

Queer Newark Oral History Project

Interviewee: Alisha Day

Interviewer: Kristyn Scorsone

Date: August 7, 2023

Location: Zoom

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay. Okay. So, hello. Today is August 7—not August. Is it August? Yes, it's August 7th, 2023. My name is Kristyn Scorsone and I am interviewing Alisha Day over Zoom for the Queer Newark Oral History Project. Hi, Alisha. Thank you for doing this with us.

Alisha Day: Hello!

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter] So first question is a very easy-easy. When and where were you born?

Alisha Day: I can give you the whole detail actually.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Alisha Day: I just found out recently I was born in Newark Beth Israel, yeah, Newark Beth Israel Hospital. You asked where or when?

Kristyn Scorsone: Where and when?

Alisha Day: So, January 13, 1995 at 9—I think, 9:55 or 10:30. Hold on, hold on. [Laughter]

[Pause 00:00:57 - 00:01:05]

Alisha Day: Right. [Laughter] So I just got this information. Yes. January 13, 1995, 9:25 a.m.

Kristyn Scorsone: Nice. Are you Capricorn then?

Alisha Day: I am a Capricorn.

Kristyn Scorsone: I'm Aquarius so I'm your neighbor.

Alisha Day: Okay.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter] Who raised you?

Alisha Day: I think I'm an Aquarius Rising.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, nice. Very nice.

Alisha Day: So my mom mostly raised me. Shout-out to Ms. Sabrina Jackson. Yeah. I mean, I was also raised with my dad sometimes, and my step-dad, of course as well, but obviously my primary caregiver was my mother.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you grow up in one place or household? Or did you, like, move around?

Alisha Day: From what I remember, I grew up, you know, obviously born in Newark then eventually moved to, like, South Harrison and—hold on...

[Pause 00:02:02 - 00:02:09]

Alisha Day: I don't know if that noise is obnoxious. They're mowing the lawn outside, but.

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-mmm. I can't hear it.

Alisha Day: Okay. So obviously born in Newark, but I believe from when I was younger, my momma told me we lived in South Harrison, East Orange, then South Orange Avenue in Newark by, like, the—I forgot the area. It's not too far from, like, the—that one pool, community pool. Boiling? Oh, my gosh. I forgot. South Orange Avenue on Brookdale. I lived there in Newark, and then eventually Orange, and then East Orange, and then Newark again with my dad when I was with him for a couple of years in the Colonnades, like after college. Yeah. I moved around a lot within the Newark-East Orange, the Oranges a lot.

Kristyn Scorsone: Cool. So it's like mostly you're living with your mom, then you lived with your dad in Newark. Did you go to—or actually, like, what's a, like, early memory you have? What's one of your earliest memories of, like, Newark, living in Newark?

Alisha Day: It's interesting because it's like good, bad and kind of ugly. Like—so my early experience, well, my youngest experience of Newark I would say is not as young, maybe like my middle school time? Obviously, I don't remember anything when I was six years old, but I'm trying to think of do I remember—well, actually, no. I was on Brookdale South Orange Avenue. I remember my mom. I don't remember it as much, but I do remember just living there and like, I think I had two dogs at that time. Like, an Akita Wolf dog mixed with like a Pitt, and just, like, my mom, and my sister.

I don't remember them exactly, but I saw pictures, and I just remember that being in Newark and I don't know. Just living in that space, that was the first time I was conscious of living there. Like I had my own room, which was great. I had my own room, toys. So that was one of my fondest memories of Newark and just living there, you know? Everything was great. Nothing to complain about. Then obviously when I went to middle school, like, I remember, like, one time, I was still coming into my queerness so like, I had a very-much body back then, honey.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: So when I was like walking around downtown Newark, this is like maybe 2006, 5, or 7, you know, skinny jeans were becoming new, or a thing, so my skinny jeans were skinny, but they almost came off like leggings and when you have, like, thick thighs and body and butt and everything, and you're like a man or male-presenting, the people in Newark did not like that. So—and at this time I'm trying to find my own individuality. So, you know, I'm like—everyone's like, “Oh. Jordans, Jordans, Jordans!” I'm like, “No. I wanna be different. I'm gonna wear Osirises, which are the worst sneakers to wear when you're walking 'cause they're made for skateboards, not walking.

And, you know, I'm shopping at Hot Topic and I'm just walking around Newark, you know, taking—I think—I forgot which bus to go to the Jersey Garden Mall. And like, men are like, “What the hell are you wearing?” “What is that?” “What is going on?” It was like, you know, you know, homophobia, of course, but—so that's one memory. But I mean, in hindsight I had the girls gagging. You know? They couldn't take it. You know, they're just like, “Oh my goodness! What is going on? Disruption of gender!” But [crosstalk 00:05:54].

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: And going to Link, I went to Link for middle school eventually, so eighth grade or seventh grade? Eighth grade. So I was in Newark, you know, for that whole year, you know, and then doing obviously the Baraka Foundation at that time in Newark. So, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What is the Link and what is the Baraka Foundation?

Alisha Day: Okay. So Link Community School. Sorry. So I was there when they were on—off of Irvine Turner Boulevard. That was just my

first private education and it helped kinda propel me for, like, my education and, like, me into private education, but it also prepared me for, like, a good work ethic, and it really turned my life around in regards to—like I struggle with math, but that was the first time I actually kinda understood math. Like they took a chance on me because my grades before getting to the school weren't the best. Like, everything else was good in regards to English and other things, but like, my grades weren't the best but I was able to convince the—the dean of admission. So that was also like at a pivotal point for me with Newark because it changed my life, doing that school, for the better. You know? Obviously, and fortunately, private schools, usually lead you with better opportunities, and, you know, I was able to seek those opportunities and make the best of them.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool. How—what is that, like, high school?

Alisha Day: That was eighth grade and then eventually after that I went to Christ the King in North Newark. And then after that I transferred from Christ the King, a private Catholic school. I was there. Had my sophomore year. I transferred and I went to Milton Hershey School in Pennsylvania. So, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow.

Alisha Day: [Crosstalk 00:07:46]

Kristyn Scorsone: Was that hard to move around like that?

Alisha Day: So here's the reason why. It was hard because I was trying to run from a lot of things in Newark. You know? I was out in school, but not out at home but I was young. I was gay, queer. I was trying to do new experiences. I'm trying to run away from home to find myself so—and I knew there was better opportunities with a private education, you know, just from, like, the names and the networking alone so my goal was to leave Newark. Keep in mind at this time in Newark, in middle school, Newark wasn't the best. This is like early 2005-6, 2003, 2004. At this time, historically Newark was known as the top—was in the top 10 violent cities in New Jersey.

To be gay, it wasn't best. You know? Violence and—but also, not just to crap on Newark, but a lot of—at this time, early 2000s, to be gay was like, ugh! You know? It was just really, really, really—I was bullied a lot. That's why I kinda moved around like a lot of schools and stuff in the Newark area and East Orange area. Like,

the bullying was terrible. This is at the time where, like, Trevor Project—before the Trevor Project, because the young man at the Rutgers University, he took his life because of the incident. So this is at that time where it's like, "Well, why would you wanna be gay?" Or like when I would like try to get assistance with the bullying, the deans or the counselors would be like, "Well, just stop being gay." "Well, just stop acting like that, and they'll leave you alone." You know? Things like that.

So—so the reason why I went to Pennsylvania was because I needed something different. I needed to—I needed a new place to start to find myself, to be myself, to get new experiences but also, I knew, for me, as a Black person at that time education was my way out. Now I'm not saying that Newark is a bad place, but, you know, when it comes to like the violence, or just also—it's not even a small town. It's just that I needed something more and I knew education was my way out.

Kristyn Scorsone: So you said this is like the early 2000s and like, you mentioned, like, Tyler Clementi, I think was his name. That was that one that took his own life because of bullying. Were you aware of Sakia Gunn?

Alisha Day: So, no. So I'm familiar with her now, but I know—obviously 'cause I do Newark Pride, or I did it and I worked with Newark Pride. When that happened I was like in elementary. You know? I forget. What was the year that Ms. Sakia Gunn was murdered? Or?

Kristyn Scorsone: 2003.

Alisha Day: I was in third grade.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Alisha Day: So for me it was like—and that's another thing, oh, which I'm so happy we're doing about this in Newark. So at this time, keep in mind, I am being sheltered because at this time Newark is "thought of as being very violent." So my interaction with Newark was always, we're going downtown to Broad Street to shop, come back home to Newark or the East Orange area. I was in—living in East Orange at that time. So in 2003, I was going to Whitney Houston Academy. You know? So my understanding of Newark was very, very much, "Oh, god! We don't know what's going on out there!" Violence, gangs, so shelter.

So eventually, I don't know if you wanna get in touch with this, but as I came back, after I graduated, like, from college, 2017, and from Ithaca, I came back to work with YENDOR. I saw Newark in a whole new way because I've always been sheltered from Newark, so. I don't know if you want me to discuss that later on, but yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Crosstalk 00:11:18]

Alisha Day: This is really, really interesting because I did not know that my connection with Newark is so deep and intertwined. Like this is—this is very, very interesting.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yes. This is super interesting.

Alisha Day: [Crosstalk 00:11:31]

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I definitely wanna ask you about that stuff.

Alisha Day: Okay.

Kristyn Scorsone: Well, I guess we'll get to that in a bit, but. So I guess, like, when did you become aware of your sexuality or gender? Like how do you—how do you identify, I guess I should say first?

Alisha Day: So, I am—I mean, I'm still trying to understand because I mean, I am a gay man, but when it comes—I do drag. I would say I'm androgynous and the only reason why I would say that is because that's how the world receives me, which is so weird because I don't like giving people—can I curse on here or no?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Yeah.

Alisha Day: I don't like giving bitches power. You know? "You can't tell me what to do." I'm very stubborn. I'm a Capricorn. As you know, it is my way or the highway. But I've gained weight since the pandemic, and so I've got these like man boobs and I got a bigger butt and hips, and my hair is longer. I'm clean-shaven. My brows are thinned out for drag so it's like I get mistaken for a woman, or I got mistaken for a trans man. I got mistaken for a butch lesbian. So I've been coming to terms with the idea of being gender-non-conforming because I identify as a man.

I have acrylics. You know, I will have longer hair. You know, thinner brows. Things that are considered more feminine but at the same time it's like, maybe I'm just a fucking butch queen. You

know? But most butch queens don't have acrylics. They might have their nails done, but. So I'm in this weird phase. Am I androgynous? Gender-non-conforming? But very much gender-non-conforming because I mean, I cross-dress on the weekends, [laughter] but for money.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right.

Alisha Day: Of course, I do shows. But at the same time that's kind of where I'm at. But yes. Very much gay man, um, cis, but gender-non-conforming, for sure.

Kristyn Scorsone: What pronouns do you use?

Alisha Day: Oh. So out of drag, he/him. In drag, she/her. Gay, queer, queer in regards to politics and the revolutionary thinking, yes. Reclaiming that. But yeah. But yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: When did you, like, realize this about yourself?

Alisha Day: It's so weird because again, back to second grade, I had a—here's me doing my air quotes—"girlfriend." I remember her. Her name was Adrienne. This is at Whitney Houston Academy, second or third grade. I think—no. Third grade. And I just had a girlfriend 'cause that was that thing to do. Everyone had a girlfriend. I was like, "Okay. I have a girlfriend because we like each other. We're friends." I didn't understand what it meant to have a girlfriend. I didn't even know what it meant to be gay. Unfortunately, I understood gay was something bad because I was being bullied for it. I had no idea what the hell or what the fuck it meant to be gay, I just was being me.

I guess I was—even if it wasn't even effeminate because when you're a young boy your voice is high, but I was very expressive. I was shy, but when I got to know you I was very expressive and comfortable with you. So unfortunately adults projected that on me, and also what the kids see from their parents, the kids inflicted upon me because I remember going home to my mom. I was like, "Mommy, they kept calling me 'gay.'" I had no idea what gay meant, but I knew it was something negative or bad because I was being made fun of for it. And then my mom's reaction was, "Oh, okay, baby." Like she was like concerned about it. Like, "Oh, my god. I guess it is bad."

So then eventually with me, I first learned I was gay or queer because like I—when was the first time I learned that I was gay or

queer? Or at least realized it? I—well, I knew something was different, or I guess—excuse my language—off, or I was off because I just wasn't seeing it for the girls. [Laughter] Like, girls was not doing it for me. Like, girls was not doing it for me. Just like, I liked girls as friends. Like, I love them. Yes! Friends forever!

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: But like—but at the same time, at that age sexuality wasn't a thing I was thinking of too, so this is why it's hard for me to realize. Like honestly I realized I was gay maybe middle school where like I had wet dreams of like all these rappers and stuff and I was like, "Oh." [Laughter] Like, and it's so weird because these men are like—why would you like these men? They're like old. Like LL Cool J, 50 Cent. You know, very like butch, masc men, buff Black guys, but. Even wrestling. Like I liked [laughter] wrestling was when—like Scorpion. Oh, my! There was something about him. In theory, why would you like a man in a black-and-white mask? I don't know. I guess I'm telling my age, but Scorpion. It was something. I had his figurine or his doll. Scorpion was the guy. Then eventually I loved Bautista. I do like a big buff guy. I don't know. Bautista.

Kristyn Scorsone: The heart wants what it wants. [Laughter]

Alisha Day: Right. I think—and it's so weird wrestling kinda is where it started. And it's so weird 'cause wrestling is so gay. Wrestling is so gay! But yeah, that's kinda when I knew I liked men. I was like, "Oh, yeah. I like this. Yeah. This is—this is doing something for me." Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did—how did you deal with, like, the bullying? And you said it was coming from adults and people your age?

Alisha Day: So the bullying was fucking terrible to the point where like—I'm not—I mean, it is my story, but it's unfortunate. Like when I lived in Orange, I remember coming home from—I went to Lincoln Academy and the first time it actually happened, it was really, really bad, when I realized, "Oh. These motherfuckers don't like me just from existing," I was coming home and it was these two boys. They was a floor above me. Two or one floor. And I'm coming home and I'm leaving, and I'm coming home and I guess I'm at home in the apartment and I'm leaving somewhere. I don't know what they said. I know it was bad. It was bullying.

But all I remember was they spat on me. Like they said something really, really mean to me about being gay or some weird shit, and they spat on me. Like they were on top of the stairwell, and they just spit, and it landed on my head. And I remember I went up to my mom and I told her about it. I forget what happened. I just know they did not like me, and then I know it was like some homophobic shit, and they spit on me. And then—and I just—to me, it was like, “What the fuck!” Like we walked past each other for months, never had an issue.

And then eventually the bullying just got worse. Like people kept calling me gay. I was called, “Elijah Gay,” slurs. Eventually in middle school, like I’m in C Building at Patrick F. Healey. I had Ernest, Ernesto—fuck you bitch—but I mean, he had a lot of shit going with him ’cause he was like 17 in seventh grade. Sixteen in seventh grade. Yeah. He had a lot of shit going on. Right. He’s an idiot, and I said that, and it’s on record. But he threw a trashcan on me. Like I’ve been bullied every day in middle school. It was every other week, twice a week, was a fight. He threw a trashcan on me. I’ve been spat on. I’ve had other cli—clients. Classmates, who were also bullied ’cause like one person had a birthmark, Thomas, and people would make fun of him. They’d say, “Oh. You got shit on your face.” But because I was the “gay kid,” all the kids who were also—were getting bullied would all pile on me because I was a target, easy target. I’m short. I’ve been 5’2” my whole life. Short. I was stocky, but I was still short.

I’ve been spat on. I have been attacked in bathrooms, like fighting for my fucking life. I whooped ass, but it was survival. I remember peeing in C Building, and a bunch of boys come into the bathroom as I’m finished peeing and washing my hands at the urinal. They wanted to fight me, so I had to beat their fucking ass in the bathroom. I had to—it was like fighting for my fucking life. Unfortunately I had to fight women too. And it was such a dog-eat-dog world and it was not just because it was a public school. I don’t want people thinking that’s the narrative. But I realize a lot of kids were going through things, and I guess it’s a mature way of thinking about it, but I know they were going through things.

You know? You can learn how like kids, but in reality they’re getting their ass beat at home, or something’s off at home. And—but that ain’t got shit to do with me, so I’m gonna beat your ass at school too. And it got to the point where girls were trying to fight me, were fighting me. I was trying. I was smart in the point where I was really good at writing. I remember being in writing class and trying to help my bully, who was an idiot and didn’t understand it.

I'm like, "Oh, okay. Daniel." He was like 16 in seventh grade. I'm like, if I help him out, you know, he'll leave me alone. Still trying to fight me, calling me "faggot," all of these other things.

Now in hindsight, I'm also realizing a lot of these people were probably also gay as well, or DL. A lot of these—'cause I know that a lot of these—'cause now that I'm older a lot, you know, with [unintelligible 00:20:31], a lot of these young boys, and it's such an unfortunate thing, but these boys project as hyper-masculine. It's not that they had a crush on me 'cause in hindsight, unfortunately our society says when boys like you, they become violent. So I'm not saying they liked me, but I do feel—I can say they had an obsession and fixation upon me. Because I'm minding my business. I would walk into a room, it's, "Look at that faggot. Look at that gay boy over there." I just walked in. You stopped your conversation to call me out.

I've had milk thrown on me. Food thrown on me. I remember—this was in middle school, C Building again, Patrick F. Healey, I was sitting with my—Dr. Morgan. I'm saying names. I'm saying fucking names 'cause you people were terrible for what you did and how did you make me feel. Like Dr. Morgan, in hindsight, I realized the shit he said was so toxic and fucked-up, but I was getting bullied so much during the lunch area time that I just wanted a place of refuge to eat my fucking lunch peacefully. Like it was so bad that I couldn't eat my lunch.

Kristyn Scorsone: That was a teacher?

Alisha Day: And—no. No. By the kids. By the kids. So the vice-principal, Dr. Morgan, was like, "Okay. Well, you can eat with me." And I was just so happy to eat somewhere peacefully, but I didn't realize the shit he said was fucked-up. Like, for example, "Well, if you stop switching, boy, you wouldn't—you wouldn't be called, 'gay.'" I had a fat ass. I have a fat ass now. I had a fat ass. You know? It's gonna do what it does. But again, I'm not thinking I'm switching. I'm walking. I'm existing. So when this teacher is telling me, in hindsight, I didn't care. As long as I could eat my lunch peacefully and not get fucking food thrown at me, or pushed or harassed or fucking threatened with violence. He would tell me, "Oh. Walk up straight. Put some more bass in your voice. Stop walking like that."

And I would follow. And I'm thinking, "Oh. He cares about me. Oh, Dr. Morgan..." Then I realized no. He's trying to make me "straight" and also blame me for the violence. Dr. Reed, or Mr. Reed, I would reach out to these—these authoritative figures for

assistance, but I was so blinded by the fact that I can be at peace, I didn't know that they was trying to—they were telling me inadvertently that I was the reason why I was getting bullied. They were telling me that if I would just stop being me and act like more masculine or someone else, I wouldn't get the violence, instead of them stopping it.

I remember—and the thing is I was always active in school things. You know? PTA, after-school. I was doing morning announcements. And that speaks a lot as to how like straight people and cis people use the gays. They love me when I'm singing the morning announcements. They love me when I do the morning announcements but your token fucking student, once I get fucking attacked, or experience violence, you blamed me for it. But you needed me to speak and do these announcements and things like that, but I had no protections for me. And that was—so I transferred to Cicely Tyson. It was okay because it was a—it was an arts school and it was more stricter, so the bullying was not as violent or bad because, you know, it had more, “I go to Cicely Tyson.” Like, you had to audition to go into this school. Like it had more, you know?

Kristyn Scorsone: Work to?

Alisha Day: Yeah. People had to—you just—you didn't wanna get expelled from that school, but I had to leave because the bullying got bad eventually too. So I went back to Cicely Tyson because the bullying—I went back to where I was that I left originally because the bullying was so bad. And then after that I went to Link and then that's when the bullying became more verbal because it was a private school. If you got caught fighting, your ass is kicked out, so those things changed. So then, you know, my mouth got better. You know? I had to learn how to read bitches because you didn't wanna fight because your parents spent a lot of fucking money, like, and we also understand with this school, the chance of you getting a better opportunity to a life for—because you went to a private school. It was before the whole charter boom happened in Newark. So yeah. Bullying was fucking terrible. I—I just—man. I kinda put that behind me, but every day, it was a fucking war zone. One more story.

Nazir or Nasir, short boy, kept calling me “faggot,” kept bullying me, kept bullying me and one day I was in science class. This is Mrs. Jenkins' class in Patrick F. Healey C Building and I—I love her to this day because I'm not a violent person, but he just kept picking at me, picking at me and one day, I just—I blacked. I'm

not proud of it, but I am. [Laughter] He kept bullying me to the point where I threw that fucker to the ground. I got on top of him and I just started punching him in the face. Just non-stop. I couldn't take it. I was like, "Who's the faggot now? Who's the faggot now?"

Like, I've been harassed verbally and assaulted, beat every, twice, three times, four times a month. Violence occurred, but every day it was always verbal violence and I just couldn't take it. I was just beating his ass. It got so bad, and mind you, I'm small but I'm husky, so the teacher couldn't get me off of him. The kids could not get me. I was fucking him up. I've had enough. It got to the point where Mr. Reed, Dr. Reed, whatever his name was, the dean, the counselor, he came up. He's like, "You're getting suspended, Warner. This is unacceptable."

Then I remember Dr. Jenkins, she said, "No. He's not." Then I quote, she says, "That boy has been bullied for years. He has told y'all for years that them kids have been bullying him, and y'all have done nothing and he has finally had enough and he snapped. And this is a result of you all not doing something." She said that. I didn't get suspended. I didn't, and things cooled down. But that was the first time an adult had my back. That was the first time I actually felt protected in a safe space because I'd had enough. And it also made me realize these adults are witnessing it. But what can you do? I mean, yes, you can do more as an adult, but at the same time it was also public school. Like, these kids were fucking violent. Like, these—

Kristyn Scorsone: What grade was that?

Alisha Day: This was sixth and seventh grade. Like these kids fucking fighting, violent. I remember Mrs. Corrolla, like, she's stressed the fuck out. White teacher, bless her heart, but like, the kids were just unruly. And I'm not saying it 'cause they were Black, or mostly Black, or in public school, but it's just that it was also a class full of like 25, 30 kids, which is hard to manage. A lot of shit's going on back at home with these kids, and you know? That's why—I remember, like, I had social studies teachers, like Mr. Grant, Black man. It wasn't that I wasn't protected by him, he just didn't—he didn't fuck around. So he just had more control of his class, so there was really no bullying, but I did well in social studies. Things where it was like always learning information, reiterating it, learning information and understanding like themes and archetypes and hidden messages, I'm always really good at. So yeah. That was my

bullying experience. I'm sorry if I was rambling, but it was—it was intense.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you like keep your self-esteem throughout that?

Alisha Day: Oh. So that also was the first time I knew I was gay because people told me that. That's to answer your first question. Like people told me that I was gay because of how they treated me, so I guess—I guess I'm gay. Also, I did not have self-esteem. I remember one time I'm walking to C Building. Oh, my god. This is so like therapeutic, but also sad. I'm short. I remember one time, this random Black woman—shout-out to Black women—I'm walking from—I lived on Girard Avenue and I'm walking to C Building, Patrick F. Healey and I'm—I did not notice I did this, but when I'm walking I will walk looking down. Like—like imagine walking, but you're looking at the ground, which animal-speaking, like, that's a sign of submissiveness and weakness. And I'm walking, and mind you, I used to—like, I'm walking, like, you're—I'm not looking up.

I was so fucking, my self-esteem. I'm in the closet and all of this other shit, home, school, everything. And this one lady was like, “Baby, why are you walking with your head down? You need to look up to see where you're going. Also you need to have confidence in yourself.” And then that's when I realized I didn't. I did not. I felt like shit because I was being treated like shit and I'm also on my way to school so I began to become inside myself as preparation to go into this hellhole. And that's when I realized that like, I was confident in education but—because I shined, but at the same time I had my struggles but it was hard. It was hard, and I didn't—I did not have self-esteem.

Like, of course, I would try to defend myself, but it would go so far because I'm like—the kid would say, “Hey-hey, faggot,” or “gay boy” or “Elijah Gay.” And I said, “Don't call me that. I'm not gay. Don't do that.” The teacher would just say, “Boys, stop fighting!” Not, “Hey. That's disrespectful. Get the fuck out my classroom.” Not, “Hey. Why are you disrespecting him like that? That's rude.” It's just “stop it.” So yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you—like, were—were you able to go to your family at all about this?

Alisha Day: So at the time not my family because even with my mom and my family, like, to be gay wasn't something we spoke about. And it also wasn't, like—also, you know how your parents would say

things you don't—they don't notice that what they say will keep you in the closet, but like, I noticed how my parents, or my stepdad and mom would react when they see someone queer in the street or whatnot. So their reactions weren't always positive, so I'm not going to open up and say, "Hey. I feel like this..." or like "I'm thinking like this..." So I had nowhere really to go to. So it was always just myself, so. I mean, everything, obviously our relationship is better now, but at that time it was—I was very much alone. I was going through this feeling alone. I'm in a world where they're telling me that it is wrong. I am wrong. I am wrong! And I'm wrong to feel or think or to be open about this, so I'm just internalizing everything.

Kristyn Scorsone: When did you first become aware of like the existence of other LGBTQ+ people?

Alisha Day: The first time I became aware of other LGBTQ+ people? Let me see. I remember seeing a trans woman. I was with my family. I mean, that's just not the first time, but I just remember seeing her and I was just like, "Oh. Okay." At that time I didn't know what—she was trans. I mean, now I know that's the word. But she was just a woman that had, like, very pronounced, like, cheeks and filler. I think I work with her now in shows. I don't know if it was her, which is so weird, 'cause when I do shows I think I met her, or worked with her before, or met her. I'm just like this woman is really, really, really like almost like a caricature. And I didn't know she was trans. I just—I knew that I was like, "Oh. She is an interesting woman." Like now I know like, oh, you know, back in the day they had the bad Botox or injections, but body and everything. But I was like, she looked really, really peculiar.

Of course, like, seeing gay men, you know, walk around. But I saw that trans woman. I think we were in—we was in Bloomfield. Were we at Marshalls? Yeah. I saw her there. That was the first time I saw, I guess, a trans woman. What else? I was just seeing gay people. Oh, my god! No. Yes. The first time, Marco from Degrassi. That is literally, I fell in love with that character. Not sexual or anything. I just connected with him. And that was a big deal at that time because he was such an important character. Like just his journey. I remember watching fucking Degrassi hiding it from my family 'cause I don't know how the fuck I got that Canadian show on American television, but Degrassi was my show.

I felt seen. I connected. I was like, "Oh, okay, so I feel the same way like him." "Oh, okay. He's going through that. I'm going

through that.” “Oh, okay. Is that what it is like dating?” And then Noah’s Ark, eventually Noah’s Ark ’cause that came out in 2005-2006-2007, around that time. So then I was just like, “Whoa! Black gay men who were living confidently and they’re fabulous? What the fuck!” Like, that is when I saw it. Like, I was like, “OMG.” Like, that’s when I felt connected and seen.

So through media those were the first examples of like queerness or gayness. But in person, I would just see gay people walking by and again, I only knew they were gay because they were more effeminate-presenting, or how I seen other people’s reactions. Oftentimes, people say this but they don’t really understand it, kids are observant. And with me, like, I’m shy or quiet or reserved when I’m meeting new people, so I’m watching every fucking thing. I—and I’m also shady. I don’t—I’m not shady like, “Fuck you, bitch!” I’m shady like, “No. She is not walking around like that...” Or, “Oh, my god. He did not just do that...” So I’m very, very, I’m in my head. I overthink but I—because of the bullying, I’m always thinking and I overprocess everything inside my head first ’cause I have to be careful what I say and what I—’cause, you know, that could be me getting in a fight, or someone trying to fight me. So I was always observing how people reacted to other people.

I would always be observing when I’m in the barber shops, and a gay person will come on media, or a gay person will leave the barber. And when they’ll enter the barber, everyone’s quiet and it’s like still. But I’m like, “What the fuck? Y’all was chilling and relaxing. Now all of a sudden this gay person, or this feminine male, comes in, or a flamboyant male comes in, you’re all quiet and stiff and the conversation’s stale. Then when he leaves, you’re all talking shit about him.”

Or I remember being in fucking barber shops with my dad, and I’m hearing Louis Farrakhan spew homophobic-ass shit, and I’m uncomfortable ’cause I’m like, “Bitch, that’s me. You’re cutting my hair. You’re talking about these gays and these faggots and these sissies, and I’m one of them. But I don’t feel comfortable saying that because I don’t want you to fuck up my haircut, but also I don’t feel comfortable in this space. And my mom’s in the other room, but she—I guess she’s listening.” That’s why—one of the reasons—I always wanted to grow my hair out because with my presentation I hated smaller hair ’cause I have like a small head and I need like hair. But also, barber shops were very much uncomfortable for me.

But also, I just didn't like my hair short. And with her, as a mom, she's like, "I have to get your hair cut because if you go outside with the..."—I did not know how to take care of my hair—"So if, you know, your hair's growing out and you're not taking care of it." Well, also, I mean, that's lowkey like, it's just my hair is black. Whatever. But like with her, it's like, "You've gotta have it kept." And every time I would try to get it cut, it'll get smaller and smaller, so they can shape it. I hated it. I hated it! But from her perspective, it's, "I'm your mom. I gotta have your hair cut. If you go outside looking unkempt, you know, you would have DYFS at my damn door." You know? Or Child Protective Services.

So I didn't give a fuck about that. I wanted my hair how I wanted my hair. I remember we were going to church one day. I said, "It's my hair. I don't understand why you get to tell me what to do with my hair." She's like, "Because it looks bad. It's uneven and it's not growing right." I didn't wanna hear that shit. I'm like, "It's my fucking hair. I want my hair this—a certain way." And—but yeah. The barber shops were like uncomfortable for me. But that's—hat's also when I saw my first gay person, just seeing people's reactions to them. So yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Hmm. So like then you said you came out at school first, and not at home?

Alisha Day: Yes. So I came out at school first. Like, I mean, if you didn't know, you're a fool. Like, I feel like my mom knew, or she was in denial, but like [laughter] some people knew it. That's when I came to terms with it. But also, again, I didn't know what it was to be gay. I was just me. So again, when I was like, "Okay. Yeah. You know, I like guys. This is for me," I was in it because the thing, and that's where my confidence came in, in like late middle school, eighth grade at Link, and then into high school.

"Because bitch, you're not gonna fight me because if you fight me, you're getting expelled, and I'm gonna fight you and I don't wanna get expelled." So you can talk you shit, bitch, but I've got a smart-ass mouth and I'm gonna make you feel small, bitch, because that's how I learned to cut a bitch down because I can't use violence because I'm gonna get expelled, and I'm trying to work to—I'm very goal-orientated so I'm trying to get the fuck out this hellhole, and you not gonna—you bitch ain't gonna be the reason why I'm not getting the shit that I owe and I'm deserved." So, you know, what was the question again? Lol. I'm sorry. [Laughter] I was talking shit.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter] Oh. No. That's okay. No, I was just asking like, how did you—I guess, how did you come out in school?

Alisha Day: Oh, yeah. I mean, I was—people would say, “You gay?” I'm like, “Yeah. Uh-huh. I'm gay. What's up?” “I'm gay. What's up? Next question.”

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: You know? It was just a matter of fact like, “I'm gay.” And then it—and then it became I was “that gay boy.” Then eventually in high school, you know, you know, you had the cis women, the girls, “Oh, I wanna be friends with him,” but also very homophobic. Like one—Christ the King—I'm gonna drag you too, bitch—Sasha, fuck you too, girl. We're in a—we're—this is a Catholic school, so I am openly gay in this Catholic school. and I remember writing all of these sad stories about how me and my relationship with my mom wasn't good at the time and all of these sad stories. So we had daily journals, so like I'm—I'm sharing with the class—with my classmates that I'm gay, and had all these sad stories and whatnot. And I'm having some friends who were allies at the time, and they were talking about going to Pride. I'm like, “Oh. I would never go to Pride.” Like, “How can I convince my parents, let alone to let me go to New York City with these kids by myself but Pride?” You know? This was like around 2010, 29, 2009.

So we were doing a—we had to do a project, a presentation about—something about The Bible, and I remember doing something about Sodom and Gomorrah, about like how Sodom and Gomorrah, good and bad, like how people think it's about anti-gay, and I—I explained how it was not specifically about homosexuality, it was just about sin overall, and only people wanna talk about gayness as Sodom and Gomorrah. But then I—side note, I also learned from an actual theologian, Sodom and Gomorrah was actually not about homosexuality, according to him.

He explained how it was about lack of hospitality and not treating guests right, and also there was violence in that city. But the reason—okay. The reason why that city was destroyed was because there was an angel that came down and angels weren't supposed to fuck with humans anyway, but the angel came down anyway. So the angel's in this person's house, and the men are like, “Oh. We wanna see this angel. Get that bitch outside. Let's go!” But these men threatened to rape the people in there if they don't let the angel out and obviously these people were men.

But the theologian explained that the thought of rape wasn't because these people were gay. At that time, which is still relevant today, rape is a sign of power. These men were trying to sodomize not because for sexual pleasure, but to dominate, humiliate, and to show dominance. So of course, when you take The Bible at face value, "Oh. Sodomite. Gay." No. These men were trying to rape these people because they wanted to see them and they weren't—this angel, and they were not letting this angel come out, and they wanted to show power. So the thing was they were not being hospitable guests, so God, you know, smited the town. That's what one theologian explained. But regardless of that.

Kristyn Scorsone: So much more sense.

Alisha Day: Right. But I explained things. This was before I got that knowing now. But I'm explaining this in class, and, you know? I do it. So next week, my friend, Sasha, who loves me and all of this other stuff, she goes up there and does a whole presentation on why homosexuality is wrong and we're going to hell. I was fucking gagged 'cause I'm like, "Bitch, you can feel how you wanna feel, but don't be my fucking friend." "Don't tell me you're my friend, and then you have these thoughts and feelings about it. Bitch, fuck you!" Like I was so fucking gagged because I was like, "Oh, wow. This bitch just like, wow!"

The other tea was her boyfriend was also flirting with me on the DL, but I was like, "Girl, you are the boyfriend of my best friend. Stop it." People knew he had—had—was feeling on me 'cause he was going to Sasha, then to Natalie, back and forth. He's touching my ass in gym. Mind you, my ass is so big in high school. Like the—the uniform blazers' tails would stick up because of my ass, like, so I was known as the "gay boy with the big butt," "the big-butt gay boy." And it got to the point where like this girl's homophobic as fuck but also your boyfriend's flirting with me, touching me inappropriately. Everyone knows it and sees it, and you're still dating him. [Unintelligible 00:42:45]. I'm like, "Girl, you got a lot more things to be worried about than what the fuck The Bible says about me, bitch." But yeah. But yeah.

[Laughter]

But I hope I answered your question. I'm sorry.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yes, no. Definitely. So like, I guess like then, you said, "not at home." When—when did your family find out?

Alisha Day: So my family found out, I was outed by my Catholic teacher-priest, Father Greg—fuck you, bitch—[laughter] and Christ the King got shut down. He got in trouble because I don't know if he doodled and dabbled, but he did something inappropriate and that motherfucker is—he, like every time I try to go and speak with people who went to that school, I'm like, "How's so-and-so?" They're like, "Oh. We don't talk." I was like, "Ohhhh." So, fuck you. But I confided to him that I was gay and one day my mom called, and she—this is what he told me. She's like, "Father Greg, is my son gay?" And I—he says, "Well, that's what he tells me."

Now mind you, I told Father Greg, "I wanna come out to my parents when I wanna come out." You know? He's just like, "I'll never get involved in family matters. You're safe with me." He created a safe space with me. I was able to be free. Like I would—during lunch, like it was a safe space. You know? He would let me sit and eat lunch. Not just me, but with other kids 'cause I was in the [crosstalk 00:44:08].

Kristyn Scorsone: That was what grade?

Alisha Day: I was in high school, ninth grade. In sophomore year things changed because the dynamic between him and I because he always kept picking on me. And mind you, at this time I'm doing a lot of shit for that school. During the summer, like each year they would get—it was the old middle school, so the high school grew, so each year they would get a floor and add a floor and add more students so over the summer I am cleaning the school with him and other kids. They would bring us to the house for dinner and whatnot and you know, I was doing a lot of stuff. I was in one of the—the honors classes, so me and the other honor students were sitting around with him. You know? Unfortunately they gave us special privileges 'cause we were honor students, but that's—that's kinda fucked-up 'cause it created a weird dynamic between the non-honors classes.

But that was the first time I had a fucking panic attack because I'm leaving to go to school—I'm about to go home and walk up that hill, see the 92 bus to go back to East Orange with my friends—and he tells me, "Hey. Your mom called, and I told her you were gay." I had a fucking panic attack. I stayed at school for an hour. I was breathing. I was crying. I was rocking. I was like, "What the fuck?" This was our Thanksgiving weekend, so it was a holiday. So it was like not only am I gonna go home, but now I have no

school to run to. I'm gonna be home for like four days or a week going through this shit."

Now my mom doesn't know that he told me, so I'm going home. My mom's upset. We're preparing for Thanksgiving and I know she knows, but she doesn't know that I know. So I'm like, "Hey! How y'all doin'?" Like [laughter] things like that meme. And she was like uncomfortable. She was upset. And then I remember one time—it's weird—like where I'm cooking a turkey, and we're seasoning it and I'm taking the giblets out, and she's like, "You feel that?" And I was like, "Yeah." She's like, "Yeah. That's what a vagina feels like." And mind you, she doesn't know that I know that he said it. But I know she's uncomfortable. So I'm like, "First of all..."—me being a smart-ass—I said, "Girl, this is a dead-ass turkey, and it's cold. This feels very uncomfortable. So if this is what a vagina feels like, honey, then I don't want nothing near it."

But I understand from her perspective, she's like—like "Oh, my god!" Like, I get it's fear of "my child is gay," but also like the shit that can happen. Like HIV/AIDS, violence, murders. But it was just funny in hindsight now. I don't think she remembers that. Also parents always forget the shit they said. That's problematic. But they go like, "I never, I never said!" "Girl, yes, you did. And I remember it, and you don't because it didn't hurt you. But it hurt me." But so yeah. It was just funny. I laugh at that now [laughter] because—but she was uncomfortable, and I remember one time me and my sister had a whole—my mom and sister had a conversation and was like—my sister was like, "Well, I just told her I was bi." I said, "Oh, okay. Well, at least there's hope that I like women." And it was like, "Well, it doesn't matter who you are, just make sure you're a good example for your niece." Fuck my niece! Okay? I love her, but my life should not be an example for how she live her life 'cause she needs to live her own motherfucking life.

But this is at that time, obviously our dynamic has changed, we're loving, everything's good, but this is what's like going on. So I'm like, "Okay. I just wanted it off my back." But I came out eventually to them senior year in Patrick—no, at Milton Hershey School after the Broadway—I did a school musical, Hairspray and I just came out to them. I told them other things about like, you know, all the things that happened to me when I was younger and whatnot and I was just crying, and we were crying. It's like, "I'm gay, bitch. I'm gay, girl. It's done. It's good 'cause I'm going to college." And I was like, "Girl, I can't, girl. I—girl, you need to know. You just gotta—you gotta know." So yeah. So that's when I came out to them. I was outed, and then I—and then I went back

into the closet and said, “Oh, no, girl, I’m bi!” Not to invalidate bi people, but yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: So it was like an evolution over time? [Crosstalk 00:47:58]

Alisha Day: It was an evolution, yeah, but I was like—I felt gutted. Like I should have been able to do that. Like, “Why would you? What?” Yeah. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. How about your sister and your father?

Alisha Day: So me and my sister we’re good. I mean, she—my sister, she support—gave me some of her wigs. I restyled ’em and wear it in drag. My mom, when I first started drag, my mom gave me—I was wearing her outfits. Like very supportive. My mom is my biggest fan. My sister went to my drag brunch for her birthday, celebrate with me. My mom went to my drag brunch for her birthday to celebrate. I hate trying to make all of my fun things centered around drag, but drag is fun. So it’s like also when I’m in drag, bitch, you get a little, cute, little table. You get discounted shit. Like if you want a party, bitch, party with a drag queen ’cause you gonna get the hookah half-off. You’re gonna get the bottle half-off. You’re gonna get, you know, the extra shit because it’s my—you know? Hello? You know? You’re gonna get the good seats. You’re gonna get the good area. You know? So you’re gonna get accommodated. You know? Accommodations.

But my father, I do not talk to my father at all too. I think it’s been—oh, shoot!—five years, six years? He kicked me out for being gay and doing drag. So around—after college I was living with him in the Colonnades in Newark. Then I moved. He kicked me out because, mind you, I’m working at YENDOR. This is after I graduated college. I’m working at YENDOR in Newark with Rodney Gilbert. Rest his soul. R.I.P., Rodney. And one day, this is the week he lost his job. They—they let him go because they were downsizing. This was like 2017, 18. This is also the week after Rodney, or two weeks after Rodney passed away. So I’m already stressed. I am already trying to work the last gigs I have with YENDOR, doing my last hours and shifts ’cause we’re doing like the Mural Tours with different high schools. Like University High. Like the Mural Tours in Highway 22. Like, you know, I’m on a school bus and teaching and explaining it to them, and the whole point of art and whatnot.

And my—one night, I would literally do work from 10:00. I’ll get off at 6:00 or 5:00, get ready in drag at Rodney’s, which I love

him, thank you for supporting me—and I would take the bus from YENDOR, go to the New York City to compete at Drag Wars or Polish the Queen or Star Search, come back home 3, 4 in the morning and I'm tired 'cause I gotta go wake—go back to work at 10:00. I gotta wake up at 8:30 or 9 to get ready to go to work and sometimes I will leave makeup in the sink. I won't even clean out the sink when I take my makeup off. So my dad one day got pissed 'cause he wanted to complain about it. Mind you, he has some new bitch, his new wife in there. She got makeups on the counter. But long story short, he got mad that I had makeup in the sink. Mind you, he had misdirected anger because he lost his job. And he said, "You know what? I'm tired of your shit. I'm kicking you out."

Here's the other thing. On top of that, my mom just got out of surgery, heart surgery. So this week Rodney's dead, the week after, my dad lost his job, my mom's in heart surgery. I'm at work giving these tours. He's blowing my phone up saying, "I'm tired of your shit. You think I'm playing. I'm gonna have all of your shit out on the curb. I'm gonna have security take your shit and throw you out." He was over it and he kicked me out. Mind you, my mom—I'm in the hospital with my mom and my sister, and he's calling and cursing me out and I'm trying to leave the room and my mom is like, "Is that your father?" She's just out of surgery. And I was like, "Yeah. Nothing to worry about." And she's like—she knows something's off. She's like, "What's going on? What's going on?" I'm like, "Marvin's kicking me out." She's like, "What?" All hell breaks loose. She's getting pissed. All the alarms are going off. The doctor's like, "You need to go! She just had heart surgery." And I was like, "Oh, my god." I'm crying, I'm crying.

My sister, when we get—she helped me get his shit—get my shit out his house. And he's an Aries, so fuck him. But sorry to Aries out there, but y'all know y'all got anger issues and got all that shit. He is, as I'm packing my shit, now he's like, "You know, if you would have just done this and did that I wouldn't be doing this here all." I'm like—and I cried and I was like, "Fuck you! You've never been in my life. You're in and out of my life. You claim my mom was keeping you from—me from you my whole life,"—which was never the case. He was never a good, proper father. But this time I'm like, "Okay. Well, let me live with you after college since you wanted me so much." I was living on an air mattress for a whole year-and-a—-and-a-half. Mind you, he'd been there. He had his own furniture. He's still getting—he had his own bed. I'm like, "If you did want me to live with you after college, you should have got me a bed and all this other shit." You know? I'm a college student. I have no fucking money.

And I'm just packing my shit. I'm leaving. I'm grabbing all my shit, and my sister's helping me pack, and I live at my mom's since then. But since then I haven't spoken to him. Every now and then, like I got—I was getting my nails done, and he saw me. I still got his number to this day, but I haven't spoken to him. I think that's been like five, six years I haven't spoken to that motherfucker. And fuck him. I've learnt that it's not my responsibility to talk to him because I'm not the parent. Also, I didn't ask to fucking be here. And my thing is, what also hurt me is, for—there's moments where he's reached out to my mom and he had his wife reach out to me saying—'cause one time I hadn't talked to him. I stopped talking to him for a year during college when I was like—a year. 'Cause I said, I was living with him my junior year and senior year, and I was like, “Oh. I'm not talking to you. Fuck you. It's okay.” And he—he—he—he went out of his way to have his wife or people contact me to tell them to call his father, so that was the first time I didn't talk to him for a year.

The second time I stopped talking to him just completely, he didn't take that initiative 'cause you can find me. You have my Instagram. You have my Facebook. He stopped, so I realized, “Oh. He don't give a fuck.” But also I blocked him. But there's other ways. Like, for example, my mom would move mountains to find out who—like my mom knows my friends. She knows how to get to me. “Why is my son not calling me?” My father did not take that initiative or have that same energy, so I was like, “Oh, okay, bet.” I match the energy. So to this day I have not spoken to him.

And the pettiness in me knows that it probably upsets him, but also I don't want you to—I don't want to—he's the type of man that any success I have, he likes to take pride in it 'cause “I'm the man that made that.” You do not. I'm not gonna give you the luxury of having any—witnessing any of my success or growth because you weren't there, or supported me, and you don't deserve it. And like when I lived with him, he did not like me doing drag. He was uncomfortable about it. But whenever I did athletic stuff, like I did rugby in college, he would take screenshots of the Facebook posts—very Boomer of him—and like post it on the wall and things. He was very proud that like his son was doing something athletic. But he shit I care about, like the drag and the music—and I went to school for music—he didn't care for it. He didn't—didn't know what the fuck I was studying in school. I needed him to pay money for like piano, my—my instructors and stuff like that. He took forever to do that, and I'm like, “Oh, no. This—no.” Absentee

father. Fuck him. But yeah. [Laughter] That's the dynamic of my family.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Crosstalk 00:55:08] Where did you go— [Laughter] Where did you go to college?

Alisha Day: I went to Ithaca College, Class of 2017.

Kristyn Scorsone: For music?

Alisha Day: I studied classical voice and I have African Diaspora or a Black Studies minor. And yeah. So I have—I have some classical training. I would love to incorporate my singing in my drag but I just gotta get my shit together but also it's stressful with my day job. You know? I'm talking all day so I don't have a voice, and then, you know? Whatever. But yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. So I guess like—all right. You—you go to college. You come home, live with your dad and like you're working at YENDOR. Where—so where does drag come in? Like where—when does that start? Like how did you get to—started with that?

Alisha Day: So I got into drag, so sophomore year at Ithaca College there was the Prism Drag Fundraiser for The Trevor Project that year did it. That was my sophomore year, and I saw the student drag show. And I saw it and I was like very much unimpressed by the shitty drag I saw. And again, before I was doing drag, I was a musical theater student. Like before I went to college, I'm in choir, I'm in glee club, I'm in dance. I was in gospel. I was in honors jazz—I mean, not honors jazz. I was in advanced jazz. Like I was a—I was a performer, darling. So I'm seeing these—I'm watching these performers. “Oh. You should have pointed your toe.” In my head I'm watching 'em like, “Oh. You should have saved that moment...oh, you should have did this...oh, that would have been better if you'd done that...” So I was like, “Oh, well, bitch. Put your money where your mouth is.

Audition for it and do drag junior year.” So I—no. It was my freshman year. I did it my sophomore year. So audition, I got in. My first gig, it was terrible. Compared to what I do now, it was bad. Makeup was bad. Everything was bad, but my performance was still moving and the confidence I had. I got my first booking after that fucking performance. It was at a straight bar, Moonie's. I was 19. Shit. I'd been working at a bar. I wasn't drinking. I didn't drink. But they said, “You can perform, you just can't drink.” And

I got my first booking and I said, “Oh, shit!” Like, I can get paid to do drag and look pretty and all this other shit? I did my first booking and then it just happened from there. I was—I was in doing Moonies, the Chanticleer, Moonlight, all this other places and doing shows and giving shows and—

Kristyn Scorsone: This is in Ithaca?

Alisha Day: Yeah. And I just started performing. Ithaca’s close to Cornell, so I’m going to like—I’m doing like—I’m going to parties in drag, doing house party things like that. Like, it was—it was like weird little queer celebrities ’cause like Vanilla—shout-out to Vanilla—she was the first like drag person out, like, person I was working with who was obsessed with Drag Race. And then I met my friend, Joseph. And then just drag. Just everything was drag, everything was drag. Trying to turn looks on a fucking \$200-every-weekly budget, you know, and working as a college student. It was like—oh. It was so interesting, but it was fun. It was fun.

We were just trying to make our way for ourselves. Me and my little queer drag friends. And then eventually I became the president of the PRISM, co-president. Me and Lex—shout-out to Lex—and then the—the Capricorn-controlling person in me, I was in charge of the drag show, and baby, I turned it. We had rehearsals. We had a runway. We had things. Mother, it looked good! I had runway music. I had the dual runaways and crossing over. It was just fabulous!

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter] Was this at Moonies?

Alisha Day: Huh?

Kristyn Scorsone: Was that at Moonies too?

Alisha Day: No, no. this was at the—so when I was the co-president of the PRISM LGBT organization, we do, every year we do the drag fundraising. That was our biggest event. So I did that. And then even, oh, yeah. We have a—every senior year, there’s like a college person. Like they have a senior award thing where like Are You IC’s—like an America’s Got Talent, but for Ithaca? I won in drag for that one. so drag has really, really brought me a lot of opportunities. Like it—drag, yeah. Drag—it’s sad, but it’s also harsh, but drag is my life. Drag allowed me to use all of the skills I learnt from—as a performer, and I utilized it. Ugh. I love drag. It’s—it’s a weird obsession. It is. But yeah. Drag has been fun, but it’s been a journey. I’ve been doing drag nine years now. I’ve

started—I'm 28 now, started when I was 19, so 29, I'll be doing it for 10 years.

Kristyn Scorsone: Awesome. Did you—how did you learn to do your makeup and stuff? From other performers or from YouTube or?

Alisha Day: YouTube. I looked like a fucking fool. I looked terrible. [01:00:03]

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: My God! I look so good now. Ugh. The makeup has changed, the brows are thinner. But back then I looked like shit. Look. Let me tell. [Laughter] Whoop! I thought it was fine. Nobody could tell me nothing. And I wish people would. I wish someone would. But when you're so confident you don't wanna hurt anyone's spirit. But that's how you learn, and I learned what works for me. And yeah. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you do, like, sew outfits? Or buy outfits? Or?

Alisha Day: I'm learning how to sew now, but all I did was—and it's so weird at that time 'cause being Black, I learned how to learn, I learned the art of working synthetic hair because when I'm getting my hair braided, something I'll add the Kanekalon. So I learned that, oh, with these synthetic fibers, if you set it in hot water, it's gonna set that curl. So I was like, "Oh! So maybe I can do a flexi-roll with this wig and create this wave when I set it in hot water?" Oh! So I—hair became a little bit easier for me.

Then I started watching more YouTube video for like blocking brows and doing makeup, and then styling hair and whatnot. So I'm really good. I'm not a hair stylist, but I do my own hair, I do my own makeup. Like I do my—like 99 percent of the wigs I have today, I've styled myself. I've bought like two, three, and I've restyled one, so everything else I do myself because I'm controlling, but [laughter] also it costs a lot of money to—like \$250, \$125, \$150 minimum—for wigs. So it's like I'm not gonna pay \$200 for a wig that I know I can do, or at least the best to my abilities versus something I can't do. So yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: How would you like get clothing? Would you have to go into stores? Like how did that work?

Alisha Day: So I was borrowing my mom's clothes. She was like, "Oh, here. Use this." She has some great pieces. I would Amazon, I'm an Amazon queen. Still to this day I'll get something, sewn it, add it.

You know? As long as it's graphic and it's pretty, it don't matter if it's from Amazon 'cause I stoned it. I made it mine, or I did something, or I have a wig that I made that's on top of it. You know, the origins of drag, you know, taking something off the rack, cutting it off and embellishing it, and that's what I was doing. I would go to Rainbow getting hot pants or shirts and dresses. I would go to Amazon. Finding shoes is hard. I'm only a Size 11 Wide, but it was like Amazon. My sister gave me some of her shoes eventually 'cause we're the same size. So yeah. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: I forgot about Rainbow. [Laughter]

Alisha Day: Right. It still exists some places.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is your sister older or younger?

Alisha Day: My sister is older than me. We're 14 years apart, which is like crazy. I think my mom had me when she was like 35-36. So yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Same in my house. I'm 9 and 11 years younger than my siblings.

Alisha Day: Oh, my goodness. So you're the baby?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yes. [Laughter] Yeah. So then like—okay. So that's awesome. And then like so how did you wind up working with YENDOR?

Alisha Day: I started working with YENDOR because I think I had like some—IC Unity was like an organization for like Black and Brown students after they graduated, alumni, to help 'em get jobs and they had an event, an outing. And one of the guys, he worked at one of the places downtown Newark. He said, "Oh. Why don't you go with YENDOR?" He doesn't work there anymore. I lost his email. I'm like, "Goddammit!" I tried to thank him, but he connected me with Rodney. I said, "I wanna do something nonprofit," 'cause I thought I would be more doing more work, which I am. I feel like nonprofit—I caught the nonprofit bug because I felt that I didn't wanna be doing a cubicle nine-to-five. I wanna be doing something where I know I'm actually changing something and being helpful, even though there ain't that much damn money in that field.

But also I wanted to do something LGBT-based or the arts, so YENDOR was perfect. It was arts education, theater and Rodney was gay. It was the first time I saw a Black, gay man in charge, and I love Rodney to this day because when I started working there, that's where I met my best friend and business partner, Karim. Dr.

Karim Willis. I think you're his teacher, so, or one of his professors.

Kristyn Scorsone: No. We took Rodney's class together. The murals class.

Alisha Day: Oh. Okay.

Kristyn Scorsone: And then I interviewed Karim for Queer Newark, so yeah.

Alisha Day: Got it. Oh, word. [Crosstalk 01:04:28 - 01:04:29]

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: So yeah. So that was my first time seeing Black, gay men live flamboyantly and out, and they were known in the community. Regardless, if you hated gay people, you respected Rodney. Rodney had his past, but Rodney was that—was that man. Like—

Kristyn Scorsone: Beloved.

Alisha Day: 'Cause he worked at, I forgot the other organization. He made a name for myself. Rodney was that guy you wanted, like, and it was—it felt so good to be—I was working and training by Karim to be the assistant for Rodney 'cause Karim was going back to get his masters. So working with Rodney, I realized, "Oh. We're that girl. We're that bitch." Like, "Oh, my god. You work with Rodney. Oh, please..." Like people would kiss my ass just to get to close—to get to Rodney. It was like people needed Rodney for miracles. Rodney would get that shit done and if he would get it done, it would be done well. He had the clout. He had the connections 'cause he also had access to all of these muralists, so you wanted to be close friends with Rodney.

And just seeing Rodney, like we was doing this one big project, a billion-dollar project. I think it got put on hold but it was for like—I don't feel like I talked about it. I can. They were trying to doing like a plaza-mall thing at the Mulberry Commons, something like that, Mulberry Street, to have like make the walking from the train to like the stadiums and theater places more quicker, but have like a little plaza. You know? Capitalism. And it was like a billion-dollar project to install—to look for artists in the nation to install different arts things throughout the—as you walked through the plaza. So I was the assistant. I'm reaching out to artists. I'm writing up things and reaching out.

And just seeing Rodney come in his Dashikis and his tunics and his beautiful outfits and extravagant and obscure into these stiffy, old White men in suits in these office meetings and here I am like, “Oh, my god,” and him saying, “No. You hired me to do something. These are the things I need. If you can’t provide it, then I can’t do it.” Just inside I’m like, “Oh, my god!” Like these White men in fucking suits, and he’s telling them “no.” Like that touched me in so many ways ’cause I was like, “Oh, my god.” Not only is he living unapologetically, but seeing these White men like challenge but also like change. Like they needed, like. I was like, “Oh. My. God!” Yeah. I was there with him in his last days. I was still his assistant when he was passing away, so that was a sad moment for me because seeing this, you know, exuberant person, you know, die, die slowly and it was—that was a significant part for me ’cause also I met Karim. Like he was the first openly gay person that had nails and was living and had his life together. He was working. He was going to school. He was married. Like I was like, “Wow!” Like the first day I met him, I was crying—he was crying in his car ’cause I was like—not the first time but like the week—it was like—’cause like I just never saw that before. Like he inspired to start wearing my nails ’cause it was like drag was helpful, but they looked good. But it was just like—and that changed my whole perspective of Newark ’cause now I’ve got introduced to Newark as this whole arts scene I did not know of, or was aware of in 2003 when I was in middle school, or when Sakia was like, you know, murdered. At this time it was like I was sheltered, so now I’m in Newark. Everywhere I met these artists and I knew all of these artists from the north, from Patterson, North Newark, different wards. You know? I was like “Wow!” So I saw a whole new perspective of Newark that it was just—it was just breathtaking and refreshing.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Crosstalk 01:08:09]

Alisha Day: And I made connections and met people. It was just nice. It was really, really pleasant surprise. And you know, I had a pride in Newark. I had a real sense of pride of Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: That’s beautiful, and Karim is really beautiful too.

Alisha Day: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: When—so you’re—when you’re at YENDOR too, you’re doing drag in the city? Did you do drag in Newark too?

Alisha Day: Not at the time. I remember Harmonica Sunbeam, my drag idol. She was one of the reasons why I started drag. Not started, but one of the people that inspired me to continue was her, and Chevelle Brooks 'cause Harmonica's funny, but Chevelle Brooks, you know, she danced. She was a big girl. She was dancing. That was like my two things: big girl that dances, but also does comedy. Like I have comedy mixed into one. I think I'm pretty funny on the mic. So, you know, so those who inspired me. Yeah. I was competing in New York fucking City. I would, oh, my god, triggered.

But, get ready at YENDOR or at my house, at my ancient father's house, and I would go take the bus or Uber to North Penn Station. I would have on like my clothes like this with a face. People were staring at me 'cause either I looked good or looked bad. Eventually, around 2017, it got better. Still meh, but it was way better than in the beginning. And I would take the fucking train, PATH train to Christopher Street, walk to West Village and compete at Drag Wars hosted by Shi-Queeta, Polish the Queen by Kristy Blaze, and Star Search, Tina Burner.

Like I would compete and I made a name for myself in that scene. People thought I was a New York queen. I was like, "No." I just—was competing too. I was winning. I was winning. I've won, like, I think, six, seven times at Drag Wars 'cause Drag Wars was the thing. So like I made a name for myself and then I had shows in Queens, Brooklyn, I was, you know, because of these competitions that allowed me to make other networking and other performance opportunities. Then I came back to the Jersey side and I was doing Jersey City, and then eventually doing stuff in Newark and whatnot. So yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: For—Chevelle Brooks, right? That was the name you mentioned [crosstalk 01:10:24]?

Alisha Day: Yeah. Chevelle Brooks.

Kristyn Scorsone: Are they a Newark queen?

Alisha Day: No. She is from the South. I believe she is from, whoo, I don't know. I should know, I guess. She is from the South. Maybe Texas?

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Alisha Day: I'm not sure exactly, but Harmonica's from Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: Harmonica?

Alisha Day: Yeah. She's from Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: And Drag Wars, is that like a really big competition?

Alisha Day: Yes! It's really, really big. It's not as long as Star Search. Star Search was longer, but Drag Wars was big. Like, and it was back in 2018, 2019, 17. Oh. Also I did like Monster Bar, they had a Wednesday, they had a "Look Queen" competition. I did stuff like that. I competed in that. So I made a name for myself working with Mitch Ferrino, him giving me props saying, "Keep up the good work." That's where I really—like what do you call it?—bit down on my teeth or was in the trenches. I was honing my aesthetic, my performance skills. Understanding my craft, how to work a crowd because this time I'm working at gay bars. I've only been working at straight bars, so the gays were like [flamboyant voice], "We know drag, so like, impress us." The straights are like, "What? They did something." You know?

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: So I really, really honed my skills in these competitions. And Drag Wars was big because, like, you know, they had a whole following on Facebook. But Shi-Queeta was the host, so oftentimes the girls who do good would get good opportunities. Like there was times where I should have won, and I was told I should have won by the host, or other people, but it was audience applause and a bitch would bring her whole coworkers and friends, you know, win. But I would lose that \$100 that day, but I would get a booking from someone who was starting a venue who was there and was like, "Oh. I saw your clip and..."

You know? Like Captain Wonder. Like he's one of the, like, he documents the drag scene in New York City or whatever. Like one of my videos went viral on his page, and like he shared it and it was just great. It was a time. You know, it was big to be on Drag Wars. It was like you could be at some VOSS events. Stuff like that. Like things like that. Like a lot of connections and opportunities come from it, which I have gotten from it. So yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: VOSS. It's V-O-S-S? Right? That's [Crosstalk 01:12:44]?

Alisha Day: Yeah. I think it is VOSS events, or like Señor Frog's. Like at that time, before the pandemic, like you had a cast. Like Shi-Queeta

was the host. So like Egypt and even Jasmine Kennedy eventually, who's now in Drag Race, or was. Like you would be a part of the show where you have like—like a Lips almost—but like you would be paid for every Sunday you were there, so the whole—that was not a goal of mine, but like working with Shi-Queeta I was like, “Okay. Maybe I can see myself doing it on the weekends.” You know? 'Cause like you made good money in tips, but also you were that girl. Like you are flyers. You're on things. Like you are booked. You're a show girl. So yeah. Drag Wars was a good stepping stone, a good platform. A lot of those people and the vendors looked at that place to see “who am I gonna book the new talents from,” so yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: How would you describe your drag persona?

Alisha Day: Come through Drag Race producer questions. No.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: The way I would describe my drag? Right. I should use this as an audition tape one of these days.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Totally. [Laughter]

Alisha Day: So I would describe my drag—that's a great question—I'm high-energy, dynamic. I take my drag very seriously, but I don't take myself too seriously. So I like the fact that I'm a very pretty-looking woman, but I can say some funny and crass and naughty things and I think that juxtaposition is funny 'cause you wouldn't expect so many filthy things to come out of that beautiful mouth of mine, but they do. I give my all when I perform. It's very Black-American-princess-inspired, the Black experience inspires my drag.

But also, like confidence is part of my drag. Like, I don't claim this, but oftentimes body positivity's associated to my drag. But the reason why I don't claim it is because I still struggle with it. Like I am fat. I'm not big-bodied. I am a fat bitch and it's nothing wrong with that. I have my insecurities on it, but drag has puts me in a place where—it puts me in an uncomfortable place where I have to confront my insecurities and be a part of it because my fatness, I feel like sometimes held me back in opportunities I can get, you know, because people want White, skinny twinks, drag queens to be in their shows and oftentimes, you know, I would be insecure because I'm like, “I'm not that.” Not saying I wanna be that, but I also know you see the fucking flyers. And this is a

shout-out and the drag ladies of Jersey City and the Asbury, it's like oftentimes I was a token Black queen or the token fat Black queen. There is no fat Black bitch in my scene but myself. In this Jersey scene there's no one else but myself. Obviously, in Asbury, in Central Jersey you might Denny Goddess—shout-out to her—but she's a trans, plus-size Black queen. Different experiences and whatnot.

But my whole thing is for me, I realized I very much was often tokenized so I've internalized that. Sometimes I felt subconscious 'cause I'm like, "I should be having these opportunities. Why is this bitch like...?" And of course, you never should compare yourself to others, but it's like I couldn't help but see that like these skinny White queens are being booked more than me when I perform way better than them. But you don't know what people do, or what, you know? Just because you're highly seen, that doesn't mean you're getting paid. I get paid. But you know, drag has made me realize that, yes, I'm fat and that can be uncomfortable, but this is where I am, so take it or leave it, bitch.

So when I'm—sometimes I do lingerie numbers, or I'm in my two-pieces. You'll see my love handles or my backrolls. I think it's beautiful. It's sexy because it's me. I looked more realistic of a woman. Like I'm not saying all women have backrolls, but the way my body is in drag I look like a woman versus some muscular-ass, six-foot-two, biceped, you know, fucking bodybuilder in drag. Like, so it looks beautiful. It looks realistic. It's sexy. It's hot. It's soft. You know? It's supple. You know? So being fat has its benefits in drag, but also it made me learn that like this is my body I have now. Do I wanna lose more weight? Yes. But I don't wanna lose weight because I wanna look—it is vain. I wanna like look slimmer, but also I wanna have energy. Like when you're big and you're doing all of those stunts and stuff, you know, it can take a toll on your knees. I've had asthma attacks after shows. So it's like—but drag has very much made me come to terms with my body and say, "Okay. Well, you wanna change your body, you can do that, but this is where you are right now, so honor it. Stick with it." So you know, yeah, it's drag, yeah. I don't know if I answered your question, but.

Kristyn Scorsone: No. You did. Yeah. And a hundred percent. Honor it. [Laughter] I got to see you perform at Newark Pride, and I was like, "Oh, my god!"

Alisha Day: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: It was so amazing!

Alisha Day: Yes. Thank you.

Kristyn Scorsone: Like I knew you could do those flips, 'cause I've seen like on Instagram, like with Drag Brunch, but to actually see it—

Alisha Day: The algorithm's working. [Laughter]

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. No, to see it in-person, I was like, "Oh, my god!"

Alisha Day: It's intense. It's like a "Whooo!"

Kristyn Scorsone: Amazing. Like amazing. And you looked gorgeous and like just so impressive.

Alisha Day: Thank you.

Kristyn Scorsone: Like how did you learn to do all those flips? [Laughter] I would be so scared. How did you learn to do those flips and splits and?

Alisha Day: Yeah. Like, I got my split 'cause I fell into it. One day I was in—it was C Building. I was running down a one hallway and I fell, tripped, and my legs fell like that, and I just, I broke myself into my split. It was the most painful experience.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, my god.

Alisha Day: But after that I was like, "Oh, okay. I got a split."

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter] That's [crosstalk 01:18:17].

Alisha Day: I just kept up with it. Kept stretching it out. Then eventually, like the tumbles and the round-offs. When you're young you're dumb. You're like, "Oh. I wanna do that," 'cause of cheerleading or like things like that. So I was just like, just did it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Gotcha.

Alisha Day: And yeah. Yeah. That's honestly how I learned how to, like just being risky and irresponsible and reckless and doing shit, and yeah. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: So like how did you come to do Drag Brunch with Karim?

Alisha Day:

So the reason why I did Drag Brunch with Karim, the Brick City Drag was because, number one, I got tired of going to New York City to do shows 'cause it was a lot of travel. I didn't have a car at the time. But also I'm like, "Why am I travelling from one city to do drag when I can do it here?" Or, "Why am I even going to Jersey City when I could do it here?" But also I wanted to create space. I got tired of being overlooked. I got tired of working my ass off, and bitches in my DMs telling me I'm such a great performer—oh, they love what I do—but the bookings were not reflecting that.

I wanted to create—I also get tired of seeing all of these White, fucking skinny queens, and even these fucking Latin queens who were White-passing were just all these spaces, and no Black faces or spaces and I got sick of it. And it—I know it sounds problematic, but like there's a whole Latin drag scene that I am not aware of, but I'm aware of, but they have these—there's a Latin Night. Every fucking bar you go to, you got a Latin Night. You know, every bar, you got a White queen hosting or doing something. You either have one Black queen being tokenized or not at all. And oftentimes, I'm not saying Black drag queens are better performers 'cause that's not the case 'cause they're Black, but normally they are better performers. And oftentimes they know that and they book us because we're the ones that are bucking and shimmying down and doing the shows and doing—and unfortunately it's created this weird dynamic where oftentimes when I don't do that, I feel like something like I have to do that in order to get my money. Sometimes I change it up. I do ballads. I don't always do high-energy, or I do my comedy numbers, you know, 'cause I'm more than just this Black queen that does stunts and stuff. I'm a dynamic performer. But that's that weird chokehold drag has got on Black drag performers in which like—not all drag performers are stunts and dance queens, but that's what gives her the money and the tips, and these venues know that, so they want to us bring us there because we have a following, and they want these people to be entertained. They want that viral moment so they can post it on their social medias and get the traction and the ads and the views.

But I wanted Brick City Drag because I wanted to book the friends and the queens that helped book me. You know, the Empresses, who is very sweet to me. The Chiantis, the Octavias, the Harmonicas, the Divinity Banks, the Kristy Blazes, the girls that gave me my opportunities in the beginning and helped me out that were Black and Brown and were often felt—were often overlooked because they were Black and Brown. And they taught me, like,

they, you know, I learned things from them. I worked with them. You know, so I wanted to be able to give them—that was my way of saying, “thank you,” but also creating space. There weren’t many bars that were open, let alone gay-friendly, so I said, “Look. We have, YENDOR has this space at Launch Pad.” You know?

When you’re gay sometimes you just make what you can. Whenever you’re in a minority group, or some marginalized group, sometimes you gotta make do with what you have or make do with the cards you’re handed. So I said, “Look. We’re gonna do this fucking work space.” I got—we both put \$1,500 in savings. I said, “Bitch, I got it. Rent. Right.” And we put it down. He put it down. So we did it, and we also complained about the lack of space and a lack of how things were ran, and like unfortunately we—I can speak for myself. I wasn’t happy with some of the LGBT organizations or events. Like sometimes I’m still upset with Newark Pride with how things are ran sometimes, or organized, or lack of connection between the communities of the drag and then the Ballroom, and then the, you know, the older gays, who are more arts and murals. There’s a lot of disconnections from like educated gays, your young Ballroom gays, or your drag gays, or your gays who are just gay and looking for spaces and are trying to—tired of going to fucking Jersey City or New York City or South Jersey or Central Jersey when they can just stay in Newark.

So I wanted to bring them all here. I wanted to bring it to Newark ’cause I’m happy to be from Newark. I’m proud of Newark. And I said, “Newark used to have a drag scene before I was even, you know, born or did drag, so why not bring that back?” So that was the reason why I wanted to do it. I said, “Let’s put our money where our mouth is.” I originally wanted to do fundraisers for YENDOR. I said, “Let me use my platform.” I really—I like helping out people and I feel like with drag I have a power. I’m a super power and I know I can attract people. I said, “I have no problem working for free and using drag to raise money for YENDOR.” You know, I loved YENDOR. After Rodney passed, you know, a lot of people were helping out YENDOR, or stopped helping out YENDOR, so I wanted to give back.

But Karim was like, “Oh. I have an LLC. Why don’t we just give back to other organizations in the Newark area that are fighting against social injustice? Whether it’s LGBT causes or helping with homelessness, or, you know, LGBT issues?” So we did that and we raised money. Circle of Friends, Newark Pride. I forget what else we hit. Oh, my god. [Unintelligible 01:23:40] Other organizations.

So yeah. So it just felt good to use my power and platform to help people out and create that space. So yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: You said, so the space is in YENDOR, a workspace called, “Launch Pad.” Where is it?

Alisha Day: So Launch Pad is in Broad Street, Newark, in the Hahne & Co building.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh.

Alisha Day: So YENDOR is—like, YENDOR uses one of the spaces. Like, you know? It’s a work space. There’s many offices in there, so YENDOR works in there as well. We also, you know, organize or facilitate the workspace area. You know, I guess, so like they manage that space as well as use the space to work at YENDOR. So I was like, “Hey. That’s a great space. Let’s use it.” You know? And he had a—his family owns Jamaican Cuisine, so they catered. We paid them. And also just show how family and friends connect to people, make sangria mixes and bring it to the event for us to share. Sometimes some family would make things for us for free. People would, you know, come and volunteer to clean up or to set up. My friends and family with my niece, my mom, my friend Bryce and his family would help set up or take down, so it was very, very a family-friendly, it was a very community-orientated event.

Kristyn Scorsone: That is so cool. And what day of the week would it be?

Alisha Day: So it was on Sundays. The last Sunday. We took a hiatus now because, I mean, it takes a lot of money to hold these spaces, so our attendance was going down, but we took a hiatus. We’re gonna bring it back, but, you know, it was our money. It’s like we’re not getting money from a grant that was, “Okay, if we don’t have enough people today. It’s okay.” No. Like we’re buying \$2,000 worth of food and catering and drinks. We gotta—it’s not even a matter of making money. We just gotta break even so we can continue the next event. You know? So yeah. So it was always the fourth Sunday of the month. And yeah, and I would book the girls with as money, I would like—you know, sometimes drag queens, sometimes we get paid change for what we do, but I try to give them more money than the normal rate just because I appreciate them, but also it was money coming out of our pocket. I know sometimes these girls have these extravagant costumes and performances and like sometimes \$75 or \$100 is not gonna cut it. So I’ve really wanted to use that space to give back to the people

that I saw it for, that I felt overlooked, but also creating the space in Newark. Like, I had people from Brooklyn coming. People from Bergen County, Jersey City, Elizabeth, East Orange, Newark and south coming to support it. And it was a nice—it was a nice moment.

Kristyn Scorsone: Are there any clubs right now in Newark that you can perform in?

Alisha Day: Hmm. Not that I know of. Yes. I could. I just haven't reached out to them. But also I'm thinking wisely, just because I could reach out to them doesn't mean it's the space for it. Like there is bars and stuff downtown, but it's like, I also don't wanna put myself and others at risk. But also I wanna be to a space that's accommodating and welcoming. You know? But I could reach out more and do that. But—huh?

Kristyn Scorsone: Like gay clubs, there's not really gay clubs right now in Newark, right? That I can think of. Or maybe there's one.

Alisha Day: No. There's clubs with like gay nights, but not a gay club.

Kristyn Scorsone: Gay nights. Yeah.

Alisha Day: And I'm gonna put this now on record. My goal—I have a lot of goals, but if I can open up my own drag bar and restaurant, I would love to have it in Newark. I would love to be able to be that point spot. I would love to have a cast like Lips or the VOSS events. Booking the girls and having a spot that's just not only for gay people, but for everyone, but to be a great destination spot in Newark. But I'd also like to have a production company, so there's a lot of things I wanna do. But I would love to have like a club, a space where you can have like balls in, or meetings, and a restaurant. You know? Brunches. Having local talent perform jazz nights. I would love to do that. It's a lot of money, but hopefully when I win Drag Race one of these days I have the clout, so it gets through. You know? But.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Are you gonna audition?

Alisha Day: I would like to audition. I just don't have the skills of sewing yet. I feel like everything else I can do: hair, makeup, hosting, the charisma, the uniqueness, nerve and talent. I just don't wanna make a fool of myself and not know how to sell it. It's weird because Drag Race did not inspire my drag, but Drag Race let me learn that my drag can very much be a career and take me far, so I

very much wanna use the platform, even though sometimes the platform and the fan base ain't too friendly to Black queens, but.

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I've noticed that.

Alisha Day: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Crosstalk 01:28:36]

Alisha Day: My goal is, I'm trying to take my time. What's for me is for me. If I establish myself and my character well enough, a bitch can't create any narrative about me because Alisha Day will be fully realized and formed and, you know, so yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Totally. Have you hung out in any—like, I guess, like, have you gone to any of the gay nights or have you ever hung out in—I don't know. What is it?—like The Globe? Or I don't know. I'm trying to think of, like, clubs [crosstalk 01:29:06].

Alisha Day: So there was like—one time there was a Brazilian gay bar, like on downtown Newark. There was a gay bar, yes. So it was—it got shut down. I think it was called, "Twister."

Kristyn Scorsone: Right. Twister. For sure.

Alisha Day: And it was trying to make me—book me there, but they fell through, and then they shut down. So I was like, "Okay. Well, look. Whatever." But yeah. But I been—I forgot Brick City or something like that's next to that one art place downtown Newark, the Latin Art Gallery?

Kristyn Scorsone: [Unintelligible 01:29:36]? No, that's—

Alisha Day: There's a bar. You know? The block where that—where is that Rutgers or that bar that's across the street from Essex County? That same block. If you go down it, it's like Rutgers is on that, Conklin Hall. That block where you go further, like there's—on that side there is that one bar. Then across of it there's the art gallery and on that block there's another bar. I went there for a karaoke night. I was in drag one night. I think they're trying to have LGBT nights, but sometimes they're not as successful because we don't come out. But also it takes a while, but oftentimes these spaces, they wanna have LGBT nights but they're not understanding that you have to foster a scene and community. Like just like don't shut it down like a month or two times of no one attending. It's like you gotta understand if you're a straight

venue that wants to do a gay event, I see through you. I know you wanna make money off of it. You want that pink dollar. And you can exploit me as long as I can exploit you as well.

So it's like you gotta understand you can have all the gay people come to your space and, you know, buy your drinks, and I can get paid to do that, you know, to give you my services but you gotta understand that if you have been historically known to be a straight venue that didn't care anything about gay people and all of a sudden you wanna do something gay, we never saw for you as a community so you gotta create space and give yourself time to allow us to warm up and to come to your venue. Like sometimes these venues, I've been to like the Dubliner in Hoboken—they wanted a gay night but they weren't promoting it. They weren't advertising it. Their successful night was a trivia night, and I had my viewing party for Drag Race right after. I'm like, "Why is your host for the trivia night announcing that they can go upstairs to see the thingie?"

Kristyn Scorsone: Mhm.

Alisha Day: Why is it not my flyers being posted? Why are you not promoting it throughout the week? You got your beer specials.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Right.

Alisha Day: And it's like so you can't want these gay events and not are willing—and not willing to create the space and actually put in the work.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Alisha Day: Then you blame the queen like, "Why are you not bringing people?" "Bitch, I can do but so much. You are historically known to be a straight venue." That's not an accommodating or welcoming or affirming space for LGBT people. So.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I just have a couple more questions, if that's all right?

Alisha Day: Yeah!

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you feel like—do you feel like your performance is a form of activism for you?

Alisha Day: Yes! Of course. I mean, it shouldn't be but it is. I mean, drag is a protest. Being gay is a protest. I don't like saying being Black is a

protest, but it is because we live in a society where like as a gay man I am saying, “F-U” to the religion, “F-U” to gender norms, “F-U” to heteronormativity. As a Black man who is being, you know, flamboyant, openly gay, I’m also saying, “fuck you” to these narratives of me being this hyper-masculine, emotionless man, or this Black, emotionless man. But also, to be doing drag, like, I am not following what it means to be a man. Like I do what I do and I do what I want and if that’s cross-dressing on the weekends for brunch, you know, it is what it is. So it is a protest ‘cause it’s challenged a lot of these normative—a lot of these norms, a lot of these understandings of what our society says we should do.

It’s a big “fuck you” to patriarchy, of course, White supremacist patriarchy, of course. But it is. I think my existence is a protest because I’m living flamboyantly, I’m living Black-ly. [Laughter] I don’t think that’s a word, but I’m living out loud and I’m also living unapologetically, so that can also shake a lot of people because it’s like to be gay, people are like, “You should be ashamed of it.” And to be a Black gay man, [gasps] you know, “What about the community? You gotta reproduce. You know, White supremacy wants us to be small and oppressed, and you’re oppressing us because you’re gay and you’re not procreating.” There are so many gay people with kids. And actually so many gay people are raising the kids the straight people couldn’t raise. So a lot of what I do is very much a protest. A lot of what I do is challenging norms, shaking the table of what people understand what their life could be, or should be. So yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Awesome. Do you still experience any like harassment for—like on the streets or anything?

Alisha Day: In the beginning, when I was traveling from Newark I was like verbally harassed, physically harassed on the PATH train. People like try to do sexual offerings and stuff like that. People are weird. I remember about being assaulted by like a bunch of fucking teens in drag. Me and like Duvall and Paige Monroe, like leaving like Sunday from Stonewall. I competed there too. And like just—but now I have my car so I was able to avoid that. But as of recently, have I experienced anything like verbal issues in drag? Not as much. I mean, sometimes when I do my brunch in East Orange, like some of the guys who come, they don’t know it’s a drag brunch, so they can be uncomfortable. And I get that. If you don’t understand it, that’s fine, but don’t sit front row in a fucking drag brunch, and if I’m interacting with you, you act uncomfortable.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. [Laughter] That's crazy.

Alisha Day: If you don't wanna be bothered, get in the fucking back, bitch. Like I don't know—I don't know what to tell you. Or it's I'm interacting, I'm hosting, I'm doing my job, I'm trying to get to know you, make you welcomed. And if you're uncomfortable—if you're so uncomfortable that if I'm talking to you, your look—now I get it. Sometimes people don't know drag can be scary. But if you're that uncomfortable and distraught that a crossdresser or a drag queen is talking to you, you got more problems than me 'cause like that shouldn't be an issue.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Right

Alisha Day: I'm not fucking you. I'm not touching you.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I ask 'cause like I worry too with like all the, I feel like, intensified attacks against drag and, you know, trans people.

Alisha Day: I mean, verbally. Yeah. I did another podcast, “Stranger Fruit,” and I was out of drag, but I was talking about how like, you know, homosexuality affects us all because you know, women uphold it, cis women uphold it, trans women uphold it. Like, you know, the whole phrase of “zesty” and “that's sassy,” and like how men are limited of expressing themselves because they're—they don't wanna be viewed as gay, so they're—they're policing their bodies and their expressions and how—and people in the comments were not listening to the points. Oh. I was talking about racism and how like Black people can be prejudiced but we're not racist 'cause in regards to power, I can say prejudiced things—and be racial things—but I can't stop you from working. I can't stop you from housing. I can't disrupt your journey to work. I can't stop you from getting health insurance or being eligible to get it. But instead of hearing those points, they were like, “What is that?” “Is that a man or a woman?” [Laughter] And my favorite one was, “Gay people should stop speaking on Black issues,” as if I'm not Black. Like, [dramatic gasp]! Like, so, yeah. So I've experienced stuff on social media. I have people commenting like, “Ew. What is that?” I'm like, “Work.” Like, I guess the algorithm's working, like.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: So like it's reaching to that other side and.

Kristyn Scorsone: I love it. [Laughter]

Alisha Day: Yeah, so. Yeah. I've had that from social media. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I guess just a couple of questions about Newark. Like how do you feel about the, like, "revitalization" of Newark?

Alisha Day: I mean, it's coming right off of and during the gentrification of Newark. Like Broad Street looks like, Jersey City looks like New York City Times Square. Like, it's—we even have fucking Halal carts now. We've never had that 20 years ago. Like we had hot dog stands.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right.

Alisha Day: But Halal guys? Like literally Halal guys. We have one around the corner on Halsey. Like it is becoming New York City. It is becoming a metro area. Commuters, buildings are being built up. Like, so, I mean, with the gentrification, things are changing. Oftentimes with gentrification, the White gays or becomes gayer and I can see why Black and Brown people feel being pushed out, but oftentimes that's like Whiteness, that's not—'cause they always associate Whiteness with gayness, and it's like, "No." 'Cause there's Black gay people, there's Brown gay people, Asian gay people. So like again that's White privilege that you're having an issue with. But oftentimes the White privilege allows certain gay rights to be passed through, and that's why some Black or Brown folk feel that like they're being discarded, or that gay people have more rights. But it's like as a Black, gay person, I still can experience racism on both sides of the community. You know?

So, but as a result of Newark, I am seeing a lot more, you know, White people walking their dogs downtown Newark on Broad Street. Never. That never—that used to be a bustling place with drug dealers on the side, people selling boosted things. Like now it's like we have street cleaners, we have people running and jogging. Like this was never seen. Like Newark Broad Street was a place to go and shop, get your food, loud music, all this other stuff, the hoteps on the corner. Now it's very much calmed down. But I mean, that means it's a opportunity, it's renaissance to create new opportunities and create new spaces. I believe the Newark Project WOW has a new space on Broad Street, like an LGBT nonprofit, so that's great for them. So you know, use the opportunity to adapt and roll with the punches.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Alisha Day: But yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Then yeah, I mean, I'm trying to figure out if there's anything else that I wanted to ask you. I don't know. Is there like a subject or like a topic that I didn't touch upon that you feel like I should ask you about?

Alisha Day: In regards to what? Newark? Or just drag?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Newark, Newark, your experience in Newark. Your identity. Your—your—yeah. Anything really. Like is there a pivotal time in your life that you're like, "Wow. I really wanted to say something about that", or?

Alisha Day: Something's been in my heart lately about drag, but I'm gonna do Newark first if I can think of something that I wanna mention before we go.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Alisha Day: Newark, don't count Newark out. A lot of people like to shit on Newark, but a lot of your favorite films and TV shows are filmed in Newark. A lot of your talent are from Newark, specifically Jersey. Queen Latifah, Whitney Houston, Lauryn Hill, Michael B. Jordan, the woman from Pose.

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-hmm. Mj Rodriguez.

Alisha Day: Mj Rodriguez. [Crosstalk 01:40:58]

Kristyn Scorsone: Tracey Africa.

Alisha Day: Kat DeLuna, Tracey Africa. Like stop counting Newark out. Just, we are that girl. We've always been that girl. I feel like when it comes to like metro cities, Newark is quiet, silent but known. Or silent but deadly. Like, from the music industry, from the rappers to musicians, like, Newark, we're known as "Brick City." You know? Newark, is even from like working-class New Jersey, like Newark is at a port. Like Newark is very, very, very much important. Like, don't count Newark out. Also, when it comes to drag, I'm gonna talk my shit. Well, I'm gonna be—I'm gonna keep it cute 'cause I don't know where this'll be posted. I was gonna post this on Instagram, but can I talk about relevant things that recently happened? Or no?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. You're welcome to talk about that.

Alisha Day: So after the murder of O’Shae Sibley—

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Sorry. Yeah. That was horrible.

Alisha Day: Right—I’ve noticed that a lot of LGBT venues are silent. And it’s just interesting because a lot of these LGBTQ venues were not silent during Black Lives Matter because they were quick to post Black Lives Matter. And as you notice, a lot of these venues that were White or LGBT-based were scrambling to book Black queens because a lot of like places in Philly and stuff were being called out about having, you know, “You say Black Lives Matter but you have no Black queens on your flyers or no Black queens in your shows at all.” And I bring it up to say that I see you all. I see these venues who say the right things and post the right things to look progressive, but their actions aren’t progressive or inclusive, and I see you.

I see—and it’s not just ’cause it affects me, but I see that you don’t book Black people or Brown people, or any Black people at all. I see that when you do, I am one of them and I’m often the token one, or another drag queen is that is Black. And I see you. and I see right through you. Do better. It’s just getting to the point where it’s just so frustrating that when you’re seeing these flyers and venues with the same White people or same Latin White-passing individuals and no Black or Brown folks at all, and when you do hire someone, even the Black girls know that “Oh. I’m the token Black girl for this month,” because, you know, you’re—like the way they’ll do is they won’t book no Black girl, but then they’ll book that one Black girl for like four shows. Then they’ll move on to the next.

And it’s like—it’s just so inauthentic. And seeing that after O’Shae Sibley that a lot of these places were quiet, it makes sense because you don’t see Black people enough to book them, let alone create spaces for them ’cause we’ve had very much, you know, venues that have turned away Black people because of dress codes, or refused to play certain music that is Black music, or create nights for Black people. We have a Latin Night. We have a Ladies Night. But why not have a night for Black people? So I see you all and I just want you to be held accountable and know that you ain’t shit. And it’s—I’m not surprised and I’m not shocked, but I see you. I see you. And that’s all.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I guess I noticed the lack of like awareness around O’Shae. Like what happened there. Like, and I didn’t know if that was just ’cause I haven’t been online that much recently ’cause I’ve been

busy with work. But so that's interesting to know that that's like—that is happening. That there's no [crosstalk 01:44:43 - 01:44:44]—

Alisha Day: Well, because my thing, even I've done Ballroom but I'm not in the scene. However, that still was an LGBT person, a Black life that you claimed that mattered during George Floyd that was taken away. And again, to make things look right, just share RIPs, share the flyers, share the vigil. But a lot of these LGBT bars and venues are ran by straight people. And oftentimes they're run by White, straight people. Not just 'cause they're White, or not because they are straight, or not because they're in this scene, they don't give a fuck, or they're not in spaces to know about it. So I just bring it up to say that we see you.

Kristyn Scorsone: Mhm. Yeah. I felt [crosstalk 01:45:29]—

Alisha Day: I don't know if I should—I don't know if I should say names, but, you know? Should I? Should I be messy?

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter] I mean, it's up to you, and you could always take it out later if you're like—

Alisha Day: No. Wait. Well, where does this go? Just want—oh. It's an archives.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. It's the Queer Newark Oral History Project website, so it'll be archived, publicly accessible online.

Alisha Day: I mean, I still work with them, these venues, but we see you, 626, Porta, Paradise, Mandala, Ritmo Sundays, Mango's Thursdays, the Subrosa. We see you guys because you guys wanna book a Black drag queen to get the numbers and have a great time, but your security guards are racist, or problematic, or your management don't know our name, or they think we all look the same. We see you. We see you. But yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Mhm. Yeah. That was awful. So many parallels between O'Shae and Sakia Gunn too. That was really sad.

Alisha Day: And that's why I also get frustrated, when like when especially in the Black and Brown community, they say things like, "Oh, my god! Like LGBT people have more rights," and it's just like but Black, gay people are still being killed because they're Black and gay. But also bringing to the point that people say, "Well, you're Black first, and then you're gay." Well, in this case he was Black

first, but he was killed because he was gay, so in this case he's both. You—I can't be Black Monday through Wednesday, and gay Thursday through Sunday. I am both. My identities are both.

There are some people who are only perceived as Black because they might be more masculine, or they're not as flamboyant with the gender expression, and they can like, you know, go stealth or hide. You know what I mean? And sometimes their identity that's visible to the eye is just their race. But for us, for most queer people who are of color, that's not the case. If you're gender-non-confirming, non-binary or trans, or just a butch queen or flamboyant, like, your identities are simultaneously intertwined.

And it just highlights how even now people are using the religion. Like, "Oh. Well, if he's offended by it, you can't challenge someone's religious thought." Bitch, you could be religious all you want, but if I didn't put my hands on you, you shouldn't have the right to put your—and the thing about it is, when you see the video of it, all of these people were surrounding the Muslim boy—I guess, like the people who were with the young boy who killed O'Shae—he snuck around and stabbed him, but eventually he was found and he turned himself in.

But my thing was you all know who did it. Either you were trying to defend him or whoever, so he should have been found already. So again, this unity behind the religion, they very much co-signed it because even if you didn't put the knife into O'Shae, you knew who did it, or you were aware who did it. Instead of him turning himself in, he should have been found immediately. It's been like a week or a week-and-a-half for him to turn himself in?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. That was crazy.

Alisha Day: So maybe someone in this community was telling him to do it? At the same time to use religion as a way of saying, "Well, that's religion. You shouldn't be angry." O'Shae was minding his business. These people went out of their way to assault him. And the other thing is just because you gay—that's another thing, another thing I wanna say—just because we gay men and gay women don't mean we will not challenge you. You can talk your shit. We're gonna talk our shit back. So people was like, "Well, O'Shae shouldn't have said anything." Why not? That's a verbal assault. I can speak—I can talk all the shit I want to, but until I put my hands on you and threaten you with a weapon, you should not put your hands on me.

Kristyn Scorsone: They're the same people that wanna save freedom of speech.

Alisha Day: Right.

Kristyn Scorsone: But only for them.

Alisha Day: Correct. And it's freedom of speech until you don't agree with what I say, or you're not saying what I like, or you're—what you're saying challenges my world views.

Kristyn Scorsone: You wanna stick up for yourself 'cause you're being attacked [crosstalk 01:49:39].

Alisha Day: Right. And it's like—and it is unfortunate. Unfortunately we have a 17-year-old young man that's gonna be in prison. My heart feels bad for him because your life is fucked. That is murder. It is not manslaughter. And it's a hate crime on top of it, but we'll see if the police system will even try to do that because slurs were thrown. It's unfortunate. It's also unfortunate he's gonna be part of the system. But we already know there is religions, cults, shit in the system too. So not only will he be praised for his religious-based homophobia, but when he goes to these prison systems, it'll be perpetuated. He'll be praised for it. Praise Allah because you or God or Yahweh. You did God's bidding because we don't like those gay people. In reality, no. He was brainwashed by his parents, who I very much blame.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Alisha Day: Because the homophobia is taught, whether it's through religion or at home. But also, to stab someone? That means this is not the first time he's done this. So the other—the other question is when is the last time he showed examples of violence and just wasn't caught? Who was the last gay person or person in general that he stabbed that survived to tell the story? Also, who—the people that were with him, why are you allowing these behaviors to continue? You are co-signing these behaviors. 'Cause, again, this isn't his first time. And he felt encouraged or emboldened to do this. I would never, out of my right mind, would stab somebody because I disagreed with them vogueing. That mean the people he was with, he felt comfortable enough and he felt supported that they would not stop him, and they would allow him to do this.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Agree. [Crosstalk 01:51:31]

Alisha Day: That says a lot about the community he's in and who he surrounded himself with.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yep. Yeah. And that's also, like you said too, it fails to recognize the fact that queer people can be religious too and are—

Alisha Day: Right. Are, and are.

Kristyn Scorsone: Like valid children of God or whoever they believe in. You know? Yeah. It is outrageous, disgusting.

Alisha Day: Right.

Kristyn Scorsone: I guess the other thing I wanted to ask you, just real quick, is how did you get involved with Newark Pride?

Alisha Day: So I believe in 2018, 2017, I worked for them as one of the performers and then years later I did events for them. Like last year, like, you know, during the Newark Pride Week. So I did something at the Medallion. Hosted that event. I would come out because my work schedule is weird. I work from 12:00 to 8:00, so oftentimes the events they have normally end at 8:00 during Newark Pride Week, so I can't always show out. But when I was free, and they booked me, you know, I would host or perform and whatnot. And then this year they reached out to me as the host, so yeah. Yeah, I guess it was a working relationship for like years in the running. But yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Alisha Day: Obviously I work side-by-side like, you know, Derrick Doll and them. But even like Karim is a part of the board, or on their team, so just being in that Newark scene you're intertwined and even with the Brick City Drag, I became on their radar 'cause we did a fundraiser for Newark Pride. So yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: I guess to end on it, do you have any favorite moments from Newark Pride? Or like, or even just favorite memories of drag, like?

Alisha Day: My favorite moment of Newark Pride is it being indoors. I know everybody likes to be outside.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yes. [Laughter]

Alisha Day: But what you all don't understand, drag outdoors in the middle of the fucking summer for a drag queen is terrible! My makeup would have been sweated. I would have been sweating through my pads. I mean, I know it was rainy, but I was so happy that it was indoors.

Kristyn Scorsone: Me too, and I didn't have to wear all of that. [Laughter]

Alisha Day: Right. Like, and I know it costs a lot more money, and outdoors is fun. I get it. You're drinking outside. It's fun. Everybody outside 'cause it was big last year. It was, you know, it does bring people in, but hm-mmm, huh-uh. Outside drag is mm-mmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter] Yeah.

Alisha Day: No. That's like, it gets to a point where it's like I was happy about Newark. I was like, "Yes!" And people came and people were so supportive. People were still in the parade in the rain, so the commitments to community and representation of being seen, that was—that was—that was happy. And my happiest moment in drag—there is still more to come—but what else? I don't know. My happiest moment in drag. Hmm. There's been so many. I won like Miss Nauty Queen—like a nautical theme pageant. There's a lot of happy moments. I don't have more than one, but.

Kristyn Scorsone: The Nautical Queen?

Alisha Day: The outfit was like, meh, but I was performing on a boat and we were sitting, and the boat is rocking. So I'm like dancing, I'm about to lean, let me roll into it. Like I'm giving shows, I'm dancing. Everything went wrong. I sent my music to the DJ. The DJ says he got it. Then he, on the fucking boat, "Oh. It's not working. The Wi-Fi's not working." I say, "Okay. What ya' got?" Like that was the moment where I realized my professionalism, my flexibility and my experience performing, I was able to utilize all of those and I did. He had a song that I performed normally, and I did it, and I won. And it was a small prize. It wasn't cash or anything, but I just won. Like I worked toward something and I won it. You know? Doing MOBI Fest. This year I was like, "I'm doing MOBI Fest this year." I've manifested it. I planned for it. I did my full-moon rituals and I did it. That was a great—

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. [Crosstalk 01:55:39] What's MOBI Fest?

Alisha Day: MOBI Fest is Mobilizing Our Brothers Initiative, about like Black health and mental health, education, and initiative. So they have like MOBI talks about, you know, things affecting the Black

community, the Black community in general and they also have drag performers, Black queer talent, Black talent, allies. And it's a festival. It was in Brooklyn. I was—it just felt right. It was just nice to be seen and to be asked to do it. Even though I auditioned, like I still would want it. I spoke with one of the producers or leaders, and he was like, "I have been fighting..." They told me behind the scenes like he was fighting for me to do it. I was like, "Awh." Like, so it was just nice to know that my hard work has paid off, and it is paying off, and it continues to pay off, and I'm being seen. Even though sometimes I feel like I'm not given all what I'm owed, but I am grateful to what I am given. So, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. Thank you so much for talking to me and for sharing your story.

Alisha Day: Thank you.

Kristyn Scorsone: I [crosstalk 01:56:49 - 01:56:50].

Alisha Day: Thank you for thinking of me.

Kristyn Scorsone: I can't wait to see what like happens next for you because you are awesome.

Alisha Day: Me too.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter]

Alisha Day: Thank you. Thank you.

Kristyn Scorsone: I'm gonna hit "stop."

Alisha Day: Okay.

Kristyn Scorsone: Let me stop it.

[End of Audio]