

Queer Newark Oral History Project

Interviewee: Lovari

Interviewer: Kristyn Scorsone

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Location: Rutgers University, Newark, NJ

Kristyn Scorsone: Today is July 28, 2017. My name is Kristyn Scorsone and I'm interviewing Lovari, aka Antonio Lovari, for the Queer Newark Oral History Project at Rutgers-Newark. First off, thank you for doing this.

Lovari: Thank you, I'm honored.

Kristyn Scorsone: The first question is can you give me your date of birth and where you were born?

Lovari: Sure, April 24th and I was born in Queens, New York.

Kristyn Scorsone: Would you like to say what year you were born?

Lovari: No. A lady doesn't tell her age. I'm in my mid-thirties.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay, all right. You say you were born in Queens?

Lovari: I was born in Queens, yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Who raised you?

Lovari: Well, I had my mom and my dad, and then when I was about 13 or 14, my parents separated and I stayed with my mom.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay. Did you change households or did you always stay in one place?

Lovari: Well, we always had our grandma. Both my parents worked so we lived—my mom, dad, my brother, sister and I lived in Bayside Queens and my grandparents lived in Queens Village, which is a 15-minute car ride. When my parents separated my mom was unable to afford the rent, so we ended up moving into my grandmother's house. I mean, it wasn't a difficult transition 'cause we were there anyway every day after school.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did your parents do for a living?

Lovari: My mom worked for Brooklyn Developmental Center for people—well, at the time it was divided into two places. One was a center for people with development disabilities. Back then they called it mental retardation. The other side of it was what they called back then an asylum or institution.

Kristyn Scorsone: What about your father?

Lovari: My father worked for a company called Sperry. I have no freaking clue what it is. I know that they dealt with making some parts, but he worked in the office part of it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did your grandmother work too?

Lovari: Not when I was— raising us, no.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, yeah. You have any brothers or sisters?

Lovari: I do. I have a younger, brother, Mike and a younger sister Brooke. Her real name is Brooklyn, but as she got older she just wants to be called Brooke, which I'm like, "Dude, Brooklyn is like the coolest name, why wouldn't you wanna be called Brooklyn?" Anyway, whatever.

Kristyn Scorsone: Can you tell me about an early memory you have of childhood?

Lovari: My earliest memory of childhood is my mom being pregnant with my brother. I was three. I remember holding—calling my youngest uncle. "Hurry up. When is he gonna come out?" I was three then. That's my earliest childhood memory and I remember that vividly. I remember we were in between the bedroom and the bathroom, yeah, and all that.

Kristyn Scorsone: You were excited about—

Lovari: Yeah, yeah, and to this day I still love kids. My brother is now a father and I'm the godfather to his kid and yes, it's the same thing.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you recall any events that were transitions or turning points in your early life?

Lovari: Yes. In regards to sexuality? Yes, I do. I just wanna make sure I'm saying this properly. Yeah, it is my aunt because my grandmother's sister, so I remember one, we used to go over there and I remember one day she was—actually I really don't know. As I'm thinking about it now, some of the things that she did was very crazy and avant-garde. So this is what happened.

There was a magazine. I don't know, it was a gay porn magazine or a Playgirl or something and she opened up the centerfold and she showed me a guy, a naked guy and she started cracking up. I

remember, and I remember this, when she did that, I think I was young. I think maybe I was five or six. I remember as soon as I saw that, the minute I saw it, the naked guy, I had a tingling sensation, not a sexual one, just a weird, tingling sensation. I remember back then saying that's what I'm gonna like. I swear to you. It was almost a psychic thing.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you feel? Did you remember that always or did you remember it later?

Lovari: No, no, no. I remember it, because then as I got older and things—I knew it because when she showed me that picture and laughed, I had that feeling.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was she gay or no? She was just like—

Lovari: No, no. she was avant-garde. She just always, she was wild and crazy, yeah. I do wanna say, I'm sorry, I do wanna say that it wasn't a sexual molestation thing. She was just crazy. Maybe I might have said, "What's that?" You know because she never did anything to harm me or anything like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Just goofing around?

Lovari: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was your neighborhood like?

Lovari: Well, I grew up in Queens and my neighborhood was—see, I divided my time and like I said, it's only a ten-minute drive, but there is a big difference because I divided my time between Bayside Queens, which is more now, even back then, it was kind of upper class, but now it's really expensive to live in. Then between that and Queens Village Jamaica Queens, like Jamaica, Hollis, Queens Village. It was ethnically diverse for both. One was predominately Caucasian and that was Bayside. Then Queens Village was predominately African-American. It was a combination of both diversities.

The neighborhood itself was, you know what, I don't wanna say—about Queens Village, it wasn't rough. I mean, some parts were probably rough, but it wasn't dangerous. It wasn't dangerous. When I say rough, there weren't guns or—there was a drug problem though. I remember one time that I was ten and I started to see—and how I knew it was crack vials 'cause I asked my grandfather, "What's that?" I started to see a bunch of crack vials.

It must've been when crack started, but I do remember that. Yeah. Queens Village was definitely more of the rough side of it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you like living there?

Lovari: You know, I always hung out in the city. I'm gonna say no, because I've never been suburban. I've never identified suburban.

Kristyn Scorsone: How would you describe yourself at that time, like, as a kid?

Lovari: I've always been hyper. Yeah, I've always been hyper. It's funny because I went through phases where I was popular or I'd get picked on. It was the weirdest thing. A lot of people I know will go through, either they were always picked on or they were always popular. With me it was so weird, like maybe in a first grade I was popular, second grade I got picked on. Third and fourth grade popular, fifth grade—it was the weirdest freaking thing ever.

Kristyn Scorsone: Were you ever picked on because people perceived you were different because you were—

Lovari: Sexuality?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Lovari: Yes, sometimes. Although the majority of time being picked on wasn't that. It was just because I was overweight and that was really the majority of when I was picked on, but there were a few people that did use the term faggot and all that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Were there adults in your life besides people that raised you, besides your mom and dad that shaped you in any way or that impacted you?

Lovari: My aunt Michelle, my godmother, totally. She lived in the Village, MacDougal Street. Oh, I should be identifying where these places are right? People are gonna automatically go, "What's that?" Greenwich Village in Manhattan, yeah, tattoos, really cool. She introduced me to what she said was cool stuff like Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead, things like that. She worked in a pet store, so she had in her apartment she had all these animals. Yeah. That's why I hung out in the city all the time, you know what I mean, like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did you do in the city?

Lovari: Oh, my gosh, well, it was mostly with her. We're talking about when I was a kid first, right, not a teenager?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Lovari: She took me to a lot of, you know, plays. See, here's the thing, at the time, Greenwich Village was very bohemian, very artsy.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was this the '90s or the '80s?

Lovari: This was the '90s and it was very bohemian, very artsy and it wasn't the way Greenwich Village is today. The best way I could think of is if anybody was how parts of Williamsburg are today, that's the way Greenwich Village was back then, but even cooler than Williamsburg. Yeah, I just went to plays or she took me to concerts. It's funny, because now that this person made a comeback, Paula Abdul, yeah and Milli Vanilli, and by the way, they did sing live when I was there. I know they lip synced on the record, but they were singing some things live. She would take me to things like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool.

Lovari: Washington Square Park and yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you go to public school or—

Lovari: I went to Catholic grammar school, but public high school.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay, what were your favorite subjects?

Lovari: History and English. All the time. To this day also.

Kristyn Scorsone: Has religion played a role in your life at all?

Lovari: Absolutely. Absolutely. I remember asking the—I went to a very progressive Catholic school and I have to say that although—and forgive me if I'm jumping all over the place here.

Kristyn Scorsone: No, it's fine.

Lovari: Although there have been priests and accusations and founts of molestation within the Catholic school community, I must say that despite all of those wrongs, there are also a lot of priests and nuns who are amazing. I've never had that experience. I didn't know anybody that had the experience and I'm not doubting that it

happened, ‘cause of course it happened, it’s been proven, but my school—and I’ll give you an example right now. We had a question box, a question and answer box and I was—I always liked to do controversy always, always. Or sometimes people would dare me to do stuff ‘cause they knew I would do it, like ask questions or whatever.

I already knew what I was in grammar school. I identified as gay in the seventh grade and eighth grade. I was like I’m gonna ask about gay, is being gay a sin, and I’m gonna put it in the thing. Sure enough, I put it in the question box and the priest would come once a week and ask questions of question box. He picks one out. He’s like, “Is being gay a sin?” Everyone goes, [gasp] you know, then everybody of course looks at me ‘cause they knew I did it.

He looked and he looks at me, ‘cause like I said, I know. He’s like, “No, it’s not.” He was like, “Being gay is not a sin.” He was like, “Now, the Bible teaches that you shouldn’t have sexual intercourse unless you’re married.” He was like, “People that are gay, they’re not married, but being gay is not a sin. You can’t help who you are.” Eighth grade. Catholic school priest.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. Were you expecting him to be supportive?

Lovari: You know what? Yes, I was. Because we also had a priest there that he didn’t say he was gay, but a few of us just was like, maybe he’s gay. Then a few years later, when he left that school, he came out as gay and he still—I haven’t followed up with him, but I know that I had seen him on the news once. He had started or was part of something. His name was Father Jim or Monsignor Jim. I think his last name’s McGovern. I’m not sure. Anyway, he was in the school and he came out. He didn’t come out while he was there, but he eventually came out and he led some organization within religion for LGBT.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow.

Lovari: Like I said, very progressive, very progressive school and they’re still there today.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. You said you came out in seventh or eighth grade. Do you mean told your friends or your family?

Lovari: Mm-hmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did everybody react?

Lovari:

No, not my family. I'm sorry. My friends. For the most part people were cool. A lot of people with me thought that I would do things just to shock people. That was just what people thought about me. At the time, my favorite singer was Madonna. Can you believe that? A gay guy likes Madonna.

It was at the time of—I'm saying this 'cause it's important because to those people that there's a lot of people that may not know that Madonna back in the '90s was advocating for LGBT people. There was actually no other artist that was doing what Madonna did. Madonna went out purposely went and put gay men in your face and she had all these things. There was like, Blonde Ambitions Tour, Sex book, so this was around that time. I was a huge Madonna fan so I kind of molded myself like Madonna. I would say things and do things like that and that helped me a lot.

I wanna say that helped me a lot because it did, because that was how I started to get more and more comfortable and be like, "Yeah, I am one." Then all of a sudden, I had this attitude where the people that were picking on me, they just stopped picking on me. I went from very overweight to very scrawny. I actually had a problem with bulimia. It was a vanity issue, that's it, straight up vanity issue. I was really at some point I looked like a skeleton and they were still afraid to say. Once I claimed it, I guess that's the proper terminology, once I claimed it people just backed off me.

Kristyn Scorsone:

Wow. How did you deal with having bulimia?

Lovari:

You know, I— it was brief. I have to thank a random person for it, for saving me. I got a random call one time from a friend of mine. I don't even think it was her mother. My mother, grandmother just thought that I was losing weight just from being skinny, but I was throwing up my food. Then just one time my grandma said, "We're not gonna be able to help you if you go to the hospital and you die, we're not gonna be able to help you. However, you're getting skinny, stop it."

Then my dad— my parents had been separated at time—no, no, was my dad still there? No. He must still be there 'cause he told me once, he said, "Hey, you get really skinny your stomach," I don't know if this is true, but I guess they just tell you things to help you. They said, he said, "Your stomach gets smaller as you get skinnier." He's like, "You really gotta watch out because if it gets smaller, that's it for you." He's like, "Please stop." I ignored all that 'cause who listens to their parents?

Then I got a random phone call from—I had a friend named Vanessa. That wasn't even one of my best friends, mind you, and I got a call from she said this is Vanessa's friend, but you could tell she was an older woman. She started telling me about bulimia and the things that could happen to you. It's weird, because usually I might say, "Who the fuck is this? Fuck you," and hang up the phone.

Whatever angle she took got me to stay on the phone and she said that the thing that made me stop was she's like, "Hey, it's none of my business but I want to let you know that when you stick your fingers down your neck and you throw up, you actually are straining your heart and there's a very good chance that you can have a heart attack." She was like, "I want you to start thinking about that. I never seen you personally, but Vanessa says you shouldn't be skinny right now." She was like, "I'm not scaring you, it's a fact that you could have a heart attack any day now." I stopped. Just from that. I stopped.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's amazing. That's great that she did that for you.

Lovari: That's great and God bless her, and I don't even know her. The kindness of a stranger. I never found out who she was. Never found out who she was.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's beautiful.

Lovari: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you start dating at that time when you came out?

Lovari: No. I did sexual stuff like masturbation with another friend in the same room. I didn't start touching. I wanted to, but I didn't start touching until 14, 15. Then I did experiment with girls, but I knew and they knew too, but I guess when you're just young teenager you just wanna do whatever. I've never had sex with a woman. Oral sex, yes, but vaginal sex, no, so I'm a virgin."

Kristyn Scorsone: Gold star. When you went to the city as a teenager, what'd you do?

Lovari: Oh man, so when I started going by myself, right? As a teenager?

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-hmm.

Lovari:

Okay, so there's one important aspect that I forgot. After eighth grade, I did go to Catholic school for one year. I went to public school three and a half years. I went to Catholic school for one year. The reason that I left the Catholic school is because I went to an all boy school, Holy Cross, and I was very uncomfortable because A, some people were picking on me for my sexuality 'cause at that point I was totally out, and B, because I didn't like the way that they were handling the situation with me. In that interim the name of the school is Holy Cross. They're located in Francis Lewis Boulevard in Queens.

I hope they change their policies now, almost 20 years later, but I was out. Oh, here's the thing. Here's the thing, knock on wood. I've never got beat up. Never got beat up. That's a good thing. I had a few people say things. Sometimes I'd be quiet at times, I would say, "Fuck you," whatever, but what happened was they are—I just felt in Holy Cross it wasn't—it's just that the people that knew, they would just keep saying— it was too much. They were like, "Are you really gay?"

It was like every day, so it was more of an overwhelmingness and then there were a few people that were like, "That faggot, blah-blah." It was more of just too much like I felt like an oddity. I knew why, because I said, "Okay, you have to understand that a lot of people, especially at a young age, they don't do this. They don't just come out like this." It was just overwhelming.

The thing that really ticked me off was one day they said that the dean—I'm sorry, no, the guidance counselor wanted to see me, my guidance counselor. I went to my guidance counselor and she said, "I wanna talk to you about a few things." I'm like, "Yeah." She said, "I understand that you identify as homosexual?" I'm like, "Yeah." She said, "Well, we have to talk because," and I thought she was gonna say we have to talk because she knew that people were harassing me. She was like, "We have to talk to because well, the thing is that if you can just, you're here to learn and a lot of people say that you're going around talking," I was like whoa, wait a minute.

At this point, I don't know how and I don't know why, but I've always had this thing with me, with adults, and it's weird because with other kids my age, sometimes I'd be too scared to say anything. For some reason with adults I always have put on this—I call it a lawyer persona. I don't know where it comes from. I like to think of myself as a person of fair intelligence, but it's almost like I get possessed. I guess I'm not a kid anymore, but back then I

almost felt like I got possessed. I would all of a sudden feel like a lawyer. Here I am, I think I was 14 or 15 and she started there 'cause I really thought she was gonna say, "Let's help you."

No, she was like, "You're here to learn and you have talking openly about it. I have no opinion on it, but it's interrupting." I said, "Wait a minute." I said, "First of all," I was like, "I get picked on." I was like, "Second of all, you're a guidance counselor. Your mission is to make me feel safe, not to accuse me." I was like, "You know, I go to jobbing centers in the Village, Hetrick Martin Institute." I said, "They wouldn't be too keen on hearing this."

That's what I'm saying, like lawyer mode, 14, 15, lawyer mode. She was like, "Okay." She felt backed in a corner. I was like, "Is there a law? Actually, there's a law for harassment. There's things for bullying," even though back then there really wasn't, but I knew. I'm hanging out in the city and in places like Hetrick Martin. I don't know if you're familiar with Hetrick Martin Institute or things like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: I am, but can you explain?

Lovari: Sure, of course. Right. Hetrick Martin Institute is—I don't know now—I know they're obviously for LGBT youth, but at that time they were a drop-in center for LGBT youth and they also had a school called the Harvey Milk School, specifically for people that identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. I'd hang out at that drop-in center and in that drop-in center I learned—it was fun. Oh, it was so much fun. They also educated you and they had speakers come in.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you find them?

Lovari: You know, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I can't remember. I guess I'm assuming that I got all that because—and again, because of Madonna. Because I read these interviews of Madonna and they were talking about her Justify My Love video which had her kissing women, kissing men and they banned it on MTV or something. She was like, "Why is it okay for a movie to see people get blown up and why can't two men caress each other and kiss?" I was basically taking that to Hetrick Martin and speaking out.

Anyway, she felt backed in a corner and she was like, "I need to get Mr. Genuzzi, the dean." I was like, "Okay." He came in and he was known to be very mean. People were scared of him. He came

in and he was very calm, but I was ready. I was ready, you know. He came in he's like, "Hey," it's like, "Hello," like that. The way that people were scared to talk to him like, "Oh, sorry sir." I was just you know, "I'm ready. Let's go."

He was totally calm and he was like, "You know, so," they probably talked prior. He was like, and he was actually cooler than her, which took me back a little bit. He was like, "Listen, nobody has a right to pick on you 'cause you're gay. That's not cool. You know I'll let them have it, whatever." He was like, "Yeah, I mean, just can we focus on the studying?" I was like, "If somebody asks me about being gay and sexuality, I'm gonna answer them. Maybe you need to have an LGBT group in here or something."

I was like, "Do you want me to start an LGBT group?" He's like, "Oh, well you know with Catholic schools and things like that, it's different." I was like, "Okay, so this is what's gonna happen" I did just like that. I said, "Okay, this is what's gonna happen. I'm gonna be me. I'm gonna defend myself and I'm gonna talk about being gay. That's it." I was like, "What are you gonna suspend me for?" He's like, "Nobody said we're gonna suspend you." I said, "Cause you can't." I was like, "That's it and I don't ever wanna have this conversation again."

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Lovari: I walked out. They never bothered me again and that was like the middle of the school year. It wasn't like never—bothered me again. Never bothered me again, but I was so disgusted with that. There was an awesome thing that happens, actually, two awesome things. I'll do the lighter one first. Again, inciting controversy, whatever.

We had— It was an English class and there was a book or a short story called *The Interlopers*. In the end of the story it was open to interpretation. The ends of the story, these guys are hiding from wolves or something at the end of the story. They opened the door and there was a bunch of wolves and then the story ends. Obviously, the wolves eat them, but it's open to interpretation, but I want you guys to write your own ending to the story.

I wrote that the wolves were werewolves and they forced them to have an orgy with each other, man on man. Then they devoured them after. I was like, watch. I was like, watch. I was like, "I'm gonna look to see the response." He gives me back—and he gives me an A minus and then there's the thing. I gotta be honest with

you. I don't remember what he wrote, but it had nothing to do with the sexuality or the sex. It was something about my grammar.

He wrote something like A minus, and then he wrote something like—I don't wanna tell lies on somebody, but it was something along the lines of the word extravagantly was spelled wrong and like he—I was like, "This dude is cool." Didn't mention nothing or come see me, nothing like that. That was lighthearted, but awesome none the less. We had a few awesome teachers in there. Now the second thing was that I was out sick one day, and one of my friends told me, they're like, "Oh, you're not gonna believe what Mr. Soriente did yesterday." I was like, "What?"

Now I always thought Mr. Soriente was gay. I don't know if he is. They're like the whole class of yesterday, he didn't mention your name at all, but everybody knew it was about you. He was talking about how we have to accept gay people. I was like, "What do you mean?" He's like, "He did a whole class talking about how gay people were killed, how gay people got picked on, famous people that were gay." I was like, "Oh, wow." He was like, "Trust me, it was about you." I wasn't there. I was out sick and—

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. How did you feel?

Lovari: I felt good, but I forgot. I never thanked him. I think I never thanked him because the kid said that he didn't mention me at all, but I was like, we knew it was about me. I wasn't in school that day and today's the day he decides to talk about why you shouldn't, you know.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was it at the end of that year that you left?

Lovari: Yeah, it was the one year, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was it just the public school that was in your area then?

Lovari: Yeah, Bayside High School. But it's funny because my mom super, super, super strict. I remember telling us, and my dad had just left, so I was just like the friggin Catholic school—it cost so much money and all this. Why can't I just go to public school? She was like, "oh, kids get beat up at public school and all that." I was like, "Yeah, but I had started knowing a few people that were in public school" and I'm like, "You know, I think I'll be cool."

I used the angle of it being so expensive and dad left to get out of it 'cause I didn't wanna tell her the reason. Then I started public

school and here's the thing about me. It is so weird 'cause I do what I call the opposite. It seems like everything that happens with me is the opposite of what is expected. Being that now I go from Catholic to public school so you would think that I would get picked on, I would get beat up, I would have no friends. Because that's the analogy that you get. No. I was one of the most popular people in public high school. One of the most popular people.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Lovari: Yeah, and out.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Did you start having relationships in high school?

Lovari: Yes, not with anybody in—and I regret it now because there was a lot of cute dudes in high school that I wanted to hook up with and I didn't. I don't know why I didn't get to. I know. I dated people outside of high school, but I'm like, oh man, but what are you gonna do?

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you go to college after high school?

Lovari: I did, but I wanna touch on something in high school.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, sure.

Lovari: Two things. I did fall in love with somebody in high school. I didn't do anything with them, but I fell in love with him, but it was very strange. It was— looking back now, I mean, I know you can't help what you feel, but I'm very embarrassed looking back now. I was psychotic about it and there were even—we even had one time a guidance counselor talk to the both of us and the guidance counselor was siding with me. Me and this person never did anything.

He was one of my best friends, but he didn't identify as gay. It was the weirdest thing because even a guidance counselor came once and was on my side 'cause I was crying, saying, "Oh, he doesn't like me." It was like that and the guidance counselor like, "Don't you wanna say anything to him? Look at him over here crying." It was so weird.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you wind up going to a guidance counselor together?

Lovari: I don't know. I don't know. I forgot. I think that we had a lot of group activities and the guidance counselor, maybe we were in

some sort of group thing. I don't know. It wasn't a guidance counselor—maybe guidance counselor is the wrong term. Maybe it was a peer orientator or something? It wasn't your guidance counselor where you sit and do your classes, but it was some counselor that worked in school, you know.

Anyway, that almost got me seriously hurt physically because we had stopped—I actually desisted the friendship, relationship, whatever you wanna call it. He had started calling me after that, and I was avoiding it because I said, “Yo, dude, you're going crazy. He ain't like that. You need chill.” That was embarrassing and his mother even called my mother to say, “Your son is obsessed with my son and all that. This has gotta stop. It's unhealthy.”

My mother is very old school so she didn't wanna hear it. She thinks that being gay you're gonna get AIDS and go to hell. That's what she told me when I came out to her and I came out to her as bi mind you, even though I knew I wasn't, but I was like gonna be sly, you know, slide it in gently.

Kristyn Scorsone: When was that?

Lovari: That was 15? It was before I went to public high school. She was just like, “All right, you better stay away from that kid.” I'm like, “Okay.” What happened was like I said, I was avoiding him, and maybe he was curious because the things that led—it wasn't like all of a sudden, I was in love with this person. Things happened that led me to believe that he, maybe—but again, and this is a fallacy of mine now, I always give people more credit than maybe what they actually are.

I always expect that a person my age has as much intelligence or common sense. Here I am at 14, 15, with these mature thoughts, or whatever, and I'm expecting this 14 or 15-year-old to have same exact mature thoughts as me. There were things definitely that I was just like you know, it wouldn't just come out of the blue. It used to be, “Oh, can you massage my back?” You know, things like that.

Then one time he even told me, “Oh, I wish you were a girl.” I was like, “Why?” He was like, “Cause I would date you because you understand me.” You know what I'm saying? It wasn't out of the blue. After the embarrassment of all that I avoided him because I was so embarrassed, and so hurt. Then he started coming around,

calling, but I've always also had an innate psychic thing or protection device.

When I say protection device, I don't mean a guard thing, I mean, I feel a guardian angel or something that tells me don't. He called me, "Oh, you wanna hang out?" "No." He'd be like, "Oh, I left one of my shirts there." I was like, "Yeah, I'll try to find so and so to give it to you." Do not let him in, do not, do not, do not.

One day my bell rang and I was home. It was the second floor. This door you got, led person door thing, I walk upstairs, shut the door. I—rang the bell, looked out the window, it was him. I was like, "Hey," I was like, "I can't have company right now." He was like, "No, you have," and he had I forgot what it was, I think it was two cassettes or something. He's like, "These are yours." I'm like, "Just leave 'em. Leave 'em right there."

I was like, I'm good. He was like, "I really need to talk. It's very important. Can you come down?" I was like, "Dude, talk to me." He's like, "I can't. I don't wanna talk in front of all these people." I was like, "Must be cautious." I remember I went down the stairs and I gently opened the door and say, "Hey." I mean gently. He was like, "Can I come inside?" I was like, "No man, you can't come in."

As I said that he flung the door open, but I was like—and I slammed the door shut and then he starts pounding on it. "Let me the fuck in." I was like—so I called the cops. Cops came. They didn't arrest him or do anything. They just told him, he's like, "Hey, if the person was a domestic—it was like just like, "We're no longer friends, but can you please ask him to leave?" they asked him to leave, but who knows what he would've done?

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you think he was intending to harm you?

Lovari: Yes, I do. Yeah, because why are you gonna open the door like that?

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you ever see him again after that?

Lovari: Oh, yes. You see, he wouldn't do anything to me in school because like I said, I was very popular in school. You couldn't do anything to me because I was always with a bunch of people and I was a little gangster too. I didn't do anything. When I say gangster, I wasn't in a gang or anything. I mean, like my attitude and all that, like the people I was hanging around with and all that. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was there any other things about high school that you wanna discuss?

Lovari: Yes. There was— No, you know it has nothing to do with sexuality though.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's okay. Whatever. Doesn't matter.

Lovari: Okay. I was disappointed one time with—oh my gosh. Yes, there is things I wanna talk about, my chorus teacher. Let me just get this one thing out of the way. Because this is important and because it goes with those sometimes how sensitivity. I write very eloquently and I am very expressive writing. When I speak I can be expressive as well, but really when I write it's like you know. I look at some of my things like, "Wow."

I was in economics class. Couldn't even tell you what the subject was. We had to write a short essay about something and I wrote it and I got it back and I got an F. I went up to the teacher after, I was like, "F? How'd I get an F?" She said, "You didn't write this." I said, "Excuse me?" I was like, "What do you mean I didn't write this?" She goes, "You speak the way you write. You didn't write that." I'm like, "What do you mean I speak the way I write, I didn't write that?"

She was like, she starts reading. I was like, "Yes?" She's like, "You don't talk like that." I was like, "Really?" I was like, "I wanna see the dean. I'm gonna write something. You're gonna give me a subject." Again, I don't know how this happens. Saw the dean, gives me an F. I said, "I wrote that." She said, "You speak the way you write." The dean looked at her, she said, "You said that?" She was like, "Yes, I did."

Back then I guess teachers could get away with more than what they can get away with now. The dean's like, "What do you all wanna do about it?" I was like, "I wanna write in front right now. I want her to give me a subject and I'm gonna write right now." I was like, "Because I wrote that." She was like, "Well, was that a take home?" I was like, "Yes, it was. I wrote that." I said, "I want it to be fair."

The dean said, "Look, just take that grade away from—." I was like, "No, I wanna write. I wanna write something right now. I want a topic right now." The economics teacher said, "All right,

fine. We'll go back in my thing, I'll give you a topic." Did it. She was like, "I still don't know," and she gave me a B.

Kristyn Scorsone: "I still don't know."

Lovari: I still don't know. I was like, "Wow, and you're an economics teacher." That made me start cutting school more, not giving a fuck more. because I was like, "I can't believe it. Why would I waste my efforts?" Again, nothing to do with sexuality, but judging book by its cover has often has happened to me in my life.

My chorus teacher is gay. He never said it in school, but everybody just knew he was gay and I was one of his favorite kids and he just—we put on chorus productions and there was one where I got a solo and it was Earth Angel. [Singing] Earth angel, earth angel—[Speaking]and when I performed it, I was just, "Can I do whatever?" He was like, "I know what you're saying. You wanna do a little bit of this?" I was like, "Yes." He was like, "Go for it." I didn't do too much, but everybody said, "Ah, yeah," you know like that. That was awesome and I still keep in touch with him today.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh yeah?

Lovari: Yeah, and it's really cool because if I do something like when I did the City Hall national anthem, here in City Hall in Newark, he shared it on FaceBook. He's like, "Proud teacher over here. This is my former student." Yeah, it's important to have somebody like that in school.

Kristyn Scorsone: You loved singing since you were younger?

Lovari: Yes, yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was your favorite music?

Lovari: I don't want anybody think that my parents didn't provide for me, but for some reason I had a wooden block. I had toys. I had toys, I promise you. I had toys. I had Superman, Wonder Woman, Justice League, all that. I had a wooden block and I remember this. My mom would tell me this, but I actually remember this and I was three. Again, it's weird, three is when I start remembering child memories. I had this wooden block and every time we'd go camping, whatever, I would sing into this wooden block like a microphone, the Bee Gees, Donna Summer and Village People.

Kristyn Scorsone: Nice.

Lovari: Very telling. The first record that I ever bought, my dad bought for me, was Cyndi Lauper; She's So Unusual record.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's great.

Lovari: Yeah, so I always wanted to sing; always.

Kristyn Scorsone: You wanted to grow up to be a singer?

Lovari: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah? That's really cool.

Lovari: I still wanna grow up to be a singer.

Kristyn Scorsone: After high school, you went to college. Did you go to college for singing?

Lovari: No. Bayside High School actually though, is an arts and music school, so yeah. They're known for—a few people went there that are now in the entertainment industry, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool. What college did you go to?

Lovari: I went to Queensborough Community College.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did you major in?

Lovari: I majored in, I didn't finish, but I majored in music therapy.

Kristyn Scorsone: Why?

Lovari: Wait, you just asked me if I went to school for music. I thought you meant you know, performance music, I'm sorry. Yeah, no, I did though, I majored in music therapy.

Kristyn Scorsone: What's that like?

Lovari: Music therapy is— at the time, it was something new and it's very common now. It's just techniques with a lot of patients, be it patients that have extended stays in hospitals or patients in hospices or things of that nature, where you just go and you either sit down, sing with them, invite them to participate in musical activities. That's what it is. Along with that you have to take psychology classes, etc., theory classes.

Kristyn Scorsone: I forgot to ask you, when you were younger, did you—besides the relative that you went to in the city, I don't know, I can't remember if you said that if she was gay or not but—

Lovari: Oh, if she identifies gay, no.

Kristyn Scorsone: No. How did you first become aware of gay people besides that you had this—

Lovari: I'm glad you brought that up. Remember, I knew that I was gay, but I remember that one day, maybe I was again, nine, whatever, there was a show on. One of these judge shows like People's Court, but it's a fake one, where they had a storyline at the beginning. The thing would go on and I'm watching it 'cause I loved those shows as a kid, the ones with the dramatic story line that were fake. I don't even think they have those anymore.

I think now is just the regular People's Court, but back then they had storylines at the beginning with the soap opera music and in the courtroom. I remember the attorney was talking to the guy and the guy said something and she was like, "What's the big deal? You're gay, so what?" I turned off the TV. I didn't wanna hear it. I was uncomfortable.

Kristyn Scorsone: When was the next time?

Lovari: Masturbation. Masturbation. I would think about guys.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Lovari: Yeah. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: You were okay with it. You were—

Lovari: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Lovari: I told you, it's weird. Just me in general, just my life in general, it's like reversed. Even in the music industry, I got respect from people that were, to my understanding, and I just think in general in the entertainment industry you get the fans first, and then the respect of the artists and or actors. With me, when I started out, I automatically got the respect of established recording artists and established actors and I didn't have a fan base, and then I built a

fan base. I was like, “Isn’t that weird? Isn’t it supposed to be the other way around?” See what I’m saying? Things with me have always been like that in my life just in general.

Kristyn Scorsone: I guess what I wanna know is so you saw—I guess who were the first people that you knew outside of yourself that were gay?

Lovari: Probably when I started going to the Hetrick Martin Drop-in Center.

Kristyn Scorsone: How’d you feel when you got there?

Lovari: Honestly—I don’t mean to be rude and be chewing on for you.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, that’s okay.

Lovari: Honestly, I was just excited about how many people I’d be able to date. I’m being honest. It’s bad, I know, but I’m so not like that now, so it’s crazy. No, I have to speak my mind. I’m just gonna speak my mind. Whatever. It’s me. If I offend somebody, whatever. The way that some guys in high school, like on the basketball team—”Well, how many girls can I get.” I was, well, “How many dudes can I get? “That’s just what I was excited about.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Well, I mean, you’re coming from high school there’s like everybody seems to be straight, I think. At least that’s my experience.

Lovari: Right, right, good.

Kristyn Scorsone: I would probably feel the same way.

Lovari: That to me was just like a big—and you know, listen, I totally participated in things and I got involved and I assisted and I learned so much, but when I was going there, my main objective was to pick up a lot of dudes.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you first come to Newark and get involved here?

Lovari: In 2010 or 2011 there was—well, in 2008 there was a shooting of four students that they lived in Newark, but they were getting ready to go to college out of state or some of them were already in college out of state. It was in the Ivy Hill section of Newark in a public school, in a public school playground. Four of them were shot in the head, one survived. I couldn’t—again, I could tell you why because I honestly don’t know, but I was obsessed with what

happened. I was horrified and obsessed and I started doing my own research.

I don't know why. I can't tell you why. I don't read crime books. You know what I'm saying? It's not a thing where it's a hobby of mine. Some people read true crime books or whatever, or some people love sports so they go to sporting events. I don't know what possessed me to start investigating and to become obsessed. I don't know. But I became obsessed with it and I started investigating on my own.

Eventually I got in contact with the mother of one of the kids that was killed and I said, "Hey, can I help with anything? Can I volunteer with anything? I don't know anything. I grew up in Queens. I live now"—where was I living at the time? I don't know where I was living at the time, but I wasn't in Newark, and we became friends.

Prior to us becoming friends, I went to the scene of the crime. Mind you, I'm doing this like with the notion that Newark is this really dangerous place and I started going to the arraignment of the—at the time, the suspects which they had been prosecuted. They are in jail and they admitted to doing it, so they're no longer suspects. They are criminals. I started going to the arraignment every day with the mom.

I'm choosing not to say her name because I don't wanna—she's out there. She's said some organizations, but I don't wanna feel like—I don't want anything to be exploitive, so that's why I'm choosing not to say her name. I remember that when I was going to right here, to the Essex County Courthouse, I remember walking out in Newark Penn Station and I walk up the thing and I remember thinking how beautiful this was. I remember saying, "Newark is beautiful." I was like, "Why do they always say these really horrible things?"

Well, obviously a lot of it's gotta be true. They're not gonna have reports, but I was like, "Yeah, but why isn't nobody talking about this is beautiful, man." Then just— so that was my introduction to Newark. Then the same year I have a friend, I could say her name, Uche, and Uche was—and I'm not a person that cares about race and all that, but there's a reason for me saying this. Uche is Nigerian, and so, she's one of my—I could still say I haven't seen her in years, but we talk all the time.

She's one of my best friends. Me and her hung out. She does modeling and we both were doing acting and she was like, "Oh, I go to these Nigerian parties. It was so cool. You gotta come." I'm like, "All right." I go with her and they were here in Newark. I had such a great time. They were so awesome.

Again, I'm like, "This is Newark. This is where everybody is saying all these horrible things are happening." Here I am going to Nigerian parties, and it's important for me to say that 'cause I'm not Nigerian. I was going in and I was probably the only non-Nigerian person there.

Kristyn Scorsone: What's your background?

Lovari: I'm Italian and Venezuelan. Nobody said a peep. Nobody looked at me funny. I had a good time. You know what I'm saying? This was in Newark. I was like, "Newark is cool," and I was like, "This place is awesome." That was my introduction to Newark. I lived in Jersey City for about five years and they were selling, so I was like, "Okay. Where am I going now?"

I was looking in Jersey City and I remember looking at reading something and it said, "Okay, blah-blah-blah, I have found Newark." I'm like oh, that's not Jersey City, why is it in the thing? I don't know why it was in the Jersey City listings. I was like oh, just like you know about Newark and all that. Then automatically the thing in my head about oh yeah, but you know the drugs, the crime, this, things you heard, but then I was like, yeah, but what about all the places that you going on?

It was Ironbound and then I started reading about the Ironbound—like "Wow, it's like all these things people don't know about Newark." I went, I took a look at it. I was like, "Wow, this is amazing," and I moved in. that was two years ago. Then, but I was renting like roommate and I was like, yeah, I want my own place. Being in Newark I became in love, now living in Newark, in love with Newark. It's magical.

So many wonderful, amazing things have happened to me here and this is my most favorite place I've ever lived, and now I live downtown in Teacher's Village near William Street where your tour. Okay, for those that need to know what I mean by the tour is they gave a queer Newark walking tour that begins near William Street and it's an awesome tour. Do it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Everybody should come.

Lovari: Everybody should come. All right, so yeah. I sincerely mean this, I am in love with Newark. I'm so happy. I'm so happy here. It's magical.

Kristyn Scorsone: What are your favorite things about it?

Lovari: Oh, my gosh, there's so much. You know what I love? You mean my favorite places?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, favorite places, yeah.

Lovari: Military Park. The carousel. The waterfront, even though it's friggin far to get to if you don't drive, and I don't drive, but the riverfront. Just architecture. I love history. I love old buildings. The Newark Museum. I like it better than Museum of Natural History.

Kristyn Scorsone: It's beautiful.

Lovari: Yeah, and it's—I tell people there's a Warhol in there. By the way, I don't think—I'm not hating, but I don't think Warhol is the best artist. The fact that you can go to—if you go to the Museum of Natural History—well, they wouldn't have Warhol, so let's say the Moma, which does have Warhol's. You go to the Moma, they got Warhol's, but they're roped off and you got—in Newark Museum you could freaking go right up to the—like literally go right up to the Warhol and it's amazing. It's just amazing, so I love the Newark Museum.

I love Military Park. I love the New Jersey Historical Society, which is also a museum, I love them. I love the people here. For the biggest city, I believe, the most populated city in the State of New Jersey, I could be wrong, but I believe that it is. It is the most—it reminds me of the South, and when I say the South, I visit the South. I haven't lived in the South, but in the South people say hi to you a lot and I can guarantee that at least two—in the morning when I'm walking to work or whatever, I guarantee that at least two people are gonna say good morning to me.

Kristyn Scorsone: I've noticed that too, yeah.

Lovari: It's amazing and— The art scene here is finally getting the recognition it deserves, but I just—this reminds me of not look-wise, but it reminds me of the East Village when they were like Bohemian Manhattan. For y'all listening, that used to be, like how

the East Village used to be like arts, cool and artsy and '80s, like that. That's what the arts scene here reminds me of. I really feel like, and whatever, if it sounds silly, it sounds silly. This is how I feel. Ever since being in Newark, period, I just feel like there's some sort of supernatural spell in a good way about here, because I literally feel—you know people talk about energy? I really feel that energy, vibrancy throughout the whole city.

I talked to other people about this that feel the same way and it's like, "I just wanna do everything Newark." Even mom was like, "All you wanna do is stay in Newark," which is weird 'cause usually when you live somewhere, you wanna go out, or whatever, and then you wanna come home, but I'm over that. I'm wearing Newark shirts. You know what I'm saying? It's amazing. I'm in love with Newark and it's not a passing thing 'cause I been here now for three years. It's not like a thing where I just moved and you know.

No, I'm in love with Newark and I walk around all the time. I do a lot of walking by myself. I just walk around. I just admire everything. I love it. I love it and I love the people. I wanna say that I think the reason that—of my experience, other being positivity and very neighborly people speaking to you is because they don't want Newark to be known as a place of violence and bloodshed and things of that nature. I think just people in general want that positive change.

Kristyn Scorsone: Are there places in Newark that you associate with LGBTQ people?

Lovari: Yes. Newark is very, very populous, especially with—and you know what, I gotta say, I got a thing, I know some people want you to say specific terminology. If I'm not identifying and if I say the word lesbian or whatever, or the word woman, that's what I'm saying. If somebody wants me to say, "Oh, don't say the word woman." No, I'm saying yes. That's a term I use, lesbian woman.

There is a big, big, big influx of lesbian women in this community and a lot of them are entrepreneurs and business owners. I am pigeonholing here and I'm doing it for a purpose, that I have never seen so many lesbian owners in one place and very successful. It's amazing. I know for a fact that they—because I know a lot of them, and I know for a fact that everybody didn't flock here like that 'cause a lot of them know each other only from being here. I don't know what it is, but this is amazing, especially on Halsey Street and all that? Oh my goodness.

I identify Halsey especially with that, but identify Newark more—and not to be a separatist, but because this is about queer and everything, I identify this more of being a big Mecca for lesbian community more so than gay male community. There's nothing wrong with that. I'm just saying that when I think of it, like Chelsea for example, when I think of Chelsea I think of gay men. Newark, Halsey Street, I think of lesbian women.

Kristyn Scorsone:

That's really cool.

Lovari:

Totally, and entrepreneurs because they're all, "Let me get some of that money. Show me."

Kristyn Scorsone:

Yeah, totally. Do you go to any bars or clubs here?

Lovari:

Okay, so I'm 12 years in sobriety so I don't drink so I really don't go to bars. I have utilized the services of—there is a place called Off the Hanger and they're on Linden Street and they identify, so not outing or—you know, they're a proud—

Kristyn Scorsone:

Yeah, we've interviewed them, yeah.

Lovari:

There you go. Lynette Lashawn and Anita Dickens, awesome people. I shot my music video, Paparazzi.

Kristyn Scorsone:

Good.

Lovari:

Did you see it? Did you like it? Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate that. I shot it in Off the Hanger and the exterior, and it won yesterday, yeah, top 10 finalist made number 3, so Newark Film Festival, but yeah. I mean, there and I shop there. I got my pillows from there.

Kristyn Scorsone:

My Newark versus everybody shirt from there.

Lovari:

Surely you jest.

Kristyn Scorsone:

Very nice.

Lovari:

If I could friggin get it the right way to show you.

Kristyn Scorsone:

Love it. I love that color too. I'll have to back and get one now.

Lovari:

Yesterday before I had this one on I had this one. Yeah, amazing.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did Lynette co-direct that video?

Lovari: Lynette co-directed the video. Lynette Lashawn co-directed the video. Yes, she did.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool.

Lovari: She did, because here's the thing, we were in there and talking about the treatment for the video and she kept talking all these— 'cause something about me. I'm sorry if we're going off topic here. You tell me to stop, whatever. With me and art, I'm a recording artist and an actor. When I work with people, I'm always a team player.

I'm always team player because A, you're always gonna learn from somebody, and B, you're making me look good. I don't understand people that they're like, "No, I gotta do it my way." No man. You're saying something, you're doing it because it's gonna make you look good. It's gonna make me look good. That being said, Lynette was talking. I was talking to Lynette about my ideas for the video months ago, and she was like, "Yeah, and this that and then Anita could do this."

I was like, "Lynette, why don't you just co-direct the video?" I'm not sure at first if she thought I was being sarcastic, I don't know. I thought maybe for a second she thought that I was in other words oh, don't tell me what to do.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, right, yeah.

Lovari: I don't know, but I was like, "No, Lynette, I'm being serious." I'm like, "I like your ideas. Do you wanna co-direct the video?" She was, "I don't know, I guess." Then the day that we came I had my director, but I had told him, I said, "Listen, I have a co-director." He's like, "I'm totally fine with that." I was like, "It's gonna be both of you."

Yeah, I don't think that she actually thought—and again, not in a negative way, but she I think up until it said, "Co-directed by Lynette Lashawn," on all of it, she didn't think that—maybe she thought that. I don't know. I don't think that it seemed like she was just like, "Hey, I'm just helping." I was like, "No, I'm giving you credit. This is your thing."

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you get to know them?

Lovari: I got to know them—How did I get to know them?I don't know. Actually, could we stop it for one second?

Kristyn Scorsone: Sure. I think we were talking about how you met them.

Lovari: How I met Lynette and the reason we had to stop the tape is I all of a sudden had to use the bathroom really bad. My apologies. I don't remember how I met Lynette and Anita. I wanna say that there's these tours called Have You Met Newark, that are run by amazing, amazing people, Emily and Antonio, Emily Manz and Antonio Valla. It may have been there, but I'm not 100 percent sure.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you have the idea to shoot in their store?

Lovari: My album is called The Rhythm of Life and one of the songs is called Paparazzi and I just visualized paparazzi being like you know, and that's one thing that I not argued with Lynette about. We didn't argue, but we cordially disagreed about. She says, "You need paparazzi." I said, "The thing is paparazzi is a euphemism." At the beginning of using paparazzi got, you know, whatever. I write my own songs except for the Mariah Carey remake that I did.

When I was writing the lyrics to the beat, I don't produce, but when I was listening to the beat, I had flashing camera, sound, I was like all right, reminds me of paparazzi, which is where I came up with paparazzi, but then I started writing—it was like I was comparing the chorus is you don't know about me, I don't know about you. Here is some advice I'd take if I were you. You're like paparazzi, all up in my face, better back up off me, get up out my space. I had the idea between the paparazzi, the attitude. When I think of attitude I think of fashion. I think of Runway and all that. Off the Hanger is so dope the way they have the interior, Off the Hanger came to my mind immediately and that's what did it.

I wanted the idea of people going through Runway and all that. Lynette and I came up with the idea of her and Prince Star Doll another awesome person, LGBT here is frigging amazing, being judges, and it worked.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, that was really good. How would you describe your music?

Lovari: You know what, I describe it as '90s R & B pop. What other people describe it as, I don't know. Some people still say—and I think it's 'cause I had a freestyle. My very first single ever was a freestyle dance song. Freestyle is like Latin beats with— sung in pop and a lot of people still say I'm a freestyle singer. I think it's

really ‘cause it was just—I guess the song you get introduced by is the one that maybe people get. I think that my stuff is R & B Pop ‘90s sound. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: You sang the national anthem right, at the—

Lovari: I did. I did.

Kristyn Scorsone: LGBT for a flag raising.

Lovari: The LGBT flag raising, yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: How was it?

Lovari: I always wanted to sing the national anthem and I was supposed to sing the national anthem in Barclay Center and it didn’t happen.

Kristyn Scorsone: How come?

Lovari: I don’t know. I don’t know. There was a lot of red tape. I ended up singing—there’s in the Barclay Center is the 40/40 Club. I ended up singing it in the 40/40 Club in Barclay Center, but I was supposed to sing it you know, before the game. Anyway, I was prepared. I was prepared already ‘cause I was supposed to sing it somewhere else, so yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you get to do that with Newark?

Lovari: Sharonda Wheeler. Love her. Another amazing person. I gotta say the thing that— impresses is the only word that comes to my mind now, and I shouldn’t even have to use the word impress, because there should be no excuse for intolerance. There really shouldn’t. That being said, it impresses me greatly how, from what I’ve seen, quite the majority of Newark residents are very, very supportive of LGBT. They do like bar crawls, things like that, and they’re like, “Oh, this is the Newark gay pride bar crawl.” Bunch of straight people there. It said gay, in celebration of gay.

What I do appreciate about Sharonda, which yeah, I think that it should be called Newark gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender. What I appreciate about Sharonda and about Newark gay pride, and I’m saying gay pride ‘cause that’s what it’s called, gay pride even though I think it should be called Newark gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender Pride of Newark LGBT pride. What I appreciate it that it has the word gay in it because New York had pride televised for

the first time this year and all of a sudden, the LGBT names were dropped. What do these little kids know? “Oh, look it’s Pride.”

What is it? You know about the Columbus Day is Columbus Day. You know about the African-American parades, says African-American so what’s just pride? I am everything that Newark gay pride and Sharonda did said gay on it. None of it said pride. I actually don’t even think it was on purpose. I think it was just that’s the name. You know what I mean, but I have to say that for gay pride this year was ‘cause I was here last year. I was one of the headliners last year and they were gay pride. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, in Military Park on the stage?

Lovari: Yes, and I wore that Newark versus everybody shirt. We didn’t have a stage last year though. It was like a mini—

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, that’s right, yes.

Lovari: Yeah. It was a nice—yeah. This year it was more awesome.

Kristyn Scorsone: I like the intimacy of not having a stage too.

Lovari: Oh yeah. That was true, yeah ‘cause when I was singing I was jumping and dancing. Yeah, true. Again, I shouldn’t have to say that I admire her because it should be without saying, but hey, unfortunately, is that many people that I know here that identify as heterosexual are supportive, like the bar crawl. “Hey, it’s gay pride. Oh, let’s go. You know what I’m saying?” They don’t think twice. I’m thinking about, and again, we could be gender misidentifying personalities, but you have this idea of the straight man being less accepting than the straight woman.

Again, I’m talking about generalizations of identifying. No, I’ve seen these dudes with their girl. It’s cool. I have a friend of mine say, “Hey, you going to the gay pride rah-rah? Me and my wife are going.” Yeah. You know what I mean? It’s so awesome. It should be like that, but you know what I’m saying. Around here it’s just like they don’t—from what I’ve seen they don’t think twice. I also see a lot of pride stickers throughout Newark. A lot; a lot and that’s just awesome. It really is. It really is. You had a few bad things. I know there was an attack on a person on Broad Street recently.

Kristyn Scorsone: It was a transgender woman.

Lovari: Yes. But I don't know the facts about it. I can't speak on it, but I think that—I don't think, I know that it's come a long way since Sakia.

Kristyn Scorsonone: Have you been to the LGBT center?

Lovari: No, 'cause every friggin time I'm back and it's closed or whatever. I have not. I have not and I want to so bad. It's closed right now too 'cause I walk by it.

Kristyn Scorsonone: Yeah, they're sporadic.

Lovari: I'm grateful that there is one. I'm grateful that there is one and the thing that to me is very important, and I've said this time and again, is that I feel that a lot of things, and people get mad at me about this, but I say this is about me and what I feel, is that I think that a lot of these stupid laws and unfair decisions I think that we're also responsible for these stupid laws and unfair decisions. How are we responsible for these hateful laws against us? Because from my own experience and what I've seen in general, especially with men, I feel that the gay male, gay community doesn't support each other as much as they need to. I've experienced it. I've seen it. I've seen them knock each other down.

I feel that the more unified—and it's ironically, from what I've seen with the lesbian community, the lesbian community is very supportive of each other, and of the gay community. It's weird because I've always seen lesbian organizations stand up, unite, solidarity. Men, from my experiences all these years, male gay community, not enough support. I say this because some people are how the hell could you say that we want our kids to get beat up? I was like, "Because," and I use this as an example. I was like, "Look at the African-American community."

If there is one thing, if they don't like just one thing on TV, they get together. They petition. They change. They support. They stand the same. They're saying we're supporting him. I have seen rappers that have had rivalries or whatever, wanted to kill each other. No, when it comes to this—I was like I don't see that in the gay community. I was like, I remember a few year—not a few years ago now, but back in—that I started to stop doing gay pride events because I would always see they'd always have a straight headliner. I understand economics because it might not be a well-known gay singer to do it. I remember one year—

Kristyn Scorsonone: This is in the city?

Lovari: Oh, this is all over. All over. All five boroughs.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Lovari: There was one in specific. There's a singer and his name is Ari Gold. He's awesome. He's an awesome dude. He's a great singer and he's had four, might be more now, but at the time he had four number one Billboard dance songs. I remember there was—he was performing one year and then they made the headliner this singer and her name was Amber Rose Marie and she had two dance songs. One went to number 14, the other one went to number 38 and guess who they made headliner? Amber Rose Marie.

You have a guy with—and it was a gay pride event and you have a gay openly gay man with four number one Billboard dance songs, and you have a straight woman who don't even have one top ten dance song and they made her the headliner. I started writing to Village Voice and all these gay organizations, "Why do you have that?" You're not gonna believe what happened to me. I got accused of being a bully. I got accused of being a bully and the gay community said, "You shouldn't be bullying people."

You should know about bullying. I said, "You can go fuck yourselves." I said, "I will not do gay prides until these things change." Then so everywhere I was going to, a few people actually boo me when I say, "Well, then you must hate yourselves," and then they boo me more. It's been changing now, but it's still—now I understand about the economy. If there's not a name, a person maybe doesn't have a name and this other person does have a name, then actually, you're going to—in a case like this, when you had a dude, a gay dude with four number one songs and a straight person with two, didn't even make the top ten, and you put her as the—nah.

That has happened a lot in the past. Another thing that I appreciated about Newark gay pride is they had the LGBT artists there. Another thing like I said too, Eminem is brilliant. He's a brilliant rapper, and I'm sure he's performed at the BET Awards, but I've never seen Eminem headline the BET Awards. They're celebrating the accomplishments of Black entertainment, and yes, there are people that—like Eminem, but Black entertainment, the achievements of the Black community.

I've seen so many times—like I said, it's been changing now, but back less than five years ago, gay pride, it was New York. Think

about how many people in New York and Manhattan that are gay, outspoken and they had—why is the word escaping me right now? I know you're not supposed to chime in, but I'm only asking if you chime in if you know the word that I'm talking about. They do that person in the parade that—

Kristyn Scorsone: The grand marshal?

Lovari: Yes! Thank you. The grand marshal. I think it was three years ago, four years ago the grand marshal, and nothing against the person, but the grand marshal was—I don't even know the title. She was a Miss New York? She was somebody that—I don't even know the whole gist of the story, but it was somebody running for a pageant, who identified as straight. They asked her about marriage or something, and she said that some—and forgive me, forgive me whoever you are if I'm misquoting you, but it was something along the lines of they asked her one of those congeniality questions and she said that to her gay marriage was very important and all that.

They made her the grand marshal and there's nothing wrong with what she said and she might have been deserving of that, but it wasn't like we were somewhere in Kentucky. Manhattan, so many active, gay people, so many active people on the street doing research, but you give the grand marshal to a straight person that just said, "Oh yeah, there should be gay marriage?" Come on man. That brings me full circle to saying yes, why do I feel like sometimes there's these horrible laws going on? Because we don't support each other, male especially, male gay.

Kristyn Scorsone: Why do you think that is?

Lovari: Ego. Vanity. Yeah, but all around. I think as men, 'cause I've seen two things with men. I would never speak from one's perspective. I have no right to. Well, maybe if I identified as transgender, but I don't have the impression and who am I to say how a transgender person feels? I can't even say that.

As a man, I've seen two things from fellow men. I'm talking about straight and gay, bisexual. Either you are constantly looking to—like do you know the term he's a man's man? I've seen that. I've seen that or I've seen straight up hate and envy. I've never seen anything in between. I think that that's the reason.

I think that there's—it's a vanity thing, like me, for example. If I see somebody that got on a nice pair of sneakers. Actually, I'm not a sneaker head. Somebody got a nice shirt on or something. I'm

like, “Oh my God, that looks good on you. Yo, I love that shirt. Man, where’d you get it from?” Then I know some people, “They think they’re all that.” It is all that. You know what I mean? I think that as gay men a lot of us have vanity issues. A lot of gay men, it’s no secret.

Listen, I’m not really into Fire Island and stuff, but the few times I’ve been in Fire Island, everybody looks perfect. I got my little belly, you know. Everybody there though looks perfect and chisels and six-packs and I’m like, “Damn.” In the interim I’m like, why do they all look perfect? There’s nothing wrong with it, but we suffer from vanity. My opinion. I think that the vanity can lead to jealousy. I think that’s why.

I also think money. I also think money. I think that a lot of people are afraid just like this year with Pride. Well, so and so’s gonna sponsor it, so and so, so and so. I’m like hmm, I don’t know. Just is Wal-Mart—and I don’t know. I don’t know. I think it’s really cool for them to sponsor it, but you know, is Wal-Mart gonna wanna say, “Hi, middle America, we’re sponsoring gay pride? No, we’re sponsoring pride.” I think it’s between money and vanity, but I think vanity first and foremost in my opinion.

Kristyn Scorsone: Besides being a singer, you’re also an actor, right?

Lovari: I try.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you get into acting?

Lovari: Acting is something else that I’ve always wanted to do. Singing was like my number one passion, but I guess entertainment things go hand in hand. This year I’ve been really lucky.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, do you wanna tell me about your film?

Lovari: Yeah, yeah, sure. A few films actually this year. I’ve been really super lucky. A Piece of the Action, which is by Newark filmmakers, and I’m amazed because of the fact that I don’t think anybody had any idea that it was gonna be the way it is. I don’t know if you’ve seen, but the posters are all over. I mean, the big billboards are all over Newark, on the highway, when you go the highway driving into Newark, there’s a poster of the movie.

On MacCarter Highway, there’s two posters on the big billboard highways. On the buildings in the other parts of Newark, on the Auto Zone they got—I don’t think anybody knew it was gonna be

like that. The reason I say I don't think anybody knew is because I know that I was on set and I was like, "Man, this set is ghetto," because they didn't have—at the time they didn't have crafty or anything like that and which I don't care when you , but I remember being there and I was like, "Hmm, wonder how this movie's gonna do?" I'm being real. I'm being real.

There was a scene where I had to put a gun—I'm bad in the movie. I had put a gun to—I kidnapped three people and I'm holding a gun with these people and now on bigger film sets they have a safety person there and they show you how to use the gun and check the bullets and all that, so this is very low budget. One day they give me a gun, I'm like, "What are you doing? This scene is like you don't just give me the gun, man." I was like, "A, I don't use a gun. B," I was like, "I need to see there's nothing in there." The dude start laughing. Said, "What are you laughing at?" "You can't tell it's fake?"

I was like, "No, I can't tell it's a fake gun. Show me that there ain't no bullets in there." They laughed. I'm like, "What are you laughing at?" They're like, "There's nowhere to put bullets." I was like, "Good, pick up the gun, show me there's nowhere to put bullets." I was like, "Yeah, this shit," I was like for real, "Yeah, okay, what am I doing here?" Look at what it's done. I'm so proud of— particularly Saladin and Midi who produced the film because they worked so hard and Wednesday was the premier. That's the other thing, film festivals are amazing, but this is in the movie theaters—movie theaters.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where was it?

Lovari: The CityPlex, the biggest theater in Newark, the biggest movie theater in Newark. Yeah, CityPlex and the first showing was sold out.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was it like? Did you get to sit and watch it too?

Lovari: I did. That's not the first time I've sat and watched my—I was in the movie Salt, so that's not the first time I've sat and watched myself. I definitely, definitely this was the first one where I had more screen time than other movies I've seen in the movies with me. The other ones maybe just a few seconds. I'm one of the co-stars so this was— yeah. I purposefully sat next to strangers. I didn't sit next to my friends because I wanted to see what people would say. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is it weird to watch yourself?

Lovari: No, it's not. It's not. I always expect that I'm gonna hate the way I look, and I didn't hate the way I look so I was like, "Yes." I'm like, "I look cool."

Kristyn Scorsone: What's the film about?

Lovari: The film is a remake—you know what, I don't wanna say remake. It's a reimagining of a movie called Piece of the Action from the '70s that stars Sidney Poitier and Bill Cosby and it's basically about these two guys, one is always owing people money. The other is a criminal stealing stuff. In order not to be incriminated for—detectives were following them. In order for them not to be incriminated for the charges, they have to agree to teach in this school for—I don't even know if it's—it's a school where there's a lot of rowdy students.

They're like, okay, either you guys face jail time or you volunteer eight hours a day, five days a week with these bad-ass kids in school. It's more of a comedy, but it has the drama element of the bad guys in it.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. You've been in other films as well?

Lovari: Mm-hmm. Yeah, small, very small parts, but yeah. That's what I'm saying, this was my first big speaking and all that. Other movies I've been in has been small parts. I was in the movie Salt, starring Angelina Jolie, and I played one of her brothers.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool.

Lovari: Yeah, but then she kills us, but she has good reasons too 'cause we killed her husband, but yeah. I made a film.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, cool.

Lovari: A short film called Shore Thing, which was based on the real-life shark attacks that occurred in 1916 in Matawan Creek in Matawan, New Jersey in a creek that was no more than 12 feet deep at the time. It was actually 12 feet at its deepest. It was four feet at its shallowest and 12 feet at its deepest and a shark actually got into this creek because at one point, the Raritan Bay, there's an estuary that drops and can deposit into the Raritan River and the creek. Some way, somehow the shark got into the creek and in one day

killed two people and injured one. They never found out what type of shark it was.

There was a great white that was caught about 15 miles from the creek that had human flesh in it so naturally a lot of people think that's the shark, but then other people think it was a bull shark 'cause the creek is fresh water. My theory is that it was a great white shark because of the fact that it attacked three people in one day. If you're a bull shark and you're used to fresh water, you wouldn't really have the need to attack. If you're a great white shark and you need salt water, what do you do when you're weak? I don't feel good. Maybe I need to eat.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was it a horror film?

Lovari: It was suspense, horror, comedy, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool.

Lovari: Yeah, and it won best short at the—I'm sorry, best suspense short at the New York International Film Video Festival a few years back. What I'm most proud of is that last year was the 100th anniversary of the real attacks in Matawan and it got screened there and I was one of the sponsors of the 100-year anniversary. That's definitely a huge accomplishment for me.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. When did that come out?

Lovari: You know, that came out in 2009 but—and that's when we rescreened it at a few festivals, but then on the interim of the 100-year anniversary is when we screened it last year.

Kristyn Scorsone: Would you like to do more of that, like making your own?

Lovari: Yeah, I mean, yeah, 'cause the mini videos I make, the mini music videos, but it's so much—the only way I would do it again is if I had a story boarder and all that. It's so much to do. Right now, so Piece of the Action is in the theaters now, but I'm also doing two other films. One is called Moth and I'm bad in all these movies. Meaning bad as in my character is not nice. Moth, I play an abusive dad.

Yeah. I gotta be mean to my nine-year-old daughter in the movie and I love kids so it's hard, but that's acting. Then there's another one that we started doing that's on hiatus right now, it's called

Underachievers and I play—my character, I'm running for the Mayor of Newark, but I'm really corrupt. I'm bad.

Kristyn Scorsone: Are both these films shot in Newark?

Lovari: Yes. Actually, all three. Piece of the Action was shot entirely in Newark. Moth is being shot here in Newark and the Underachievers is being shot in Newark and Orange.

Kristyn Scorsone: What are some of the locations in Newark for Piece of the Action?

Lovari: Oh, man. We had the Teacher's Village. We had, oh my gosh, what is that place? What is the name of it? Mercado, Mercado Tomato Pie, Indigo Hotel. Where else? What did we have for Piece of the Action? Those are the only ones that I can think of. There were other scenes, but it was in buildings, but I don't know the name of—I could tell you they were near. They were near Springfield Avenue and all that, but yeah. For Underachievers, so far, we've shot interiors, so no exterior set with Newark. Moth we're shooting in interior and exterior tomorrow on Wainwright Street, so it's like north Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay, that's really neat.

Lovari: Then my music video obviously we shot you know, Off the Hanger right here in Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: What about your other music videos? Were they shot in Newark too?

Lovari: No, no.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool. Have you, being an actor, being a singer or anything, have you experienced any discrimination based on your identity?

Lovari: Yeah, based— with my own community. I was saying earlier about ironically, I have not—and it's weird. Well, no, maybe it's not. Well, yeah, no, it is weird. I haven't experienced any—because I'll do a lot of shows with the hip hop community. No, I've not experienced it. I've unfortunately experienced backlash within my own community.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. This mainly with that issue with the—

Lovari: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Lovari: Which honestly, Newark pride—well, no, did I do Queen? Yeah, I did Queens this year. Newark and Queens were the only prides that I did this year because I made a promise to myself that if I continue to see this going on, I'm not gonna do it. I'm not gonna do it.

Kristyn Scorsone: What's your favorite thing about performing?

Lovari: Okay, so I have great, great dance team. They're great. They're awesome and especially John. There's like houses—

Kristyn Scorsone: Are you talking about ballroom houses?

Lovari: Yes. John is a Ninja, the House of Ninja and he's been working with me for almost seven years. I like the audience's reaction to the dancers, but I also like people hearing me sing live because sometimes I'll sing it a little different than on the record, because I naturally sing in a falsetto and I'll sing falsetto for the most part and live, but then I'll get to also do like a bit more of a vibrato in person. Even sometimes people say, "How come you don't sing like that? I like the live version better." It's because the beat sometimes with the music, if you sing it like that on a studio recording, it just doesn't sound the same, which is why some singers will sing it differently in person. Cause in person, if it's a backing track or reverb, you can play around with it more so than if you hear it on record, like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's interesting. I didn't know that. It's cool.

Lovari: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Have you gotten to perform with anyone that you're a big fan of?

Lovari: Yes. Yes, I have. When I was a kid, I used to love—I love horror movies. One of my favorite horror movie franchises was Friday the 13th and they ended up making a TV series out of Friday the 13th that had nothing to do with Jason or the hockey mask. It had to do with cursed antiques. I don't know why, all of a sudden, they made a—but it was them. It was the same people. It was called Friday the 13th the Series.

Anyway, the star of it was an actress and singer named Robey and she was the star of Friday the 13th the Series and when I was a kid, again, I knew what I was, but I had a non-sexual crush on her. I said, "I gonna meet her. I'm gonna meet her. We're gonna hang

out. I'm gonna meet her. I'm gonna meet her." Then in 2012 or 2011, we met and we did a song together. They put it on my previous album. It's called Take it to the Top.

She came, we recorded in a studio and yeah. I was just like—it was so awesome because I got to watch some of the episodes with her. At first, I was gonna ask, I was like, "I'm asking whatever." I was like, okay, I was like, "Sorry." I was like, "You gotta understand as a teenager I was obsessed with you. Could we watch a few episodes?"

She's like, "Yeah." I mean, it was totally like a kid, fantasy thing. We're sitting there and she's telling me, she's like, "Oh, I remember when we did that and that and that took a few hours. Oh, that was so much fun." I'm like, "I cannot friggin believe I'm sitting here with one of my favorite actors." As a kid I'm like, "We're gonna hang out." I'm making her watch.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Lovari: She's agreeing and she doesn't think I'm psychotic. I'm not, but you know what I mean? It's like, can you imagine sitting down with someone like, I don't know who, whatever your favorite musician is or whatever and saying, "Hey, can we listen to your CD? Can we listen to track five?" I'm picking out the episodes that I want.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Lovari: It was really, it was really awesome. It was even more so for me because then the horror—I love horror movies. The horror fan sites, not 'cause of me, 'cause of her, obviously, were picking up on the songs. Now I'm on all these horror fan sites that I love anyway, you know, like that. That was one person.

I didn't perform with him, but he's a big supporter of me, is—when I had said I was a kid, singing in that wooden block, the Village People, Randy Jones is a very good friend of mine. I even went to his wedding. He's the cowboy from the Village People. Very big, very big supporter of me; good friends. I'm good friends with him. Went to his wedding. I've opened up for him. Yeah, who else? Who else? You said perform with, right?

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-hmm.

Lovari: I'm trying to think here if there was anybody else that I sang with. I've gotten to meet some of my favorite singers.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah? Like who?

Lovari: Sophie B. Hawkins.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, that's funny.

Lovari: You know her?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Lovari: That's awesome because some people like, "Who's that?" Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover is my favorite song of all time.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's a good song.

Lovari: My favorite of all time, which is funny, coming from me, because my favorite type of music is more pop R & B, but that's my favorite song of all time. I got to meet her, talk to her. She signed every single one of my Sophie B. Hawkins singles and CDs that I had.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you see her on that episode of Community? I don't know if you ever watch that show?

Lovari: I heard that she was on it. It's funny, I did work with one of the guys from Community.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh yeah?

Lovari: Yeah. I didn't get to see it. I know she was on it though, but I didn't get to see it. She sang Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover. She was on it, right? Yeah, I didn't get to see it yet, no. That was really awesome to get to have a conversation with her and to sing—not sing, sorry, to have her sign all my things. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Lovari: Yeah. Yeah, totally love Sophia and kudos to you for knowing Sophie B. Hawkins.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, I really liked that song when it came out. You had also told me, prior to this interview, that you worked at a law firm. Is that

right? That handled the case of the New Jersey four? Did I get that right?

Lovari: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you come to do that?

Lovari: I can't speak about that on the record because— I didn't work with them, I worked for a firm. I worked for a firm that was—

Kristyn Scorsone: Like involved?

Lovari: No, they were.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow, yeah.

Lovari: Yeah. Yes, you're right. You're right, mm-hmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool. What else did I wanna ask you about?

Lovari: I mean, it's public, obviously people can look it up, but I worked with the lawyer, is a very good friend of mine. I also work with that—

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you have a nine to five job besides acting and writing or do you solely—

Lovari: No, not right now.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, that's cool.

Lovari: I have in the past.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Lovari: Sure.

Kristyn Scorsone: What kind of jobs have you had?

Lovari: Law firm.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Lovari: Not as a paralegal, just as the office manager. What else? I worked in a record store when they had record stores. I can't believe it. That makes me wanna cry, man, say "When they had a record

store,” it makes me wanna cry. Memories of Soul. They still have record store here called Memories of Soul.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where’s that?

Lovari: Memories of Soul is right on—near Maiden Lane and Halsey. It’s like the block where—I don’t know if you ever see there’s a block where they always have a bus playing club music or house music? I think it’s Halsey and Broad.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Lovari: You’ll know ‘cause they play during the day this loud, loud, loud club music. Sometimes hip hop, but it’s mostly club music. They’ll have a PA going, best deals, blah-blah-blah. If you go down that block, right near Teacher’s Village, be in Teacher’s Village and you’ll see big Memories of Soul.

Kristyn Scorsone: Maybe I don’t go down that far, yeah, okay.

Lovari: Yeah, and they sell vinyl and all that there.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, cool. I’ll have to go look for that.

Lovari: I bought 45’s for \$.25 there.

Kristyn Scorsone: That’s awesome.

Lovari: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where do you see yourself in the future, a few years from now?

Lovari: Still doing what I’m doing on a higher platform. I want a relationship. I really want a relationship. Do I see it in a few years? No, I hope so. I would like to will it into being.

Kristyn Scorsone: That’s cool.

Lovari: For my career, I’m still doing—you know what I would like to do? I have an interest in—I don’t wanna use the term politics, but I keep seeing in the future for me, something with public office. I don’t know why. I think because a lot, I’ve certainly done—more so in the past than presently, but I’ve worked, volunteered a lot for people running for City Council, good friends, but people that have been in City Council or were in City Council, gotten them interviews like public relations with them or represented—most

recently, actually—oh, crap, that’s what I gotta say. Sorry. There was Tommy Sudhan Thomas.

I’m so horrible with these titles. These the things that when we go back, that I’ll say, “Hey,” because I wanna make sure I get the right title. Anyway, Sudhan Thomas is currently elected as Jersey City something on the Board of Education. We’ll get the title later, but they had a vote, he won and all that, whatever; Jersey City Board of Education. Anyhow I did like—they were doing ads about him so he asked me to do an ad about him.

You know, I agreed with what he was doing so I could you know, I did a vote for Sudhan. Anyhow, he asked me to represent the LGBT community. They had a board meeting. He asked me if I would speak on behalf of the LGBT community, whatever I wanted to speak about, what changes needed to be implemented. This was only a few months ago. I gave a five-minute presentation to the Jersey City Board of Education about how we need to make sure that there’s anti-bullying policies specifically for LGBT youth in all public schools.

When he’s doing this, he’s asked me to be spokesperson for that. There’s no official title, but he said, “When I need to do more, I want you to represent the LGBT community.” That’s why I’ve seen things like this—I foresee myself in some sort of whatever, being in public office. I can’t tell you what that’s gonna be, but I’ve just—it’s again, this psychic vibe that I have. It’s not gonna overtake my film and music, but I sincerely feel like something’s gonna happen with that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you follow the nation’s politics as well?

Lovari: I follow what I wanna follow because regardless of how people feel about Donald Trump, I feel that there are a lot of lies being told about Donald Trump through the media. I do. I feel that I know about the transgender thing, which I’m completely in disagreement with.

Kristyn Scorsone: The what thing?

Lovari: He’s banning transgender from military.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, right, yeah, yeah.

Lovari: I completely disagree with that. I think it’s horrible. I don’t think it’s gonna happen. I don’t think it’s gonna fall through. I stopped

following the media when he got elected because a lot of it was just fear propaganda and a lot of it is straight-up lies. Even if you disagree with everything he does, even if you didn't want him to be President, the media has told a lot of lies about Donald Trump.

Donald Trump grew up in Queens, in Jamaica, not too far from me, where I grew up. I might have a little bit more familiarity with Donald Trump than other people. A lot of things, policies that were being said weren't true, or fear mongering. I don't trust the media. I don't trust the media. I'll read things and then I'll ascertain what that's from and I'll get my own facts. The day of the inauguration, instead of the headline being 'a president gets inaugurated', the headline was 'Trump removes LGBT site from White House page'.

I knew, common sense, that they remove everything because they implement theirs. Sure enough, it wasn't just the LGBT site. It was 12 other pages because as one administration was out, but that's fear mongering and that's not healthy, especially since you know that people are against—in the majority, this is the truth, the majority of people are against Donald Trump. You know that already, but now you're doing that. You know what I'm saying? I don't trust the media. I don't.

Do I follow politics? I don't watch it. I see what there is and I make my own decision. The thing about trans—did he really? Did he really do that? I went on there. Oh, yes, he did. Fucked up. Other things like, "Did he?" No, he didn't do that. You know what I'm saying? It's a lot of fact checking and it sucks because to me the mainstream news now is worse than the National Inquirer in my opinion. It really is. No, I don't follow it like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right. What else I wanna ask you? Oh, can you tell me more about the visit? You touched on that I think at the beginning of the interview, but the event that you attended last night. It was for your video, right? It was an awards show?

Lovari: Well, Newark has the Newark International Film Festival. This will be their second year. I'm not on the board of anything here, but I think it was a success. I went last year. It was amazing. They did a lot here at Rutgers. They did a lot of screenings in Rutgers. Very well put together and last night was the title was I'm So Newark Short Film Festival Contest. It is a part of the Newark International Film Festival, but that's not until September. This is one of the preludes leading up to it. Film submissions and last

night was the top ten finalists. I was in top ten, really excited, and I came in third place.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Lovari: I was even just grateful to be in the top ten. That's a yeah, I think my video—Paparazzi is my best video I've ever done and I love it. When you think about the hundreds of submissions, I'm assuming there had to be at least 50 submissions, I'm assuming. I could be wrong. I don't think there were just ten submissions you know. Yeah, so I got third places. I'm So Newark Short Film Festival Contest.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool.

Lovari: Yeah. There were ten finalists and I got third.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Lovari: Thank you.

Kristyn Scorsone: I also wanted to ask you, what do you write about? What else do you write about in your music?

Lovari: Everything's personal. When I say personal I don't mean I'm not telling you, I mean, it's all from personal experience. I can't write about things I haven't experienced. I never did ecstasy, so I can never write about doing ecstasy. I don't drive so I can't say rolling down the boulevard, but I have a song called Ride with Me on my new album, but the ride with me is euphemism for be with me, are you on my side, like rock with me.

I can only write—I choose, I'm sure I could write about something if I want, but no, I choose to only write about true experiences and all my music's personal. I tell people, I'm like, 'cause people like especially on social media, "You never talk about your personal life." I'm like, "Well, then you're not listening to my music because my lyrics are so personal." I mean, they are so personal. Like I tell 'em, did you know I was engaged? No. You should've listened to my song. I mean, I write really personal lyrics. I mean, Paparazzi's not—you know, but Paparazzi is personal because Paparazzi I'm saying, I told you the chorus, but then the verse says, "You think you know everything about me. One date is not enough to read my mind."

Right there I'm telling you that I had an experience where somebody took me out on a date, they judged me on first date. I said, "Right there." Then the next line is, "Online, you've been posting lies about me." Everything is personal. It might sound like sassy or fun or whatever, but all my lyrics are personal. I have a song called Sober Today. I'm 12 years in sobriety from alcohol.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's great.

Lovari: Then I have a song called Be Yourself Tonight, which is funny. It's about society and things and it says, the chorus is, "Be yourself tonight. Know what's wrong from right. Don't let them tell you what to say or do," them being the media. The verse says, "Society today is very scary. We all walk around like robots; land of the free and brave. That's what they used to say, but if you disagree then you're out." Because I find that if you disagree with something now it's like you disagree? You disagree?

I know people that voted with Trump and they were like, "Oh, if you voted for Trump, don't ever talk to me again." Aren't we in the lands of the free? Why can't we do that? You know what I'm saying? Why? Or just like if I didn't have my music and film, I wouldn't be on social media. It annoys me. You don't know you have to. How come you don't have Snapchat? I don't want it.

Now to me, today, it's more like—or like I seem to say, "We all dress alike, beards and bowties. What about individuality?" I'll see so many people with the same—to me a lot of beards do look good on dudes, but it's like now everybody's got a beard. Y'all telling me y'all wanted that? No, y'all are following each other. Yeah, my songs are about what I see in society.

I also want songs to empower people, like self-belief and things like that. I'm sorry to interrupt you. Nothing wrong with these either, but you won't to hear me sing like, "Hey, party up in here. Let's go." My lyrics are more—like my favorite songwriter of all time is Annie Lennox. You know what I mean? I like to interpret and what I loved about her was she only started doing this with her last few albums, but I pay attention to lyrics.

I wonder if they were thinking about—and Annie Lennox's last few solo albums she wrote a thing about each song and what she was thinking. I said, "That's so awesome," because she's my favorite songwriter and now in her thing she's like, "When I wrote this song I was thinking," I was, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. That's really cool. You said that you've been sober for—

Lovari: Twelve years.

Kristyn Scorsone: Twelve years?

Lovari: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What made you give up drinking?

Lovari: You know what, it's funny 'cause a lot of my friends to this day, "Like, you drank the least" and they're absolutely right. I did drink the least out of all my friends, but I went from not drinking or barely drinking to drinking every day. It coulda been a beer every day, but here was somebody that rarely drank, if ever, and then I started drinking every day. Weekends, I would get drunk-drunk, Long Island ice teas, all that stuff. Then weekdays I needed—I was working a job and I took an Arizona can and I went to the liquor store and filled up the Arizona can. It went from every day. Getting drunk every day, no, but drinking every day.

I was like, "That's a problem. That's a problem, yeah." So I stopped. Never did drugs. Was too scared of drugs. I smoked pot in high school a lot. Now if I maybe— tried it again a few years ago. I get too paranoid. My only bad thing is cigarettes. I don't buy packs though, but that's not an excuse. One cigarette is bad itself, but that's my vice now is cigarettes. I'll smoke one a day or two a day. I'll buy Loosey or something.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you give it up on your own or did you go to meetings?

Lovari: You know what's funny? I went to meetings, but I gave up—I straight up gave up. I gave it up because I had an allergic reaction. I got bit by a cat and I had to get a tetanus shot and amoxicillin and my first question was can I drink with this? You know, be light, but after ten days you can drink. The tenth day, the last day of me taking it, what I feel is that I almost had a heart attack 'cause the amoxicillin had potassium in it and I guess my eating habits weren't the best at the time, so my body went into shock after my last one.

We thought I was having a heart attack. They called an ambulance. My heart was racing a million miles a minute. It was the potassium, the lack of, from having all this potassium. I guess my potassium levels were low so they gave me amoxicillin with potassium Clavulanate so now it was like my body went into shock

from having all this sudden rush potassium to none. When that happened to me I was just like, “Okay, your lifestyle’s gotta change.”

From that day on is when—and I had quit cigarettes too at the time, but I could say I quit ‘cause I was smoking a pack a day, but it was all in one shot which was real hard, man, ‘cause when I did all in one shot, you wanna talk about dizzy? Oh, my gosh. I couldn’t go out. I couldn’t go out. I feel like I was gonna pass out everywhere because my body was overhauling in shock. No more drinking, no sugar, then no more smoke, no more nicotine. I was like, “Oh my God.” It was the worst.

It was the worst thing, but I never—I’ve been lucky, knock on wood that when I stopped, I never went back to drinking. I never went back to drinking. I’m always careful to say that because sometimes when I’m taking pictures, a lot of time—my friends drinking, that’s fine. That’s not my issue that they drink. A lot of friends of mine will drink and will be in photos and if they’re doing something or putting on makeup, they ask me to hold their drink. There’s been a few photos where I have a drink and I have to say, “Hey, holding my friend’s drink,” ‘cause to me that’s very important.

I know AA or 12 Step is supposed to be anonymous, as it should for healing, but I never wanna be hypocritical so if you see something—I tell people, “Hey, just to let you know that’s not my drink or whatever”. What I’ve been doing lately is I’m like, “I can’t hold your drink, I’m sorry.” I’ve never gotten tempted, but I don’t wanna be seen with a drink in my hand.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right. Can you tell me about your engagement?

Lovari: My engagement. There’s really nothing to tell. What do you wanna know?

Kristyn Scorsone: What happened? You were engaged and you’re not anymore?

Lovari: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: When was this?

Lovari: Let me tell you something, we were engaged to the point we went to City Hall and got the license. Yeah. Yeah, a lot of people don’t know. Because it happened so fast and it was fast. It was just rushed. It was rushed.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you know each other for a while?

Lovari: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh.

Lovari: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: It's like a whirlwind romance thing?

Lovari: Yeah. I mean, the thing is, is that because a lot of my experiences are hooking up with the understanding of hooking up, no malicious intent. I found out when I'm dating somebody it's either okay, I'm not interested or I'm very interested. I mean, look, I really started—and this is so bad. It makes me look so bad, but whatever. I really started dating him because he worked overnight in a bodega where I was living and I was flirting and getting free food. I'm just being honest and I'm not gonna even retract it because it's funny. I was hooking some of my people up with some food and I was like, "Yeah, but he's kinda cute though." Then we started dating for real 'cause when he would bring me my food—but that is the real—

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, you gotta lock down that food.

Lovari: That is the real reason that we started dating, because I was actually just flirting with him to get free food. I'm not even gonna lie, but then you know, it blossomed. Yeah, I mean, yeah. He's the one that actually broke it off.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Lovari: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: How long ago was that?

Lovari: Not too long ago. Two years ago? Two years ago, three years ago? Definitely not more than three years ago.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, are you still friends?

Lovari: I don't wanna be his friend because of the fact that when we talked about doing the engagement, I said, "Please, let's only do this if you're sure," because I'm very careful who I introduce my friends to because I have great friends that are very concerned about me in

a good way. I'm blessed. I have real friends that tell me, "Dude, you cannot wear that shirt." Real friends. Real friends. A lot of time my people, they oh, you need to get a new set of friends. Why? You see, that's what I want.

I want people like that because they only have the best intentions for me. They'll be like, "Do you like this shirt?" "No." Whatever, so friends that'll be real with me. Of course, they support me too, but I'm saying. Julissa, a person you met at pride, she's like that. She'll be keep it real like that. I'm very careful if I'm messing on stage, somebody bring them around, so I said, "Please, make sure that this is—I know this is what I want.

Do I know what I want now? I don't know, but—and he said, "Yeah." Then I started to introduce him to people and I was this close— 'cause remember, my mom doesn't wanna know nothing about that stuff and I was this close to—I was like, well, I gotta tell her if I'm gonna get married. That's why I don't wanna be his friend. He is constantly grudging me on Facebook, writing things on Facebook. I just don't respond. I just don't respond. I don't wanna be his friend.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you have a—this is kind of a silly question, but I like it as a question.

Lovari: There's no such thing.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you have a favorite motto or quote or something that you aspire to?

Lovari: Oh, yes, that is not a silly question at all. One of my favorite quotes, "An unexamined life is not worth living."

Kristyn Scorsone: Who is that?

Lovari: That's Socrates. "An unexamined life is not worth living."

Kristyn Scorsone: What does it mean to you?

Lovari: Well, it's pretty much what it says, an unexamined life is not worth living means if you don't try something then you may regret it. When I say try something, I mean, don't—well, for me I'm not gonna try—I'm sorry, I'm not doing that, what do you call that, skydiving, parachute, no. If there's other things that I'm not examining or learning about myself, I don't wanna be, knock on wood, 90 years old saying, "Damn, I really should've taken that

trip.” Or, “Damn, I really should’ve told that person how I felt.” Always self-examining myself.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is there anything that I didn’t ask you that you wish I had or that you’d like to talk about?

Lovari: This is for the queer, and it’s for people, it’s LGBT, but also talk about just experience in general. I’m trying to think if there’s anything I left out about LGBT community. Yes. Sex. I am anti-PrEP and I’m gonna say why I’m anti-PrEP. I’m anti-PrEP for two reasons. No, I’m sorry, I’m anti-PrEP for one reason. The reason I’m anti-PrEP is because just like with anything else, and I may be completely wrong on this.

I need to educate myself more about it, but to my understanding, PrEP has some sort of antibodies that are present in HIV. If I’m wrong, forgive me, but that’s what I believe. I know you can’t say anything, you’re just here as the interviewer, but to my understanding, PrEP has some components of something that can be found in HIV. I would be terrified to put in my body anything that has some components of HIV. That’s why I’m anti-PrEP. People say, “Hey, but look, people get measles vaccinations.” There was a big difference between strains of measles vaccinations and strains of HIV which causes AIDS. No thank you, that’s why I’m anti-PrEP. Many people cannot understand and that’s why I’m anti-PrEP.

The number two thing I wanna talk about sex is that I am so happy that strains of HIV throughout the years have—I don’t know if the word consolidated, but the youth today, to me it is very, very, very, very important for people to know, especially in our LGBT community, especially males because that is what the majority of HIV is. They need to know how AIDS was. They need to know. They don’t know. They don’t know that back in the day, if you had HIV and AIDS, it was a death sentence. They don’t know.

People need to know. People need to see pictures. People need to see how people back then, when they had AIDS looked, how they had the things all over their tongue. They need to see it. They need to see that because people, “Oh, I’m on PrEP.” That’s wonderful if that works for you, but I don’t ever think that the horror of AIDS should ever be forgotten because just the way we have all these things that may control it, who’s to say it can’t come back full force? Now everybody’s just like, “I’m on PrEP.”

To me in our community, especially as a male—and I gotta say something else because I don't want anybody thinking—and I do, this I do care about what people think. A lot of things I couldn't give a shit about how you feel about me, but I wanna say this 'cause it's very important. When I keep saying as a man, as men as all that, I want you guys to know that I actually have more female, women friends than male friends. I don't want at any time anybody to think that I'm undercutting a woman or lesbian community in any way, but I don't think it would be fair if I speak from a perspective of a woman or anything like that because how do I know what it is to be a woman? I just wanna say, when I keep saying as a man, I'm saying that in a way of my identification. Because I don't want nobody to think that—'cause it's certainly not the way that I feel. I do know that I'm a man, as a man. I'm saying that as identifying what I can do and the only experiences that I can give people.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, that makes sense.

Lovari: In regard to sex, yeah, AIDS, yeah. I think that we need to see how it used to look. We need to see it 'cause it was bad and a lot of people don't realize it. The younger generation, they don't realize. I'm not chastising them for it, but if it was out there more to see?

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you think they should maybe teach that in schools?

Lovari: Absolutely. Absolutely. 1,000 percent,.1,000 percent. They should have the most graphic photos possible, absolutely. One of my friends had AIDS and died and when I saw him in the hospital, oh, my gosh. Mind you this was only a few years ago. If he looked bad, I'm just thinking about—and from photos I've seen of other people that had it when there was nothing, where it was like in six months or three months boom. To me, AIDS was swept under the rug and it's very cavalier, in my opinion, the way people cavalierly talk.

See, it's a catch 22 'cause I'm so happy that—and I wanna be very careful the way I'm using my words here, but I'm so happy that maybe things—that there's been such a progress made in HIV treatment. Of course, I'm amazed, but don't realize why there had to be such progress made.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you fear AIDS growing up?

Lovari: I still fear AIDS. I say AIDS. I don't say HIV. I say AIDS, just like what you said. AIDS, absolutely, absolutely. I had a scare once.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Lovari: Yeah. Somebody I messed around with, somebody that was HIV positive and they didn't tell me.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. How did you deal with it?

Lovari: That was a nightmare. I was praying every day, "Please don't let me have AIDS. Please don't let me have AIDS. Please don't let me have AIDS," and I'm HIV negative, knock on wood. I'm terrified. I'm terrified.

Kristyn Scorsone: Does that affect—

Lovari: I don't care—I'm sorry.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, no, go ahead. Go ahead.

Lovari: I don't care about all these medications. I don't want it. I don't want HIV, no.

Kristyn Scorsone: Does that affect how you date?

Lovari: I've never been into anal sex. Yeah, I mean, yeah because I mean, that's sort of stupid. I guess you can get it orally too, but does it affect the way they—I mean, you know what it is? I've never been into anal sex, but if it goes down to it and if I'm on the receiving end, absolutely. Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Also, too, before you mentioned you have a friend that's in one of the houses. Do you go to ballroom events?

Lovari: Guess what, there's a frigging ballroom in tomorrow. Tomorrow is the big latex ball. Do you know that every year, for four years now, "I'm going to the ball?" I've never been to a ball.

Kristyn Scorsone: No?

Lovari: No. Every year I say I am going this year, blah-blah-blah. I said I was going this year, but now I'm filming a part of a movie tomorrow so I can't go. I can't go, but I was very, very good friends with Willie Ninja from the House of Ninja.

Kristyn Scorsone: Can you do any of the dance moves?

Lovari: Hell no. I can't do shit. I'm not a dancer. Anything you saw in that video, that's just luck. I don't know. I do things that give the illusion of me dancing. I'll do little poses, little attitudes, but I can't dance. I cannot dance. No, I can't.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is there anything else that I didn't ask you or anything else you wanted to discuss?

Lovari: Thank you. I'm just trying to see about the LGBTQ community. I'm trying to see if there's anything to touch upon with that. I honestly can't. I mean, you've been very thorough. I can't really think of—

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you have any favorite LGBT singers or artists?

Lovari: Sophie B. Hawkins. Sophie B. Hawkins.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. That's right. Forgot that.

Lovari: Redact that. Edit that part. Don't edit Sophie B. Hawkins though. I like Ari Gold very much too. He's a friend of mine too. Sophie B. Hawkins by far. That's my favorite song, Damn, I Wish I Was Your Lover, but all her albums, she's had four albums now. I love them all. The non-singles, everything. I just love Sophie B. Hawkins, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: I guess then my last question would be, what does your favorite day look like?

Lovari: A day where I can go to the museum or go explore historical places and a day where I learn. A day where I can learn of my own free will, what I wanna learn. "I wanna go to the museum today or I wanna go look at that building today and find out its history." That's my favorite days, where I can walk around and do that.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. Yeah, thank you so much for doing this.

Lovari: Thank you. I appreciate, thank you so much.

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