

Queer Newark Oral History Project
Interviewer: Kristyn Scorsone
Interviewee: Juliana Moraes
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Kristyn Scorsone: Today is July 18, 2018. My name is Kristyn Scorsone, and I'm interviewing Juliana Moraes, at Rutgers Newark for the Queer Newark Oral History Project. First off, thank you for doing this.

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, definitely. It's a pleasure.

Kristyn Scorsone: First question is just when and where were you born?

Juliana Moraes: Rio, Brazil, 1980.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay. Who raised you?

Juliana Moraes: Who raised me?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah.

Juliana Moraes: Well, besides my parents, I always had nannies. You know, babysitters.

Kristyn Scorsone: You had both a mother and a father in your household?

Juliana Moraes: Yes, in the household.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you have siblings?

Juliana Moraes: Yes, I had a brother and a sister.

Kristyn Scorsone: How long did you live in Brazil?

Juliana Moraes: Till four years old.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where'd you move to next?

Juliana Moraes: Then we migrated here. We came through the old-fashioned way, which is the whole Central America, through Mexico. The way they're not letting people in now.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, you had to—do you mean you walked, take trains, and stuff like that?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, to get from one place to another.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you remember?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, I have flashbacks.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah? What do you remember of it?

Juliana Moraes: I remember the sky being that dark purple right before sunrise. I remember, and I was in my, I think it was my mother and my aunt's—she was carrying me. I've always been slim, petite, so I was, yeah—had me there, and I remember what I could hear was, “Duck down, [*foreign language 01:42*] duck down, duck down”, ‘cause the patrols. I have memory.

Kristyn Scorsone: Were you scared?

Juliana Moraes: I was so young. Yeah, I guess I was petrified. It's just, you know—

Kristyn Scorsone: Why did your family decide to move?

Juliana Moraes: I guess for the American Dream.

Kristyn Scorsone: When you came here, where'd you move to?

Juliana Moraes: We went through Texas, and we went to Queens, and we ended up in Jersey.

Kristyn Scorsone: How old were you when you came to Jersey?

Juliana Moraes: Five-ish.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Where in New Jersey did you live?

Juliana Moraes: All over. Union City, West New York.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where do you live now?

Juliana Moraes: I'm here in Newark, in the Ironbound.

Kristyn Scorsone: Ironbound? How long have you lived in Newark for?

Juliana Moraes: Approximately 9 years, 9, 10 years.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you recall any events that were in your early life that were transitions, or turning points for you, as a kid, or a young person?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah. I guess turning points as like—I guess one of my turning points is discovering the Village, discovering Christopher Street, discovering the pier. At that age when—you're in school, you're bullied, and you're looking for an escape somehow, and your parents are religious, and it's—where do you turn to? Queer kid who is POC [03:29]. I was ostracized. I was feminine, I was always a feminine—I thought I was just gay, I didn't know, 'cause at that time, I didn't know terminology. I was transgender. I just thought I was gay, and I was just bullied at school. I had no support from my mother. I had friends, but they can do so much. When I step foot in the Village, walking down that Christopher Street, when I saw the pier, it was like Oz.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. How did you discover it?

Juliana Moraes: Follow the yellow brick road. *[Laughter]* It was kind of like that, metaphoric speaking. You know what I mean? It was just like, I would ask people. I heard about it so much. When you're young, you hear about the Village, and it's a very artsy-fartsy, queer, LGBTQ. At that time, we didn't use queer, 'cause it was derogatory. Now, the community has taken it back, and it's a very empowering word, queer. I love it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is this in the '90's?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, early '90's, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: You said your parents were religious?

Juliana Moraes: Oh, yeah, Jehovah Witness. Besides my father being machismo and toxic masculinity is disgusting, and I know too much about that.

Kristyn Scorsone: How would you describe your identity now? How do you identify?

Juliana Moraes: Well, you know what's so funny? Growing up, yeah, I didn't know I was transgender, and then as soon as I just started coming around, I started cross-dressing. I say it like that because I'd just put on my sister's—luckily, my sister was the same size as me, 'cause I'd been petite, and she was small, she was a teenager. It's like, okay, her jeans fit me, her tops fit me, she could lend me some eyeliner here and there. I could pass by a Goth kid or some shit. That's how I started out, then I just started letting my hair grow out, sit in the chair and just comb my hair, and look at myself, and it's like, hmm, this looks—I'm having fun doing this. I don't know, I just feel comfortable.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was she willingly giving you—

Juliana Moraes: She was supportive. Supportive, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah? She understood you?

Juliana Moraes: It was just one of those things. I didn't snitch on her; she didn't snitch on me. We were just sisters. You know what I mean?

Kristyn Scorsone: Is she older or younger?

Juliana Moraes: Younger.

Kristyn Scorsone: How about your brother? Is he older or younger?

Juliana Moraes: Older.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you have a relationship with him too?

Juliana Moraes: Vaguely, it was always—remember I was a feminine child. It was always, man-up kind of deal, so it wasn't—till today. I don't like his approach. I don't know, I just—I choose who I wanna be around. I really don't—you know at this time and age, chosen family, it's important, and it's valid as much as a maternal, definitely.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was high school like for you?

Juliana Moraes: Same. I'm not gonna be stuck-up, but I had lots of talent. Of course, it's LGBTQ people, we have so much talent, it's like I don't know what to say. It's like a curse sometimes. It's like, yeah, you're given all this talent, but then the world ostracized you, but they pay homage to our people on the runways, and then take—so many things come from us. Cis people take that for granted, and they take their cis privilege, and they always wanna downsize a person that's LGBTQ, especially trans people.

Kristyn Scorsone: You said you're into dancing?

Juliana Moraes: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: What kind of dance?

Juliana Moraes: I've always been into cultural dancing, like samba, of course, international music, and any afro-beats. It's like it's in my blood,

you know what I mean? Since I was young, my heart ticked. I always danced to a beat of a different drum, like the saying.
[Laughter]

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. Were there adults in your early life that shaped you, besides your immediate family, people you looked up to?

Juliana Moraes: People I looked up to? I guess my best friend when I was in high school, because she resembled everything I wanted to be. She was just curvy, petite—well, I mean petite as in short, not because—you know, curvy, right body, just exotic. Just like I am, and it's like, wow. Me and her were like we feel each other's soul. That's who I looked up to. I give thanks to her all the time in my mind.

Kristyn Scorsone: Are you still friends?

Juliana Moraes: Well, she went on. She got married, and we lost contact.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you go to public school or private?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, public school.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you still practice religion or no?

Juliana Moraes: Well, I practice my—how do you say this?

Kristyn Scorsone: Spirituality?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah. I'm the child of Oshun.

Juliana Moraes: What's that?

Juliana Moraes: The Goddess of Love, The Goddess of Rivers. The one that helps with maternity. Her color is yellow. She's always combing her hair.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool. That's beautiful. When you went to the Village and the pier, did you know about queer people, LGBTQ people before that? Did somebody bring you there, and then you were like, "Oh, my god"?

Juliana Moraes: No, nobody brought me there. I went there by myself. Like they say, if you seek, you will find.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. What are some of your memories?

Juliana Moraes: If you build it, they will come. [Laughter]

Kristyn Scorsone: What are some of your memories of that time?

Juliana Moraes: Of going to the pier?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Juliana Moraes: Oh, I remember sitting in that bench, before the gentrification took place, and it was New York. It was the last of the New York that I know, when it was edgy, it was more POC, it was—more things were, you know what I mean? It's not like now, they just transformed it. It was magical. I don't know what to explain. I remember that first night. It was just magical. I sat there. I was nervous, like a virgin, but I was excited at the same time. I met this older guy; he was kind of a friend for a while. He'd say, "Oh, you don't go there, don't do this,"

Kristyn Scorsone: He showed you the ropes?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, a little bit here and there. It was interesting, and it was addictive. I kept going every weekend, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Juliana Moraes: Do you remember the names of some of the places, besides—

Juliana Moraes: Like what?

Kristyn Scorsone: —like clubs, I guess?

Juliana Moraes: Oh, at that time we had Twilo?

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, I went to Twilo, yeah.

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, we had the Tunnel. We had Cheetah Lounge. We had, what's it called? The one that's a church?

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, Limelight.

Juliana Moraes: Limelight, yeah, Limelight. Let me see, Sound Factory, Copacabana, different nights. Latin Quarters, we wanted some Latin music. Then you had the Brazilian clubs, they had Club [unintelligible 12:03], SOBs. It's not son-of-a-bitches; it's Sounds of Brazil. Yeah, that was awesome for me. That was my spot, 'cause I'd go there, and that's where, when I started transitioning, I would go there and just dance my ass off.

Kristyn Scorsone: When did you start transitioning?

Juliana Moraes: Medically or physically? Well, [mumbles 12:30] I started transitioning in my head. ‘Cause transition happens in your head, and then you—it was at 16, 17. When I found myself with the Brazilian community, and there was a guy named **Joselino Tunnez** [12:51], and he took me under his wing, and he would always put me in my samba outfit; bikini and bra-top, and my headpiece. Beautiful legs I had. It was that, and I was like that when I started out like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: What about medically?

Juliana Moraes: Medically I didn’t start—I heard it in the streets, ‘cause I was in the streets out there. I’d mingle with all the trans girls, or people like me that identify as non-binary, or whatever, but at that time we didn’t know. We found each other, just in cliques. For some reason, we just gravitated to our own little places. Later on, these people became beautiful creatures. That’s how it was.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you start taking hormones around that time?

Juliana Moraes: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Then, later on I met my trans-mother, which became my trans-mother, **Michelle Moraes**. She lived in the Upper East Side, and I started hanging around with her. She took me under her wings, and that’s when I started taking the hormones, the pills, the estrogen, all that stuff, the injections.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did it cost a lot?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, at that time, yeah, ‘cause insurance didn’t pay for it. I think it paid it for her, not for me. It was costly; a bottle would go for 200 or so. And now we have insurance, and luckily it pays for it.

Kristyn Scorsone: That’s great. Did you go to a doctor to do it, to get the hormones?

Juliana Moraes: Well, first of all, we would do everything on the black market at the beginning. It was so expensive to have docs. We don’t have the clinics we have today to transition. We have countless [unintelligible 14:50], and Medicaid pays for the surgery, some of them. FFS, facial feminization for those that don’t know. But implants, you know. I got silicone many years ago, and that was a mistake, but that’s what I needed to feminize myself.

Kristyn Scorsone: Why do you think it’s a mistake?

Juliana Moraes: Because I have complications from that. I mean, I just had surgery four months ago, and they got rid of some of it. That's something a lot of girls don't like to talk about, it's taboo. Some of us, we got lucky, but some of us—silicone is dangerous.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, even for cis women that get it, there's always problems.

Juliana Moraes: Society's so harsh on us, so you wanna fit in so much. They don't see that part.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was it like when you first started using the hormones? How did you feel?

Juliana Moraes: Well, at the beginning, I was just, I got every hot-flash, my nipple was sore, a lot of crying 'cause you're transitioning, so it messes up your feelings.

Kristyn Scorsone: How long did it take before you felt, I guess, like stabling?

Juliana Moraes: A couple of years when I felt more assertive.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you ever feel like, I can't keep going, or were you like, no I have to keep going?

Juliana Moraes: Oh, yeah, of course. There's many times you doubt yourself, because people put guilt on you, so they...

Kristyn Scorsone: How did your family and friends react at the time when you started going through hormone therapy?

Juliana Moraes: Well, let me go back to my family. I had left my family's house at 17, so I pretty much left, because my parents wanted to—my mother knew that I was, that I was presenting as woman, because I had a lot of women's clothes stashed in my closet, in the back of it. Of course, mother being sneaky, would go in my things and throw out my costumes and stuff that I paid for. It's okay. That's long gone.

Kristyn Scorsone: What brought you to Newark?

Juliana Moraes: What brought me to Newark? Well, I just came here because I think I would be closer to my culture, the food. I miss Brazil a lot. It's not doing good, 'cause fortunately here, the politics take the money from the people that really need it, so it's division. It's a lot of the white supremacy. They follow the United States agenda. It's ridiculous.

Kristyn Scorsone: What are some of your first memories of coming to Newark?

Juliana Moraes: Well, I used to come here for the Portuguese festival every June. It was a spot, back then it was more popping, like they say. I always came around for the festivals. It's a great neighborhood, lively. Even though it has its downs like every other neighborhood, with LGBTQ people, times you will get somebody that feels uncomfortable with you, but other than that, you just go about your business.

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

Juliana Moraes: Halsey Street. I don't know. It's a little span, just little pockets.

Kristyn Scorsone: Any bars or clubs or anything?

Juliana Moraes: I really don't go out out here. No, I don't really go out.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you go to Newark Pride every year?

Juliana Moraes: I've been going for the last four years.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool.

Juliana Moraes: I like it. I love the outdoors. I love parties outdoors. Instead of the nightlife, I like more outside. I like conversation. I love talking to people. I love, as well as visibility for me, showing them that we're here, we're not going anywhere, and that there's trans people. We're here, and I like to communicate. I like to talk. I like to teach people. Like that day when I met you in the street. I love to go up to the booths. I like to see what they're doing, and I like to give input sometimes.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. Let's see. What do you like best about being trans and queer? What do you find most challenging?

Juliana Moraes: The only thing I find challenging is the trauma. I'm 37 years old, and its different stages of my life. It's a constant battle. You gotta keep yourself—I find myself just having to liven myself up, whether it's getting a facial or self-care. I slack off for two days, or three days sometimes, it's like, "No, I cannot let this get to me. Let me open the windows. Let the sun in. Let me put the music high. Let me put my music to something that gets me up." Depression is disgusting, and this lifestyle, people are looking at you.

Fortunately, I got my little curves, and my sex appeal. It attracts in both ways. When you don't wanna be bothered, men feel like it's their duty. Then, people gender-policing. It's disgusting. It's like, "Fuck off, really? Live your life." They don't understand the concept of live-and-let-live at times. Especially in this Newark.

Unfortunately, a lot of people it's like—it's minorities. It's embedded in the culture from years of oppression, colonialism, [21:58], and they hand it down to their kids. It's a lot of times, a lot of these girls, passability. I really don't care at this time and point in my life. When I wanna do it, I do it, and when I wanna go all out, I go all out. So what if I'm wearing a bright pink lipstick and a green wig, which I never do, but pink lipstick, and you know what I mean?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. That's really cool. Oh, I forgot what I was gonna say. Do you date?

Juliana Moraes: Do I date?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Juliana Moraes: I would love to, it's not like I don't. It's not that I don't want to. It's just that many guys I talk to, you have conversations and then they text you back and forth. Sometimes, it's just a taboo thing. They're just looking for, to get their rocks hard. It's sad; I do wanna be validated as a human being. I want love, just like anyone else. Sometimes I just, whatever. Try to brush it off, but it hurts. You think you have this connection with this person, and all of a sudden, they stop texting you out of the blue, okay. So it's like, "What's goin' on?" You know what I mean?

Kristyn Scorsone: How do you meet men?

Juliana Moraes: Well, in the street it's like, okay. Most of the times, especially here in Newark, they look you up, they size you up, and if you have something to offer to them, they now talk to you. Like if you have big breasts or big butt, I guess it's a sexual thing, it's not like—

Kristyn Scorsone: Is it usually straight men or gay men?

Juliana Moraes: I guess it's people. I'm pretty passable, so I guess it depends. Then, when I tell them my T, or that I'm trans, some of them will be okay with it, but then—but usually the men that I like are not around here.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you feel the need to disclose or is that a choice you make depending—

Juliana Moraes: Well, you know what? I really don't bother at times. Sometimes, yeah, my voice is a little rough 'cause I'm cranky and I'm tired. The other guy the other day in the train, in the New Jersey transit, he was saying—he was a Jamaican guy in his 30s or whatever. I had said something [*unintelligible 24:42*]. He's like, "Oh, my god, your voice is pretty deep and tough, whatever." I told him, "Yeah, because I'm an activist, and I like to get my point across."

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Juliana Moraes: That's what I answered, and I just kept it very neutral, very—I'm not gonna give my T to him. Oh, please, I don't—you know what I mean? I wasn't interested in him anyways. He was like, he kept talking to me. I was like, "Oh sure, yeah, oh thank you, okay." That's it. You know what I mean? It's very bad tactics. [*mumbles 25:19*]. I keep my glasses on and keep moving.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, keep moving. Let's see. Oh, what do you do for a living?

Juliana Moraes: What do I do for a living?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Juliana Moraes: Well, I was working for a nonprofit organization, the LGBTQ center in the city.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, yeah? How was that?

Juliana Moraes: It's okay.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did you do there?

Juliana Moraes: The drop-in groups for the trans people.

Kristyn Scorsone: What are the drop-in groups? What is that about?

Juliana Moraes: What is it about? I'd say it's either we would have a closed group, which is you have to sign up for it, and you get screened for it, every identifiers, trans or—actually, I would say gender-nonconforming, but they have their own group now. Oh, questioning. Then from there you get to decide if you wanna go to another group. That's happened. Activist work. We step out; we give flyers, STI prevention, PrEP, Truvada. We don't force it on

people, but it's an alternative. If you think you've been at risk, PrEP, that type of stuff. Empower the community; you're not alone. I give people help, but I myself need the help sometimes. It helps out both ways, and I'm not ashamed to say that I do sex work on the side.

Kristyn Scorsone: How do you feel about doing that?

Juliana Moraes: I don't shame it, because a lot of the guys that come see me, it's like you're a therapist to them almost. You're talking to them and really get to see what's in their mind. Trust me, some of these men say—they would be arrested if they did half of the stuff that they said they would.

Kristyn Scorsone: What do you mean?

Juliana Moraes: Oh, pedophiles. I'd rather cross-dress—what is it? I'd rather play a role, and let them get their, whatever their fantasy off, than go out there and actually do something.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, so you play almost like a child or something like that?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, that makes sense.

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, I'd rather play that than have them go out there and—people don't see this side of it. A lot of it's conversation. A lot of them are ashamed to date a trans girl or approach a trans girl in the streets.

Kristyn Scorsone: This is the way.

Juliana Moraes: We make it a safe haven for them. It's a two-way street. You know what I mean? They help out; we help out. Both parties are consenting adults.

Kristyn Scorsone: You think it's, for some of them, it's because it's stigmatized, let's say, to date a trans—

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, exactly. Also, they have families or their status, corporate, or just regular men that...

Juliana Moraes: Do you watch *Pose* at all?

Juliana Moraes: Of course.

Kristyn Scorsone: I've only seen the first two episodes. Would you say it's like that?

Juliana Moraes: Mj Rodriguez, she lives here in Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, yeah, right. We want to interview her; we'd love to interview her.

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, just Facebook message her.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, that'd be cool.

Juliana Moraes: I know a couple of them, yeah, [*unintelligible 28:58*] some of those girls I grew up with.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, yeah? That's really cool.

Juliana Moraes: [*Crosstalk 29:03*].

Kristyn Scorsone: I was thinking of the relationship with the one woman and the businessman, and that kind of—

Juliana Moraes: Yes, that kind of—exactly. It tells it. It tells it. It's an awesome show because it's showing the other side of all this, and what goes on behind closed doors. Society, some people need to see this because they don't think we exist. They think we're just freaks. What the reality is men are the real freaks. Not that we want to, I don't wanna shame them, but you know what I mean?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, totally. Do you feel ever unsafe doing that?

Juliana Moraes: At times, if I feel somebody's being a little hostile. It's stressful too, at times. It could take a toll on you, but you gotta just know how to self-care once again, evaluate the situation, and see how you can...

Kristyn Scorsone: Let's see. At the talk, remember when Miss Pucci Revlon gave the talk here, and you talked about during—as an audience member, when they had the Q and A, you talked a little bit about trans women and body modification, and how it's changed over the years.

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, that's what I had mentioned earlier about the silicone to feminize ourselves.

Kristyn Scorsone: You said certain women you could see would have similar noses, and things like that.

Juliana Moraes: Oh, yeah, if they went to the same surgeon.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah. Some girls have a cookie-cutter look. Especially where they come from, they all get the surgery, with the same doctor, so they have the same traits. The difference between back in the day is that, yeah, besides taking hormones, silicone, they'd go to pump, to get pumped at these—in the houses, in somebody's home. There was a couple of people that did that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, interesting.

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, one just died, one of the girls, an old school woman that used to pump in Chicago. I forgot her name. She was Cuban. She just died. There's other people out there.

Kristyn Scorsone: By pumping, you mean injecting?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, injecting silicone. Back to that, yeah, we used to feminize ourselves, cheeks, forehead, chin, I think. The old school way. Now the girls are doing FFS, which is, they're chiseling the bone, and all this and that. Now, I notice a lot of them don't even want to put implants. You get some of them that wanna have that voluptuous body. Some of them just take hormones, and they're okay with that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you feel pressure to do more and more, or do you feel like you're happy with the way you look?

Juliana Moraes: Who, me?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Juliana Moraes: Oh, no. I'm okay with the way I am. Maybe just, I was gonna get some fat transferred to my buttocks, 'cause I had taken some of it out with a surgery. That's another thing they're doing now, the fat transfer, which helps, which is a healthy way, with your own fat.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, that's interesting. Did you know any trans men back in the day?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah. I remember when I used to go to Stonewall, of course, historic Stonewall. There was a drag king. At that time, I didn't know much about it. Yeah, a drag king, and he would do shows. It

was a black male who would do shows. That was my first introduction into a trans man.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you see any of them—did they go to the same people for hormones and stuff in the city?

Juliana Moraes: See, I don't know about them like that. I dated one, and they had a prescription for it. Back in the day, I'm assuming it was the same way, black market, or they go do the tests, booster, that type of deal.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, what was it like when you were dating each other?

Juliana Moraes: It was a flurry at the beginning. Wow, every time we'd look at each other, we're blushing, and what's going on here? Emotions, and you can't hide it. Things are gonna happen, regardless. Can't fight nature.

Kristyn Scorsone: How long were you together?

Juliana Moraes: A couple of months. It didn't last too long, 'cause at that time I had a sugar daddy, and my sugar daddy was harassing him online. He told me that later on. I didn't know why he'd broke up with me.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you stay friends at all?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, we're still friends, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool.

Juliana Moraes: He's big. He's amazing. He's a counselor in a high school in the Bronx.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, cool. How would you describe your personal style, your aesthetic, your clothes or fashion or whatever you're in to?

Juliana Moraes: It's a mix. Sometimes I'm feeling punk, sometimes I'm feeling banjee girl. You know what banjee is?

Kristyn Scorsone: Hm-mmm.

Juliana Moraes: Banjee cunt. Like, the girls with the hoops and the the [makes sound of chewing gum] "What's good, Daddy?" Real Latina. Real. You know what I mean?

Kristyn Scorsone: Is that kind of like chola, or is that different?

Juliana Moraes: Something, yeah. Yeah, that would be a compare—yeah, it's chola.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay. That's cool. What inspires you? Books or music or film, or anything—

Juliana Moraes: I like documentaries. I love documentaries. I love learning about different cultures. I've always been into that since I was young. Geography, learning the capitals of the countries. What's the main exports. I don't know, marketing I guess, whatever. All that stuff, I always been keen about that. I always gravitated to that. Festivals of heritage you know what I mean? Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: You said you were involved in the center. Were you involved in any other kind of activism or activist groups or anything like that, I guess, protests?

Juliana Moraes: I'm into Sylvia Rivera Law Project. I've done things with them.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was that like?

Juliana Moraes: It was awesome. They're the ones that gave me the referral for me to get my political asylum.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay, wow. How did that go? What was that like?

Juliana Moraes: Oh, it was stressful. I broke out. I thought I was gonna lose it, 'cause you're going against that tyrant, the judge. It's tough, but I made it through.

Kristyn Scorsone: What's the process like?

Juliana Moraes: What's the process? Oh, a lot of paperwork.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is it expensive or just—

Juliana Moraes: Well, thank god I got a—right here in Newark, we have the Quakers. What is it? The friends of Quakers?

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, the American Friend Service Committee?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, something like that? They're right here. I got lucky.

Kristyn Scorsone: They helped you?

Juliana Moraes: They were so supportive and nice, kind. They really help out people that are undocumented or POC, and they're really there, not judgmental. I gotta give thanks to them every time I pass by.

Kristyn Scorsone: You just needed to fill out paperwork, and then I guess go before a judge?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, it's a lot of interviewing, and just going through it, and a lot of documentation, getting files and things. She did a lot; she did all that for me.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow, that's awesome. What do you think about current things going on in the trans movement, such as bathroom rights or increased visibility, like Laverne Cox or Janet Mock or things like that or the gender non-binary movements?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, we're in a revolution now, a sexual revolution. We made a lot of accomplishments, but it's unavoidable to talk about number 45, because we were doing so good with Obama. We could change our name, our birth, on our certificate. About the bathroom situation, people that talk about it don't really know us. That's what it comes down to. I don't go in the bathroom, I don't know, looking around.

Kristyn Scorsone: Have you ever had any confrontations in the bathroom?

Juliana Moraes: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's good.

Juliana Moraes: No, because like I said, thank god, I'm passable. I do know how to get around stuff. I'm not gonna say I'm perfect, but I've been around, and street smarts. Being in the streets at an early age, it woke me up, and I saw a lot of things, so it's like you know how to manage yourself. I'm glad we're more in the mainstream now. It's a good thing, but it always has its backlash too, of course, 'cause there's people that's gonna use that and take that as opportunity. Now they know what to look for when they see a person that's gender non-conforming, or POC. It's sad that a lot of women of color, trans women of color, are getting murdered at a high rate, because unfortunately, it could be hostile.

I never go to the other side of Newark. I would love to go see—I hear so much things about, there's little places out there, but I'm not scared, but it's like, okay, I gotta have a plan here. I'm not just gonna walk up in some neighborhood, where there's gunshots and

all that. Janet Mock and Laverne Cox, it's a great milestone for us, this fight of equality, and social justice.

Kristyn Scorsone: How do you feel about Caitlyn Jenner?

Juliana Moraes: Well, I met her. I was one of the ones—in one of the episodes, I was on it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, really. Wow.

Juliana Moraes: With the organizations, I was working with trans Latina at that time, so a bunch of trans girls, and she wanted to come and talk to us and hear from us.

Kristyn Scorsone: I think I remember that, yeah.

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, I was in there. Me and my other colleagues, we were there. She was there, and I was like, "Okay, she got her transition." She does not represent us. She does not know the struggles. Yeah, everybody's entitled to transition, but that's why she's gotten a lot of backlash, because she's—first of all, She goes against everything that – you know, Republican? And she's— [41:23]. She has been called out by a lot of girls.

You see you haven't heard anything from her lately. I guess she got the message. Because we don't need negative publicity; we have enough. We need positive role models, people that know the struggle, that know what we go through, not just some people privileged that everything was given to them, and then they wanna talk on behalf of us. That's not how it goes. My respects to everyone, but we did our little shoot. We shot in Queens too, when we were giving out condom stuff. We were talking about the area and things like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was she receptive to what you guys had to say?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's good. Have you ever watched *Transparent*?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What do you think of that show?

Juliana Moraes: Like I said, that goes back to the—it goes back to *Pose*, because it's like, thank god, *Pose* is now there, because they're actually

casting trans people and non-binary people and everybody under the rainbow. Now there's a spectrum under the umbrella. What's the name of that show?

Kristyn Scorsone: *Transparent?*

Juliana Moraes: The person casting us, it was a cis person, like *Transamerica*, like the other one of the first sex change in Denmark, remember?

Kristyn Scorsone: I don't remember.

Juliana Moraes: *A Danish Girl* or something?

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, yeah, I don't remember.

Juliana Moraes: *A Danish Girl*, remember?

Kristyn Scorsone: No.

Juliana Moraes: She had the SRS, and there was a cis guy that played her. Recently, this actor she played—

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, yeah, Scarlett Johansson?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, about playing a trans, and I was infuriated too, because come on, really? You gotta trans, and you're gonna pick a cis person to play us. I'm glad a lot of trans men stuck up, and now hopefully trans men will get the role.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, I heard she backed out, and said, I'm sorry, basically, when she realized the backlash.

Juliana Moraes: Well, yeah, it's about time.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, for sure. Have you ever been involved in the ballroom scene?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah, vaguely. I pretty much been working, or at the outdoors [unintelligible 43:57] I've been to a couple of balls. I've gotten two trophies for femme, that type of stuff. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: In Newark or New York?

Juliana Moraes: One in New York and the other one in Philadelphia.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, yeah? That's cool. Let's see. Were you able, since you can change your birth certificate, have you changed things like that?

Juliana Moraes: I changed my name, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, your drivers license and everything?

Juliana Moraes: Well, I'm still on that, 'cause I just had it done a couple of months ago, and I had surgery. I'm still running around doing things.

Kristyn Scorsone: Let's see. Do you have things that you, pet peeves, or things that you think straight people should avoid saying to trans people or doing or asking a certain question?

Juliana Moraes: Oh, typical. Yeah, when you say you're trans, "Oh, but you don't look like one." A trans person supposed to have a certain mold, and that's all? It's like a cis person, "Oh, you don't look"—that is pathetic. That and, "What was your name before you transitioned?" Little things like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: How do you feel about photos of you before you transitioned?

Juliana Moraes: They don't bother me. Actually, I don't have any, and I had some in my phone I saved from taking pictures with my family. I went to the house and took pictures.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you have advice to people out there that are thinking about transitioning, things you wish you knew?

Juliana Moraes: Follow your heart. Don't put silicone in your body. Try to look for a safe space or community where you can go to and talk to, or if you have a buddy or a friend, somebody that supports you. It's important to speak and talk, don't stay silent, 'cause then it only builds up. You know what I mean?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. What kind of things do you do for self-care?

Juliana Moraes: Self-care. Everything from working out to a vegan diet sometimes. Like today, I just had oatmeal with water. Yeah, today I ate vegan. It's funny, 'cause I don't notice it but, yeah, I've been doing a lot of it. Just oatmeal with water for breakfast. Then I have my iron pill, and then I have my workout, and I have my, maybe the powder's not vegan, but the—sometimes I do the soy protein with chlorophyll, chia seeds, cranberry juice. Oh, yeah, I put egg whites, that's not vegan. I cheated there. I usually don't do it, but anyways.

Collard greens in the blender, and beets. B-E-E-T-S, yeah beets. Carrot and blueberries, put that in and just drink that.

Kristyn Scorsone:

Sounds pretty good.

Juliana Moraes:

That's all. That's all I'm gonna eat today. Can you believe that?

Kristyn Scorsone:

Wow, yeah.

Juliana Moraes:

I know, I wanna stay young and petite.

Kristyn Scorsone:

I'm all about French fries.

Juliana Moraes:

I love that too, trust me, but it's a constant battle. No, don't do it, and if I do get it, I get four or five, and I just throw it all out. I feel so guilty. Oh, my god, oh, my god, what did I just do?

Kristyn Scorsone:

Is there anything that I didn't ask you about topically or anything that you wish I had or a memory that you have that you would love to talk about or anything like that, that maybe I didn't ask you?

Juliana Moraes:

I guess the first time that I had my breasts done and my nose, I felt like myself, putting on that dress, or going out with that outfit, and presenting. It's so empowering. It's like, my god, that's me? I still do that sometimes. My god, that's me? Oh, my god, why do guys treat you so bad? You're beautiful.

Kristyn Scorsone:

Yeah, I imagine it must have been, I don't know, a giddy feeling or something, I don't know. Pure happiness, I guess.

Juliana Moraes:

Yeah. I love just putting on, like me today, I put on this top, I was like, "No, I'm gonna go with something Rutgers colors."

Kristyn Scorsone:

Did you have friends that when they first saw you, that were super excited for you?

Juliana Moraes:

Yeah. My transition is amazing. I literally went from day to night. I never in my wildest dreams thought I'd look like this, never, ever.

Kristyn Scorsone:

You feel beautiful, right?

Juliana Moraes:

Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone:

Yeah, I would say you are.

Juliana Moraes: Thank you.

Kristyn Scorsone: What's your favorite kind of day look like?

Juliana Moraes: My favorite kind of day?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Juliana Moraes: Wow, my favorite kind of day. I wake up without cramps, I'm hydrated. I open the window. I make my money. Then, I have a cute guy text me that I've been talking to or somebody that I'm interested in, and we send pictures. We talk. We talk on the phone. We make plans, that type of deal. I bring my parrot out, I kiss him for a little bit, we snuggle.

Kristyn Scorsone: You have a parrot?

Juliana Moraes: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What's his name?

Juliana Moraes: Zee.

Kristyn Scorsone: Zee, that's cute.

Juliana Moraes: I just have a wonderful day. I don't feel guilty, 'cause society makes you feel guilty, always. I feel happy. I feel secure. I feel safe. I feel sane. My mental health is good. I'm walking down the block, with my purse in my hand, and my glasses, and I feel unstoppable.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you find inspiration in trans activists in history, like Sylvia Rivera?

Juliana Moraes: Of course, yeah. I go back to it a lot on YouTube. I like reading about the pioneers that paved the way for us. Everything from the 1800s, 1900s. Everything from, everything. Representation, and we've been around for thousands of years, from two-spirited people, Native cultures to Victorian times that show that we do. Japanese culture, everything has—I love stuff like that. It's so empowering.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. I guess that's about it, unless there's anything else you can think of that you'd wanna say, or talk about?

Juliana Moraes: How long did we take?

Kristyn Scorsone: It's probably been an—I think it's been an hour, I guess, or maybe more.

Juliana Moraes: Really?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, close to an hour.

Juliana Moraes: I told you I would finish fast.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, thank you so much.

Juliana Moraes: I told you, I knew it, 'cause I'm—

[End of Audio]

Notes:

Pg. 7 –

1. [12:51] – check with interviewee regarding name – **“Joselino Tunnez”**
2. [14:05] – check with interviewee regarding name **“Michelle Morea”**