I first got into fanfiction because I had heard a rumor about it at a lunch table that there was a such thing as explicit fanfiction. So I typed into google.com, adult fanfiction. And adult fanfiction.net came up. I was like, Well, that's exactly what I asked for. And they had their site was pretty intuitively laid out and they had their biggest fandoms separated out as something new. Like you didn't have to go into the alphabetize menu of fandoms it was like just there on the main menu for their very biggest ones. And one of them was Avatar The Last Airbender. And again, this is back when I thought I was straight. And everyone's into Zuko. And Zuko and Katara. So that was very much where I started. And I honestly, I liked some of it, but not a lot of it. Um, and I started moving on to male male pairings. And at the time, I explained in a way as well, I appreciate that there's not like so much misogynistic language, like it was kind of triggering, like the way that they would have these characters be interacting in some of these fixed, so that's why I like it. And I felt a lot of guilt for liking male male fan fiction, because I was like, Oh, I'm, I'm the Fujiyoshi Yahweh person who's fetishizing. I'm the bad person. But I guess I wasn't guilty enough to not read it, because I continued to read it. And I got really deep into Spock and Kirk, that was a huge one. That's honestly pretty formative for me. In terms of the relationship dynamics that appealed to me. And Femslash I think part of this is just what adult fanfiction dotnet was attracting and there wasn't a ton of Femslash on there, just like in general. And some of it again, because my body has not really been a site of pleasure for me some of it I'm like, well, that's unrealistic. And it would like take me out of the experience. But I was really into Korra and Asami Catcher in the Dora.

1:06:40

Ah Oh my God, why am I blanking? Star Starfire, and Raven, those types of things. But I think I read the most male male stuff.

1:06:59

And now that I know I'm a lesbian, and really enjoy things that represent us, I like go out of my way to watch things that have lesbian couples or soft couples in it. And that helps, like finding chips that I really like. And, you know, looking back some of these things, I'm like, Oh, this is definitely a gender thing. Like some of the fix I had bookmarked. I'm like, Oh, I think the thing that was really appealing here is the way that this man is performing gender is how you want to perform gender. Especially for some of those Zuko and Spock stuff. I guess I'm just angsty that way.

Olivia N 1:07:47

So what platforms Did you read fanfic on, like, what were you on?

1:07:52

So I started on adult fanfiction. dotnet and then I heard someone talking about a oh three as like that place to read fanfiction. So migrated over there. And I haven't looked back, because there's just so much like, you'll never run out. There's just a million billion things. And again, this was when I was like, when I first got access to the internet around 1415. And I remember because I didn't get a smartphone until I was 16. So when I was going places where I knew there wouldn't be internet, I would print out fanfiction. And it would be like, in the bottom of my suitcase or whatever. Just so embarrassing, because one time my mom found it, and it was like, All right, I guess like, my, like, my household was actually pretty sex positive, but like, in a hands off way. Like when I turned 18, and I started talking to my mom about the problems I was having with my boyfriend, she's like, You should definitely get a dildo and like explore your body and like, figure out what you like before you add this other person into the mix. You know, which is nice. It's nice when your parents aren't mean I talked to my mom a lot about things people probably don't talk to their moms about cuz she was always good at it. Like good at advice, good at listening, good at not being judgmental. And it's a real tragedy that I didn't like, I think she knew that I was gay just based on the conversations I had with her. But I never came out to her because I didn't have it figured out before she died. And that makes me really sad. So can we talk

Olivia N 1:09:39

a little bit about if your views on marriage have changed at all before and after identifying as a lesbian.

1:09:50

I have always had a very doe eyed opinion of marriage. My parents marriage was very happy at least while I was alive. My parents were married for 11 years. Here's before they had me. So I think they were whatever issues they had in their marriage, they were pretty well worked out. I only saw my parents shout at each other once in my whole life. They were good at disagreeing without fighting, and like arguing without fighting. Um, and they had like the cutest meet cute love story. My mom's parents owned a restaurant and he worked there. So they met as young high schoolers, but they didn't date in high school. But they did end up dating in college because my mom had a car and my dad had a motorcycle, and he wanted to go to a party, but it was raining. So he went to go invite my mom to the party. And my mom had just gotten their heart broken by some Harvard polo asshole. And she was playing the same record over and over again. So my grandma said, yes, you're going on the date and kicked her out. And they went, they went on this date, because my mom was annoying. My grandma,

and my dad didn't want to get rained on. And they fell in love. And they got married at 23. So I've always been not like people are like, Oh, marriage is just a patriarchal thing. It's that it's this that I've always been like marriage is that ceremony, where you tell everyone how much you love each other and promised to be partners for life. And I still feel that way. I want to get married one day, I want to have a wife, I want to be a good. I want to be a good wife to my wife and I want to have that type of partnership and deep abiding love and respect that I witnessed my parents having my entire childhood. So

Olivia N 1:11:44

can you talk about how your lesbianism or how your clothing impacts your lesbianism, your clothing, your jewelry, makeup, tattoos, body mods, or even your cosplay or other forms of gendered expression. affirm your identities or your lesbianism?

1:12:04

Yeah, so as I mentioned, I fell into lesbian markers before I knew that, like I did it independently, like I just, I guess not that independently because I had a crush on a woman who in hindsight was probably also gay, but like, but I didn't do it to signify I was gay. I did it before I knew I was gay. I did it because I liked it. But it did get me marked as queer, really young. And when I first started getting the Inklings that I might not be straight. One of the things I did is grow my hair out to be long to see if I can attract better men. And I'm like, Oh, maybe I don't like men because the only men who are attracted me with my short boys share our shitty men. And if I grew long lashes straight hair, and maybe I'd attract men who make me want to be straight. That did not go well. And I cut my hair short, pretty immediately. Once I came to terms with being queer, in terms of gender expression, I bought my first binder. For a cosplay, I wanted to do a Kirishima cosplay. And the second I put it on, I said, Oh, no, out loud, alone in my bedroom, because I realized how much I liked it. And didn't want to. Like I was worried about it. I was like, I can't wear this for anything other than a cosplayer. I'm gonna want to wear them all the time. And it's like, and looking back on that I'm like, Wow, it's so weird that I was concerned like, what what is the problem with wanting to wear them all the time? I mean, I guess, you know, it's got to be leftover tough stuff, probably. But I always felt better cosplaying men like I it was, in hindsight, kind of gender euphoric. But in a way, I didn't let myself except I always explained it away as I like cosplaying men, because I give myself a bigger break for not being accurate because I'm like, Well, I'm not a man. So obviously, I don't look like a man. Whereas when I would do female characters, especially femme characters, I would just be like, I'm so not pretty enough for this. I'm not good enough at makeup. Like I'm not doing gender. Good. Whereas when I'm not doing gender good as boys, it's like, yeah, well, what do you expect? I've got Double D's like, you know, I'm doing my best. But, ah, over this last summer, actually, I was visiting my godmother in Portland and I mentioned that I really wanted men's clothing. I really wanted some men's clothing but I couldn't justify buying any because when my mother passed, I inherited all her clothes. So I essentially had two closets worth of clothes, half of which were the really nice, like higher quality expensive pieces from my mother's closet and half of which were like trendy stuff. That was like in my fashion at the time. So I had so many clothes. I was like, I can't justify buying any more clothes, but I really wish I had men's clothing. And my grandmother was like, well, that's dumb. And I hate that. So they took and I'm sorry my goddaughter is actually since come out as my godparents. But so my grandparents took me shopping in Portland to all these men's boutiques and got me like my starter wardrobe of men's clothes. And very immediately, I was like, Oh, yes, I really

only want to wear men's clothes. I don't really like, my my clothes. They don't even feel like my clothes anymore. And the next time I did a high FEM cosplay. I was like, oh, no, I'm in drag. I'm a catfish. This is terrible. I was like, I'm lying to everyone. I don't look like this. And like, yeah, I don't look like that. But I don't look like any of the characters like cosplay. That's the whole friggin point. You're wearing wigs and contacts and 10 pounds of makeup. But that was for the queer, the queer con flame con in New York. And we that was for the the kickoff party, which was at a gay bar. And I actually ended up really hitting it off with someone. And we ended up making out for a lot of the night. And I felt kind of guilty about it. Because I'm like, oh, this person thinks I'm this really high femme, like fashionable. Like, no, like I had a corset on I was like, sent to the gods, like, I looked good, in my opinion. But like, I'm like, Oh, this isn't the actual shape of my body. This is not the actual length of my hair. Like I don't, I don't wear cat eyes and big lashes like this ever. Um, and so there's been a lot of deconstruction of that stuff. And I've always been a little bit alternative, like I got my industrial barbell piercing when I was 16. And I got my I got my first tattoo at 20. And I've just continued, actually, as a little reward to myself for coming out, I got a rainbow cuff tattooed on my ear. Just a little subtle something for me, because I couldn't make it to pride. Because my town's pride got canceled due to COVID. And I wasn't going to be somewhere where I could go to New York Pride. So like, just for my little personal pride, I went down to the tattoo shop and I got I got the little pride flag tattooed because I don't know, because like my parents were accepting, but I don't know why coming out was still pretty scary to me.

Olivia N 1:17:38

Can you talk a little bit more about coming out and what that was like?

1:17:42

Yeah, so I was dating, I had been dating my girlfriend for five months before I came out to anyone. And part of that was because it was it was like later COVID times. So like, all I did was go to class on Zoom, and go visit my girlfriend. And like that was pretty much it. And I was not living at home with my parents. With my dad at this point my mother had passed. And my friends were online, so I didn't have to tell them anything. I didn't want to tell them. So at first I was like, I'm not going to tell anyone until I'm sure because how embarrassing would it be to uncom out to be like I'm gay and then, you know, sleep with a woman and be like, actually, I'm not fuck this. Which again, was dumb, because I was so madly in love. Like, it was obvious. But in any case, even after I had been dating my my, my girlfriend for a while I was like, I still don't know if I want to do this. And then my girlfriend's parents were coming to visit. And I was like, Oh God, if I meet her parents, my dad is going to be mad if he ever finds out that I met her parents, without like, telling him like without even telling him that I was gay or had a partner. And my dad and I had a relatively contentious relationship. That improved amazingly, once I moved out. Like, if you have a contentious relationship with your parents, I can't recommend anything higher than not living under that roof. But he never really gave me any indication that he might be homophobic. And when I was in middle in high school, he used to joke that I should be a lesbian because men are bad. And he's like, get a Subaru get a pitbull, you'll be happier, you know, be a lesbian. And I'm like, Dad, that's not woke. You can't choose your sexuality and I'm straight and lol I mean, you can't choose your sexuality, but like, lol so when I was working up to tell him I was I was like telling myself I'm like, Oh, he's known the whole time. He's like those jokes. Were him trying to tell you that it's okay to come out to him. So I told him And that was not what those were. He did not know. And he was shocked. I'm not angry. He did a pretty good job of it. But yeah, he apparently had no idea, which is again, crazy,

because everyone knew except for me, and apparently my dad. And, you know, the only thing is he asked me if I would be okay not telling his parents. And I'm not close to his parents. He's not close to his parents, his parents were abusive. And he was like, Look, and he's like, as soon as he said it, he's like, I don't want you to think it's because I'm ashamed of you. It's because I don't want your grandfather to ask me what a lesbian is once a week. And I'm like, Yeah, you know what? That's fine. Like, if they live long enough for me to be getting married? We'll tell him then. But like, until then, what does it matter? You know, and when I told my friends that I had had in high school, again, these are the friends that knew me when I was kind of turfy. And very adamant, like one of these friends has a theory that everyone's a little buy, which is not ideal for other reasons. But at the time, I was like, everyone's a little die. Except for me. No one's ever been straighter than me. So when I came out, I'm like, you're not allowed to say I told you so. But I have something to tell you. And they didn't say I told you so. But they're like, yeah, that tracks actually. So yeah. And then when I came out to them, I was like, I think I might have gender actually. They were like, yeah, that also tracks. Um, because I remember, I've had so many gender variant friends. And when they would be having dysphoria and issues with their gender, like, my thought would be like, Damn, that sucks. It must be hard to have gender, like I don't want to do that at all. And then I just got bumped with the gender stick, and like, now I have dysphoria and like care about and I'm like, Oh, this does suck, I was right the whole time. Like, I wish I could turn back the clock. For one, this was like, not something I spent any active consideration about. But a lot of my gender variant friends told me that this is just a phase you go through. And like once you start getting this, like, the things you want, you're going to be on the euphoric side. So like, if you can just knuckle under the crushing awareness part, it gets better. And I think I am going to try that. And if that doesn't work, I'm just gonna put it back in the closet and not deal with it because because I don't like a similar thing happened when I was waiting tables and part of the uniform was to wear makeup all of the time. And so I was wearing makeup like five or six days a week. And I noticed that when I started doing that, when I would catch my face like in a mirror, not wearing makeup, I would be horrified like I was getting like face dysmorphia from not from like only seeing it in makeup and I only started liking my face and makeup and I was like This is This is killing me. So I literally had a conversation with my boss I was like I will not be able to wear makeup from here on out. So I stopped and now I only wear makeup for cosplay and job interviews. Because wearing it too frequently just makes me feel so bad about myself. And a kind of similar thing happened with the binder when I started wearing it all the time. I feel great when I am wearing it. But when I can't wear it now I feel really upset about it. And like even before the binder I think I had some chest issues like I I started wearing head coverings head scarves, hats, I don't wear my hair out in public anymore. And at around that time I started getting into more modest clothing like I had a lot of Dickies which are like those little collar like half shirts that you can use to make a shirt more modest. That I really liked. So even before I started binding, I didn't like showing my chest all that much. But now when it's just like a T shirt and jeans day if I can't also have the binder. I don't feel all that good and I don't like needing it. So you know the solution that worked last time was don't wear makeup, but I don't want to not wear binders. So I'm like trying to find something I can live with some compromise that I can live with.

Olivia N 1:24:38

Why don't you like the idea of wearing binders?

1:24:41

Oh, I like the idea. It's just because of my Ehlers Danlos and my ribs like there are just days where I can't like that. There are some days where I just have to present them because I'm, you know, applying for an apartment and I need them to not know I'm queer. And then there are other days where I'm like, oh I need to give my A body a break, like medically. And sometimes that can be like a whole week, like, well, I'll put the binder on in the morning. And like 20 minutes later, I'm like, No, I really can't wear this today, I have to switch to like a sports bra. And not a very compressive one, just something. So I've tried the tape. But again, with the earliest downloads, it tore my skin really badly. So I've got a new brand. And I'm going to try that. And hopefully I'll better luck because I really liked that. Because when it's the tape, you're wearing it like the whole time, like even when you're sleeping like it's really cool. But within 18 hours, where the top, my skin just ripped, it just ripped right open. And then when I use the oil to take it off it, like tore in a bunch of other places. And I've actually, it's gotten pretty bad. I've actually got a lot of like, marks now. And I'm like, Well, fuck. So it's one of those things where it's like, and I think there will always be times where I'm not able to wear a binder. And I don't want to feel bad about myself every time I can't. So we're gonna

Olivia N 1:26:16

move into the section where we talk a little bit about your identity, and deeper into identity formation and how that all relates to community and lesbian community. So how do you think disability and chronic illness and form your interactions with other lesbianism up other lesbians, yourself and your own understandings of your lesbianism?

1:26:41

Yeah, it definitely makes a difference. Especially when I started leaning more into masculinity, I started I was like, oh, I need to read the, you know, the foundational texts of, you know, like, female masculinity by Jacques Habersham. And which is a noun by a bear. Fuck, I forget your name. But I really liked which is unknown. I really liked it a lot. It really spoke to me. You know, Bucha is kind of an aspirational label that I hope to one day be able to embody that role enough to have like, earned it. But one of the things that which identity, especially for Bear was, it was so intertwined with, like physical acts of service, like helping people move, you know, walking really far to, like, get someone something that they had asked for. And I'm like, physically not capable of some of the which things that I would like to be capable of. And I have this friend, who they identified as a lesbian for many years, but now identify as a trans mask, gray row, Ace person, but they grew up in the lesbian community, they came out as a lesbian when they were like 13, and only stopped identifying as lesbian at like 22. And since this is a trans mask person, really the only trans match person I personally know who's like taking testosterone and like done some of the gender affirming things. I've talked to them a lot about it. And they're also disabled, we have a lot of chronic illnesses in common. And I like went to talk to them about my despair, about finding this thing that I wanted to be but like, physically couldn't. And they sent me this article that a disabled person had written about this very crisis, like the crisis of trying to be a butch and not be well, like, as a disabled person. I hate requiring caretaking. I hate it when I need people to do things for me. I hate it so deeply, but it happens pretty frequently, especially if I overdo it. And so they sent me this auto shuttle article about it. And it was supposed to be this like affirming thing. But I read it and I was like, this isn't and like, when I read it, my instinct, I'm like, this isn't a butch person at all. And I was like, god dammit, like, first of all, that's not how it like you can't take away other people's identity, other people's identity labels and second of all, like it's kind of a toxic construction of the label to make it

dependent on physical ability. So like, I'm just wrong, but that's something I'm still working on deconstructing. Because as I get more comfortable with my masculinity, I find myself wishing I was able bodied in a way that like I've always wished I was able bodied in that I wished I wasn't in pain every second of every day. That's always how I felt. You know, when people talk about wishing to be able bodied as being internalized ableism the metaphor that comes to mind is like, do you remember that 1x Men movie where they're like, We have a cure for mutant ism, and storms, like, we don't need a cure and Rogue is like, what the fuck? Like, I'm the rogue. And like some people have other disabilities, and I guess that works for them good for them. But like, if I can train my body for an able bodied woman, I would do it in a heartbeat. But as I get into my masculinity, I find myself wishing to be able bodied, not to be out of pain, but to do things for other people like to do more acts of service to be more physically capable of protecting myself and others. And that's been weird. That's been something new to, to sort through. I'm pretty, I keep giving myself complexes like I'm not even 100% sure where they're coming from like, which is a noun in no way says, Be Able bodied or perish. Like, that's not what The Book says. That's not what the author thinks that's not what's going on. But I don't know, I did it to myself good for me. Now I have to, you know, unlearn it and break it down. But, and I guess also just being less physically capable. Like, sometimes if I want to do a big day, I'm like, if I want to do this big day, I have to bring my crutches. And if I have to bring my crutches I have to think about can they go to every part of the day that I want to go to? And sometimes the answer is no. Which means I have to cross things off my list off my agenda, and either do them on a day, where I'm only doing that thing so that I can not bring my crutches or not do it at all. Um, now my personal friend group, especially the lesbians, I know in person, are all and I know Starbucks also, but the, they're all disabled. But it seems to be in different ways. I don't know if it's just one of those things where it's like, I noticed what I experienced more than everyone else. So it only seems like their disabilities affect their lives less than mine affects my life. But sometimes it feels like sometimes it feels terrible being the most disabled. And I don't think that's an accurate way of putting it but I'm definitely the only one with a mobility aid. And that can be that can be a problem.

Olivia N 1:32:36

Do you feel like your like disabled lesbian community accommodates you? Like? Do they do actions where you can be gay and be a lesbian, and use a mobility aid or be multiple be disabled in the way that you are?

1:32:49

Yeah, I would say my friend group, this is the first friend group I've had that has made any effort to accommodate me. The friend group I had before this was the summer of 2020. After the George Floyd lynching happened, I got very involved in the protest scene in my local town, and also in Philadelphia, because we weren't very far away. So I got close with a group of people that we like formed, like an action block, essentially. So we went to all the same protests, we looked out for each other, etc, etc. And at this time, I was a little more physically abled, and I hadn't needed a mobility aid and like the last four years, probably, but suddenly, I'm protesting, and I'm walking all this walking. And I started hitting the limits of my disability. And they were so cruelly callous about it, we went to DC for the for the the anniversary of MLK is march on DC for Jobs and Freedom. And the organizers had said the wrong drop off point like the I think it was that they said northeast instead of southeast. So we were on the wrong side of the city. And I wanted to call another Uber to just Uber us from the wrong drop off point to the

right drop off point. And they were like, no, no, it's not that far. It's only a mile and a half. Let's walk it. And I was like, I don't think I can do that. Because once we get there, the protest is also a walk. And they said, no, no, it's fine. It's fine. And I wasn't as good at sticking up for myself, I guess. So I said, Okay. So by the time we got there, I'm limping. I'm barely able to walk. Every part of my body is swollen. I look like I've been stung by a bee. And I just lay on the ground while we listen to the speeches. And by the end of the speeches, I'm not so swollen. I'm feeling terrible, but like, okay, and then it's time for the March and my friends are like, we have to go on the march. It's history. We cannot go and I'm like, You're right. We came all this way. Like we're gonna do it. So I did it. And we finish it and I'm like, Okay, now let's call a cab because I'm going to die. And we encountered an older black woman who was lost and her phone was out of charge. So we gave her directions to where she needed to go. And DC is on like this grid pattern. So it was alphabetical streets. So she just needed to walk on the same street, we were on to the next one. Or as I offered share our cab, and we could take our cab there first drop her off, and then go where we needed to go. My friends are no, no, we're gonna walk her we're gonna walk her. So we ended up walking. So this day ended up being a four or five mile day of walking. And by the end of it, I was supposed to drive my car to a family friend's house where I was supposed to stay, they had to pick me up and drop me back off to pick up my car later. Because I couldn't drive, I couldn't use my joints. And the next day I hit 102 Fever, because of all of the inflammation and just shit I had done to my end. This was August, it was hot. Like this was a, this was a hard day for everyone physically, but like I pushed myself to the absolute breaking point. And they ignored me at every turn. Now in my defense, I didn't put my foot down. But when I talked to them about it, I'm like, hey, this, like, hurt my feelings and made me feel like that you don't value what I can and can't do or want to accommodate me. And they're like, well, you should have just brought your cane. And I'm like, Yeah, I should have. You're right. But I didn't like think of it when I was packing. And that's on me. But like, you shouldn't have done what you did. And that ended up being the end of that friend group. That was that was our last falling out. But so my current friend group, so this is that's about the level of accommodation I'm used to getting from people. But my current friend group is really, really good, um, about these types of things. Like we still really like to go to conventions and do these physically hard things, but they always make sure I bring my mobility aids even when I'm like, oh, no, like, I feel pretty good. I don't want to bring it. And they're like, No, bring it and I'm like, oh, no, I don't want to bring it doesn't match my costume like this. They're in there, like no, bring it. And they don't mind sitting down when I eat to sit down. Like if we are taking a long walk and I can't do the whole walk in one sitting, they don't mind sitting on a bench with me for 45 minutes while I like, get my second wind. And like no one's ever done that, because it's slow and boring. And it makes us late for things. But like, my friends don't mind. And like when I have to go home early and go to bed at 8pm because the weekend is just too much. They don't mind. They don't make fun of me. Like they, they go to their after parties and stuff. And it's okay. And like part of my disability is that I can't drink. And that's, that's a real social issue. Because a lot of people think that people who can't drink either are alcoholics, or like snobbishly looking down at the people who drink. And for me, it's literally just like, my liver can't process it. Like I just can't. But my friends are really nice about like, knowing that, whatever we do, I'm gonna have to be sober for and like, not getting too drunk most of the time when we're together. And like just being aware of things like that, and it feels it feels good. How does

Olivia N 1:38:32

gender inform your interactions with lesbian kameez and your own lesbian? Your own lesbianism, you mentioned being gender questioning and what that means to you. And can you talk through that? Yeah, um,

1:38:47

so I tend to decide things slowly, then all at once. So I've always had what I thought was an intrusive thought that what if I went on testosterone? And by definition, an intrusive thought is ego dystonic. It's something that you don't want to do. It's something that's not representative of you. So when I realized, oh, no, it's not an intrusive thought. It's a subconscious desire. And those are not the same thing. So I made a joke about it to my friend, like, Haha, how crazy like would it be? And I thought she was in a laugh. And she's like, I think that would be really good for you. And I was like, I've been like, I've been saying, I've been perceived, in a way I didn't expect to be perceived. And that felt good. No one's like, again, I've never talked to anyone about it, because I don't know. I guess I was kind of embarrassed about it. Or not all that like consciously aware of it. Um, but like, the first person I ended up talking to about it was like, really supportive and I was like, well, you should like try it. Like, try it and see like, you know, It's like I've been watching you as you like, present more masculine, the I've been watching you get more happy, like, I think I think it's a good idea for you. And again, this is just a friend This isn't someone I need permission from but like having permission to explore it made a really big difference for me. Um, and so at Thanksgiving, I like talked to my dad and I'm like, I How would you feel if maybe I microdose T lol. And that conversation was hard. You know, he, he did his best he, he, he told me he loves me no matter what. And that he just wants me to be happy. He did cry when I told him. I think part of it is that the representation of like, gender variant and trans people is always one of dysphoria and pain and suffering. So when I like I don't think he got that, like what I'm chasing is a gender euphoria that I've been loving, rather than like running away from a dysphoria that is like, agonizing me. Like I think he literally said, I wish you didn't hate your body so much that you felt the need to do that. And I'm like, I don't think that's what's going on. You know, I appreciate that you wish I had better self esteem. I also had better self esteem. But I think that's an unrelated issue. So it's nice to know that he doesn't mind. So once two people were like, it's okay to consider I started considering it. And, you know, doing all the research, like how would testosterone interact with my medications? You know, the ones I need to stay alive and can't come off with? Like, is this even an option for me? And eventually, I hit a point where I'm like, I just need to talk to a doctor, like, just, I just need to make an appointment and like, see, like, so I have that booked. I'm pretty excited. It's in March. So think fingers crossed, I, again, I don't know if it's going to be medically possible for me or medically advisable. But I'd like to try it. I'm eager to try it. And it's funny because I actually agonized about a name change much more than that, because I was so worried about how it would make my dad feel. Cuz, you know, my name was very important to my parents. And, you know, I've heard the story of how I got my name, you know, a million times. So when I was looking for a new name, I was like, I want one that starts with the same letter, I want one that comes from the same culture, I want one that like, hopefully, my dad will see as like the respect and honor that I'm meaning it as for the care they put into choosing my first name. But there aren't that many F men's names in general. And a lot of them are like, from Spanish. And we are not Latina, we have no last name heritage. So those are not names for me. And there are only a couple choices for for Irish F min names. But I did. I did end up liking Finnegan a lot, especially because it nicknames down to Finn, which is very similar to my legal name, because I don't want to change my legal name because I don't see. I don't want to tell the government shit. Like I don't want I don't it's not on the government's

business. I don't mind my legal name being my government name, I don't mind. Like, it doesn't matter if it's not a name anyone calls me. And I just I get pretty anxious about like fascism and stuff. And like, when Texas tried to make a list of trans people in the state of Texas, I was like, Oh, good, I should do everything in my power to not be listable by the government, because nothing good can come from a list of all the trans people in the state of Texas. And like, again, I'm living in New York, like it's, it's not a problem for me. And you know, again, I have upper class background like it's not, it's not my struggle to appropriate but like, I don't know, sometimes a little caution is warranted. So I don't want to tell the government anything and being that fin is a conceivable nickname of my birth name. For people who don't like trans people, they'll probably just assume it's a gender neutral nickname of that name rather than short for Finnegan which is a very masculine name in my opinion. So

Olivia N 1:44:37

what was it like what's it like making and meeting lesbians and you're sitting now especially since you were at a historically women's college? Oh, it's spectacular.

1:44:49

Again. I don't think if I hadn't gotten to Smith, I think that also might have really delayed me in coming out. Because I got to Smith and I don't think this is true by the numbers. But it feels like there are more queer people than like sis hat people on that campus. Like, it feels like a place where queer people are the majority. And that was a super cool feeling. Even before I knew I was part of that community, it was just a super good vibe really accepting, like, at the time, my head was just completely shaved, and I got so much shit for that back home. But then I got to Smith, and it literally didn't even make me stand out. I was just one of 50 other bitches. And that was kind of awesome. And like, I was able to like because I had this more like lesbian masculine type expression. At Smith, it never felt like people were judging me for that. Or even assuming my sexuality, like Smith tends to be pretty good about asking people. So I finally felt like I wasn't under the microscope anymore. And I think that gave me enough room to like breathe and do some self introspection while I didn't feel like I was on stage. And since then, like when I got into cosplay, none of those people are from my college, I actually met them online as well. And we ended up becoming in person friends. Um, but that's been amazing too. And naturally, it's funny, I didn't set out to only become close to the lesbians. But just naturally, I just naturally gravitated to having much closer friendships with other lesbians. And it's been so gratifying, especially because we all have such different experiences with how we came to it, and how it relates to us and our gender identities. And like, like, so for gender stuff, I have my friend, my roommate, she's in the process of coming out as a trans woman. And I'm in the process of coming out as whatever I'm going to come out as maybe trans mask, I guess. So we've just been daring each other to transition. Like, do what I dare you. And that's been really fun. So it's just been a good it's so much easier to make friends with other queer people, especially other lesbians, like, when I was in high school, I was like, God, I must be unlovable. I am unfindable, like, I can't make or maintain real friendships and that when you're the common denominator on that, and then I got out of my small town and met more queer people. And now suddenly, I have a lot of friends and, you know, even more friends than I can really keep up with. And that's amazing and spectacular. And it's, it's fun to be not marginalized, I guess. At least not in the circles I run in. And I really recommend finding people in person, if you can, it is so much better than the community you can form online, which is better than nothing. I had that for many years. And I do think of it fondly, but it's different in person, it's better. And it's more whole, because when you're online,

it's so easy to partition off different aspects of your identity and be like, This is my account for talking about anime. This is my account for talking about, you know, gender, or sexuality or whatever. But like when you hang out with people in person, you are like hanging out with them as a full human being. And it's much easier to see them as a full human being and like, form better friendships, in my opinion.

Olivia N 1:48:45

So what does your lesbian community look like now? Like who's in it? Where did you find each other?

1:48:52

Yeah, so the lesbians in my life are mostly my friend Liv, who is a non binary lesbian, that. So that friend, I mentioned that I got physical with who turned out to be a Machiavellian schemer. They were the they were like the access the access of our friend group initially. So I met them when I started my care, Shima cosplay, because they had made a tutorial for how to make the gears and it was my first time doing homework. So I asked a question in the comments. And they were like, oh, find me on Instagram. And like, I'll help you through your build. And I was like, lol, no way. This person with 25,000 followers is just saying that to be nice. And then my friend, the one who's now my roommate, who's now coming out as trans was like, No, they wouldn't just say that like go friend them and be friends. So I did and we were online friends for a long time, probably six or seven months, and then their friend live now my very was friend was hosting was organizing a My Hero Academia photoshoot? And my friend was like, Oh, do you want to be the Baka go for this? And I was like, absolutely I do immediately. Yes, it was my first professional photoshoot it was my first time doing a cosplay thing in person, I hadn't really gone to a convention like, you know, I hadn't really done any of that. Um, so then I got there. And so much of that there were it was a big shoot, I think there were 20 of us. Like, I think it was all Class A, and a couple of teachers. And so many of them are queer, and I hit it off with a lot of people. But I really was close with, you know, my friend who ended up not being a good person and live. So we fell into a friend group with another woman who was bisexual, and straight man who we bully constantly. That's a joke for anyone. We're not meeting to him for release our friend. And from there, I just met live had been out as a lesbian. Since age 15. At Catholic private school, like, talk about more courage, like I can't even imagine being out as a lesbian at a Catholic private school. But so she knew a lot of lesbians, like my friend, Claudia, who is a non binary, butch lesbian, who's very cool, very cool. And they're very close with Kayla, who is bisexual. And then my two friends from high school have come out as gender variant people. And my personal pet theory, which you're not supposed to have about your friends. But you know, sometimes you do is that they are trans lesbians. But they're not out as that right now. They're out as gender variant people who are into women. But like, I'm pretty sure they're women. Like, I don't think they're gonna end up being non binary. Like, I don't, I just I think they're both in situations where like, they're more enmeshed with their families, so their family's opinions matter more. So I think it's gonna take them a little while to come around. But I kind of consider them as part of my lesbian circle. And my roommate who's coming out as a woman. She's not a lesbian, but she is bi. And I don't know, she just, she has such good vibes. Sometimes I'm like, honorary, your honorary included. Which, that's not a good thing to say. I shouldn't have said that. That implies that bisexual people aren't good or valid, but I didn't mean it like that.

Olivia N 1:52:58

You're fine. I don't care. I'm not a cop. It's literally fine.

1:53:02

No, I know. You're not incompetent. I don't want anyone in the archive to be like, like to see the archive and be like, damn, apparently being bisexual is not good enough. Like, I promise,

Olivia N 1:53:14

you'll be fine. It's fine. Um, so you've talked a little bit about your lesbian community and how it's really centered around like, cosplay. And you meet a lot of other queer people and other dikes and other lesbians doing cosplay. And you form like a cute little like lesbian cosplay community. So can you talk about what your first visit was, like to a lesbian related place or event other than just being at Smith.

1:53:48

So I guess the first one was in person was actually that gay bar for the flame con. It wasn't lesbian specific, but it was it was a queer event at a bar there. And there was drag. Then, again, since I don't drink, I hadn't actually been to a bar before. Like, I'd been to bars that are also restaurants but this was like, a bar bar. And I had never been to one of those before. So my first one was this gay bar that was putting on like a queer inclusive event. And it was a really good time. And it happened to be a cosplay event as well. So they were all also nerds, we are all into the same things. The music was really fun. The shows were cool. The dancing was good. You know, I really hit it off with someone. It was just it was one of those things like I always knew I wanted to move to New York. Because my my friend who was now my roommate, we wanted to live together for a very long time. But it never made sense when I was in college because my college is in a small town.

1:54:54

And they're, she's an aspiring actor. So she was our Already in New York, she's probably going to stay in New York. So I kind of knew I was moving to New York after graduation. But

1:55:06

after this event, I was like, damn, I have to move to New York, where there's events like this where like, there's so many people, it's so good, it was really fun. So

Olivia N 1:55:22

what does identifying as a lesbian mean to you?

1:55:27

For me, it means like, a lot of freedom. In a lot of ways, it meant identifying as lesbian meant freeing myself from, like, expectations that I had never lived up to very well and wasn't even sure I really wanted to identify as a lesbian has been an exclusively positive experience for me, like, I felt like I came to a lot of peace when I accepted that I am a lesbian. And once I started questioning my gender, and reading a lot more queer theory,

1:56:04

you know, specifically about Bucha identity. And learning more about lesbian history, I've, I've just felt better. I feel like I'm part of a history that I'm proud to be a part of.

1:56:19

I feel like I have a real community. Like, as I didn't grow up religious, both my parents were estranged from their families, mostly. So I pretty much grew up with one grandma, and then my nuclear family of four. And that was kind of my community. And I didn't have a lot of friends. And I wasn't very good at any of the activities I did, because I kept getting injured. So I was only like, sporadically a part of them. So I guess I've never really felt deeply in a community. And being a lesbian feels like that, to me, even when it's locked down, and there's nowhere to go. Even when I get lazy and bury myself in schoolwork, and don't put in the effort to find, you know, friends and events. It just, it feels like home, it feels good.

Olivia N 1:57:13

Can you talk a little bit about what lesbian community means to you like having lesbian community, finding it, making it meeting it and keeping it?

1:57:22

It means everything I don't like? You know, sometimes you'll see think pieces on the internet, like, oh, American society doesn't value friendships enough, like it only values like romantic relationships. But like having a community of lesbians that I'm just friends with. I don't think I could go back to A Life before this. Like, I don't think I could deal with not having that in my life. It's a support system. It's people who really get you. Like, our one bisexual friend. Like she's obviously sapphic. But her experiences have actually been pretty different than ours. Which was kind of unexpected to me, because I came out so late, that I would have expected to have more in common with a bisexual person, because I felt like I was like, Oh, I was like, Oh, I live that life. Like I get it. And then we talk about like, growing up and things like that. And like, there are also some other things like, you know, she's been skinny her whole life, she's been skinny and beautiful her whole life. And neither me nor my friend can say that about us. I think we're beautiful now, but we definitely didn't grow up skinny or beautiful. And I think that's part of what color is that? But you know, meeting other queer people like, yes, there's definitely a queer community. But there's something special about other lesbians being in community with other lesbians. And, and like the two lesbians I know are non binary, like the ones I know really well. Um, and I've had this theory that lesbians have more genders and other people. Like I kind of consider Butch and femme to be genders. Separate than femme, like as an feminine and mask, like I consider I kind of consider those to be other genders. I know that's not everyone's opinion. And also that, like, some people are like, we shouldn't make more genders we should, you know, have less genders and be gender. Like, you know, gender is bad, and we should have less of it. But I, I always liked. I think lesbians have more genders. And I think it's more fun. And I think it's exciting and good. And as I meet more lesbians of color, and I learned about like, stud culture, I'm like, oh, that's actually pretty different than Butch culture in very cool and interesting ways. That I love learning about, you know, I'm white. So I'll always be learning about that very peripheral peripherally. But it's just I don't know, I just appreciate it. I love this. It's, I'm sorry, I'm no longer eloquent. I think I've answered the question. I guess.

Olivia N 2:00:16

You're totally fine. You are, you're eloquent enough. You're whatever anything you say is good. So what lesbian spaces do you wish existed?

2:00:28

I wish there were more non alcoholic lesbian spaces. I know, this is a pretty cliché thing to wish for. Especially a lot of minors wish for this because they can't go to a lot of lesbian or queer spaces, since you know, they tend to be either alcohol spaces or adult only spaces which do need to exist, obviously, but like, I'm going to like a lesbian cafe, or lesbian bookstore, like those things would be fun. And like Northampton, the town I live, that my college is in that I'm moving to Brooklyn from is very gay, it's so gay. But there's actually two shops downtown that don't carry, like, they carry a lot of pride stuff in general, but they never carry anything lesbian specific, they never carry the lesbian flag. They never carry anything about witches or femmes. And it's always felt kind of hostile in a way like to be in a place with so many lesbians, like they have the MLM flag like the blue one, but they don't have the lesbian one. Like, that seems pointed to me in a lot of ways. And like, it's a queer space, but it's also somewhat unwelcoming. And maybe I'm reading too much into it. But like, I don't know, it's there, the vibes are there. And I've taken other people to those stores to see if they pick up on vibes. And a couple of them have, so I don't think I'm completely crazy. What is

Olivia N 2:02:11

lesbian joining to you?

2:02:15

Lesbian joy, to me, is not just about the joy it comes when you're dating someone or when you're having sex with someone, though, obviously, those are great examples. But anytime you have joy that is not marred by feeling not feminine enough or not, not straight enough, like anytime. Anytime a lesbian is experiencing joy without all the baggage that society says we're supposed to have. So like, a lot of my lesbian joy comes from sitting quietly with my friends and crafting or movie nights or you know, when you go shopping with your lesbian friends and they tell you you look really dapper. That's a joyful moment for me. And I think let's be enjoy needs more representation like I know every pride. Do you know that slideshow of the like, the historic pictures of gay and lesbian couples come out? Like, it's like the same 20 ish photos. They're all black and white from like, different periods of history, and a lot of them are black, gay and lesbian people and I cry every time I've seen those pictures. I don't know how many times but I cry every time. They just look so happy and at peace. And I think the more queer people can create that type of representation, the more queer youth will have an easier time coming up

Olivia N 2:03:48

is there anything else you want to talk about?

2:03:52

Um, don't think so. No, I don't think so. Well, thank you very much. Thank you for listening to me ramble for so long.

Olivia N 2:04:07

Of course.