

Transcript of Interview with Tatiyanna Shirley By Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Tatiyanna Shirley

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 01/19/2022

Location (Interviewee): Coral Springs, Florida

Location (Interviewer):

Transcriber: Angelica S Ramos

Some of the things we spoke about include:

The inadequacies of sex-ed in the USA, and a culture of shame and fear mongering about sexuality
FDA not regulating sex toys. How the sex shop industry is dominated by white women and non-binary people.
The pandemic as a humanizing experience where people can display care for one another through their actions.
Police brutality against Black people. The large presence of solidarity with BLM after George Floyd's death.
Comparing white responses to BLM calls to action pre- and mid- pandemic. Seeing a commitment from white
people to standing back and listening, having a real desire to change. Increased recognition from America settlers
about the land stolen from Indigenous people. The loneliness of doing one's part by isolating. Being in an on-off
relationship during the pandemic. Pandemic drinking culture. Caring for ourselves as a way of caring for
healthcare workers. Rick DeSantis's slow roll out in Florida; comparisons to New York. Reclaiming normalcy
post-vaccination. Testing before socializing. Vaccination and testing access. Growing up in a holistically centered
household; living in a small town. Overcoming vaccine hesitancy through compassionate dialogue. Reevaluating
social circles and prioritizing relationships. The harms associated with the USA's politicization of the pandemic.
Working an office job in January 2020 and hearing colleagues make jokes about the pandemic in other parts of
the world; ego. Depression among a generation in the 20s about what the future holds; being in a state of career
limbo. The importance of being comfortable in our bodies, rejoicing in our bodies. Gratitude and joy. Nurturing
one's inner child.

Tatiyanna Shirley 00:04

Hello.

Tatiyanna Shirley 00:06

Hi.

Kit Heintzman 00:08

Would you please start by telling me your name, the date, the time and your location?

Tatiyanna Shirley 00:13

Yes, my name is Tatiyanna Shirley. It is January 19, 2022. Currently 1:02pm. And I am currently in Coral Springs, Florida.

Kit Heintzman 00:29

And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license, attribution noncommercial sharealike?

Tatiyanna Shirley 00:40

I do.

Kit Heintzman 00:41

I would really love it. If you just started by introducing yourself to anyone who may find themselves hearing this. What would you want them to know about you and the place you're speaking from?

Tatiyanna Shirley 00:51

Yeah, I'm, like I mentioned my name is Tatiyanna. I'm born and raised Floridian. You know, I started a brand about two years ago. January, actually, so the two year mark is right around the corner, actually. And if you're, if you're January 2020, that was a few months before the pandemic hit. So I was very excited to start a business, I went in with no idea what I was really doing. I did some research. But overall, it was my first time starting a business. And then two months later, a pandemic hits and everything started to get really, really weird. For, for me, especially as I was starting to navigate new territory as a business owner, and then what that looked like, for a business owner during a pandemic. So you know, that's, that's a little bit about me and that kind of navigation there. But yeah, and it's a it's a, it's an online business, for adult toys adult novelties. Which, which is a really interesting field to get into, especially, actually, something funny is that when the pandemic hit, it was very frightening. And at the time, I realized I didn't I eventually I came to realize that adult toys work was a great industry to go into. Because no one had anything to do really except masturbate. Because everyone was not one was seeing each other everyone was social distancing, and everyone was home bored. So a lot of people ended up getting into their sexuality exploring sexually. And there is research that shows the spike, that the pandemic cause for sexual exploration. So that was honestly a pleasant surprise when I got into this industry, because trust me, that's not what I was thinking. And I wanted everyone to masturbate more. But and, you know, I also did talk about sexual wellness, and I give sex advice and self love advice and tips like that. So, you know, as I'm trying to understand, how will I get people to be more comfortable in their skin to want to explore their sexuality, their identities, their pleasure, and lo and behold, everyone's stuck at home and they're touching themselves.

Kit Heintzman 03:58

I would love you, love it. If you told me a bit about how you decided to enter the industry.

Tatiyanna Shirley 04:04

Yeah, um, honestly, I think for me and a lot of people is that we didn't really have proper sex education. And me personally, I really didn't have anyone to ask or talk to about a lot of the questions I had for myself. And back then you could research you know, what, what does this mean for my body? Like as I'm evolving into my womanhood, I'm growing breasts, I'm getting my period and I'm feeling these things as I'm exploring my identity. And every question made me feel like it, like shouldn't ask that because if you did, it was don't have sex or you'll die pretty much. And I guess just As I grew up and wanted to explore myself more, I realized everyone was lying that sex is not scary. And my body changing is not something to be embarrassed of. And I allowed that to kind of, I allowed my curiosity to kind of create that narrative for me when I got into this industry, because I didn't want people to not have someone to go to, you know, because it might might not be safe for you to ask a parent because you get shamed or judged, or to ask your peers because what if they're not experiencing that, and they tell you, You're being weird, and I just didn't want anyone to feel alone, because it can be an isolating process, as you are discovering yourself. So, you know, I, I ended up by doing that. For myself, by just researching, I researched a lot. I was self taught, obviously, no one teaches you this. And I just started exploring and reading more. And then

I learned about, you know, ecommerce, a buddy of mine, introduced it to me, and I was like, What can I What can I distribute. And it was an aha moment for me where I was like sex toy. But I knew I didn't want to just sell sex toys, I didn't want to just, you know, I want it to be a part of the conversation. And as I'm researching and understanding over the years, I realized, you know, adult toys aren't regulated by the FDA. So a lot of people end up with products that are very harmful to their bodies, getting rashes, and burns because of these chemicals. So I made it a priority to do body safe, and not just here's a toy, figure it out. I also wanted to show new ways and ideas about sexuality and the confidence it can give you when you decide to start your journey and to your sexuality.

Kit Heintzman 07:29

So you mentioned opening the business in January 2020. Do you remember when the pandemic first hit your radar when you first began to hear about it?

Tatiana Shirley 07:38

Yes, I was actually, I had a regular job, and the TV was playing at work. And the news was going crazy. Around January, February, and everyone was making jokes. And I was mortified because I was like, people are dying, and they're getting sick. And everyone just kind of HA, like laughed it off. And it was a it was a office job. So it was a lot of ego in the room and a lot of things that I just wasn't comfortable with. So I decided to leave, gratefully. So I had the privilege to leave my job and be able to move in with my parents and stay with my parents. You know, and I know that's not the the reality for a lot of people. So I did have that privilege of being able to quit, because I couldn't stand to be in that environment of people not caring. And at that time I just launched no one really knew about my business and it was just like friends supporting me buying things. And once I left, I was able It was honestly kind of great timing for me, because I was able to just dive into ardently my my online business, I was able to just dive into it. And it was slowing into that lockdown time where it was getting serious. You know, it was always serious, but the news media was locking us down. It was it was time for a lockdown. And it was actually you know, a way for my peers and I to talk so freely about ourselves and our identity. I remember doing like, you know While going on Instagram and doing lives and posting on my story, and people weren't ashamed or afraid to talk about things anymore, because maybe we all just thought it was the end of the world. And it was like fuck it let's, let's talk, you know, but overall, it was really, you know, it was really inspiring to be in that moment where suddenly when we were all alone and isolated, we tried to find a safe space within each other. Because we knew everyone was, was in this position, and everyone was scared, and you really remember to, I don't know, I feel like I felt like it was one of the most humanized moments. In a way, I know that. In some areas, it's not and then in some it was but it in that moment, it was definitely a real. I'm a I'm a person, I'm a human, and we are just trying to figure the next parts out.

Kit Heintzman 11:11

What's the word pandemic come to mean to you?

Tatiana Shirley 11:18

Chaos. Um, I just think of chaos. Because everyone you know, wants to make it political. And it's just like, it's not a political thing. It's a it's a, these are real people. And we are, we're suffering and so to make it a political stance, is just kind of not necessary. And my eyes because it's a it's it just makes it a weird war. And it's, it's not supposed to be it's how can we make this safe? And get through this together? And how can we provide the supplies and provide the tools? And what can we do to do our part? And what can you know, people in charge the people in

authority, what can they do? What haven't they done? You know? And then it was just so chaotic, the mask, mandate, you know, and people just not wanting to do it, not wanting to do it, even though every day was 1000, new record, 1000 people dead, new record 20,000 new cases, new record, new record, new record, new record, and people were still fighting, just to feel like they were right. And it's like, was it worth it? Was any of it worth it? But, you know, you, you can read stories about people saying that, I wish I actually listened, you know, I wish I actually did my part as they're on their deathbed. And it was, it's just like, ego gets so in the way of being, you know, in this moment, it was like, I'm right, they're dumb, they're, you know, they don't know what they're talking about. Masks don't work. And here we are two years later, and if the people who are saying they don't want to wear masks are wearing masks, you know, so I just I, I hear the word pandemic. And I just think it's chaotic, because so many people try to make it a game of ego and a moment of terror, when it should, it should be unifying us and making us stronger and more, you know, willing to help each other out. Because that's, that's ultimately what this pandemic leads to, is, we could really do something if we just did what was actually right. So.

Kit Heintzman 14:04

I'd love to hear more about what doing your part meant for you. In the beginning.

Tatiyanna Shirley 14:08

In the beginning, it was definitely staying inside, there was no pandemic. I mean, there, I'm sorry, there was no vaccine. So staying inside was very, very important. And you know, of course, it was lonely. And you start thinking about yourself and you start, you know, going through the waves of emotions, like, Oh, but I would really love if I could just do this, but you just need to sit still. And I think that's what the pandemic had the possibility of teaching so many people was to slow down. And, and, and just be, you know, because especially in America, you are, you're taught to just be fast pace, move instantly beyond the next thing all the time, and everyone just had to stop. And no one knew when it was going to go back to quote unquote, normal. You just had to be still and, and that was definitely a challenging part. But I think, once you sit, you know, you remember what it's for. And the value of sitting still is not only are you, you know, changing the lives of others and helping others and, you know, keeping people safe. It's also you, you, you remember that, like I mentioned, be still, you know, some people still had to work. And that's another thing, if you, you know, grocery stores are still open, businesses were still open. And so if you had the privilege not to work, and then you're going out and seeing a bunch of people, and then you go into a grocery store, or you go into a fast food, or you go somewhere, and then you just put those people who have to work and are working so hard, right, and like, in this moment, and they're terrified of like, oh, my gosh, could this be the day I get sick, you know, it was just like, if you if you had the privilege to stay home, do it, because you were really, really putting people at risk if you didn't, and the people who had no choice, but to leave their homes, it's like, Come on, we we need, we need those people to be safe and healthy, and everything, you know, nurses, doctors coming in, and, and, and so that's the beginning of like doing your part. And then when a vaccine came out, you know, it's like, get the vaccine, because it really helps you and your symptoms. And then it also helps the nurses and the doctors who have to be in there all the time. And I've read something recently about how most of the COVID cases that still come in and fill up the hospitals are from people who aren't vaccinated. And I understand that you can still get COVID with the vaccine. But I think what's most important is knowing that if you aren't going to do the vaccine, if you're not going to get it, you need to do things the original way of the pandemic, which is staying inside, keeping your mask on like Don't be that person who has their mask and is going everywhere going into clubs going to parties, and you're unvaccinated. I think if you choose to not have the vaccine, I think it's important to still carry a lot of the original ways of the pandemic. And even if you're are vaccinated, it's important to, you know, make sure you're not putting yourself in high risk

settings all the time. You know, I think it's kind of cool that a lot of places don't let you in without a negative or a vaccine card. Because it just lowers the risk. And for the people who are doing their part get rewarded, and they get to have that slice of normality. You know, they get to have that little moment of like, Oh, I remember this feeling like, you know, like, it's 2019 again, but [inaudible] pre pandemic. So I think it's like a nice, I really like that. There are things in place that I don't know a better word, but they you know, reward people for doing their part you have a vaccine or a negative. And then you can get back to some of that normality.

Tatiana Shirley 14:41

What have been some of those kinds of normality that you've been able to reclaim after being vaccinated?

Tatiana Shirley 19:22

Flying, being able to travel, just just because, you know, recently I was able to go to go back to Georgia where I have family there. So it was just good that I could see family, you know, and I was able to go to what I do, just restaurants being able to like, I love eating out like I feel like I'm a foodie in a lot of ways and just to have that experience is really nice. And I like that people take it seriously, a lot of restaurants will take it seriously like, Oh, are you eating inside, or you are taking it to go. And if you want to eat at the restaurant inside or outside, in some places, you have to have the vaccine card, otherwise you have to take it to go. And so yeah, being able to go, enjoy eating out, being able to see family and friends, being able to see friends like that, it's just great to. And I think it also like, reminds you to cherish the, your, your group of friends, you know, like you always hear quality over quantity. And I think ever since the pandemic, people have really, you know, looked at their group of friends, or the people they actually want to surround themselves with, and the people they want to spend time with. Because a lot of people broke off friendships, because of their views, on the pandemic, on masks and vaccines. And because if you think about it, it's like, okay, you're my friend, and I love you. But you are willing to put me at risk. And let's say for example, you live with your grandparents. And it's just, it's like, well, I don't want to really be around you, because you would rather put me at risk and put other people at risk. And it's like, well, how do you define love? If you're willing to do that? You know, so I, I think that I think that's really interesting. I think I think the pandemic has been such an eye opening humanizing experience for so many people, so many of us. And, you know, that I think, I think the biggest part of normality is, honestly, being able to be around the people you love again, you know, because, like I mentioned earlier with being in America, it is constantly on your toes, what's next, trying to show that you are successful, or you're somebody or something and you're validating yourself through your accomplishments, and you don't realize that you're drained or you're going overboard, or that you're, you're losing yourself, you know, and that moment, when we had to slow down, it was a really great opportunity to relearn who you are, and unlearn a lot of the things that we were shown to be normal. So, and that a big part of you know, that when you're reflecting on yourself, and growing into yourself, and redefining who you are, after everything, I think a big part of that discovery is also discovering who you want to be around, and the friends and, and the family members because, you know, just because they're blood doesn't necessarily mean that they have to be a constant in your life. You know.

Kit Heintzman 23:22

Thank you so much for that.

Tatiana Shirley 23:26

Thank you.

Kit Heintzman 23:27

Um, so 2020 became kind of like, notoriously 2020 Have ever skyrocket, like, crashing. And then 2021 also does not have a great reputation for having been particularly kind to us and 2022 kind of feels like it's off to a rough start. And some of that has been the pandemic, but there's also been a whole lot else going on in the world. And wondering if you would say something about what the other social, political structural issues have been on your mind over this period of time?

Tatiana Shirley 24:02

Yeah, um, honestly, 2022 I feel like has been one of the one of the slivers of hope. And 2020 during the pandemic, we we saw a lot of police brutality going on. And it was affecting a lot of black people, which made everyone, Okay, so when, like I mentioned earlier, everyone was thinking that that humanistic side really showed where it was like how do we be better for one another? What can I do what can my part be? And in that everyone was in the pandemic and isolating and staying to themselves but when, when police brutality became a huge thing, even in the pandemic, black men were dying, fathers were, black fathers were dying. Mother, black mothers, you know, black kids. Not it's just there was a lot of it. And when George Floyd died, everyone came out of the streets, out to the streets, to walk and March and, and fight for something they believed in. And I think that was another moment of like, humanized moment of what can we do for each other? What can we do because this, this life of ours, as we've, as we know, it is not promised as something as a natural disaster like the pandemic. It's a lot more than it needs to be, you know, when it is natural disasters and natural disasters, but something so preventable, like police brutality, and killing, and murderers, that is something that is just all around wrong, and it's what are we doing? And then what am I not doing? What could I be doing differently? So you saw a lot of white people wanting to wanting to change. And I think that was because Black Lives Matter has been around for years. And I don't think anyone took it too seriously. And by anyone, I mean, white people. But I think when the pandemic happen, and killings were happening, we, white people actually wanted to listen this time, I don't know what shifted for them mentally. But I think a good portion wanted to actually listen, and not have a voice in it because their voice wasn't necessary. And one of the things that happened, you know, in that my online business, you know, it's obviously black, don't, I'm a black female business owner. One of the things that happen is that you saw a lot of people within the sex positive community, which is dominated by white, you know, non binary and white women. And they put our voices out there. So you saw black female sex shops, black non binary sex shops, you saw black fluid, gender fluid, sex shops that were just being displayed. Throughout which was really, really cool, because my timeline started to, to look like look, look more, more inclusive. You know, I saw just people of color in general, starting to have a voice or having space and a community that we were doing so much for, but weren't getting a lot of recognition for it was like our work was done in the shadows, and other, you know, white brands were growing and growing. So that was one of those things where it was just like right in your face. They were finally letting black people have a voice and say something without trying to talk over us or play white savior or anything of that nature. It was it was literally hey, here are black own shops, go support and then that was it in the floor was ours. And I think that's a really, really great start, especially in the sex positive community because a lot of sex positive people and people on their sexual expert sexual journey don't really look like the people in in charge or the people who are dominating that world. So it was really cool to really cool to see new faces who have been there honestly, for a long time. Me I started in 2020 So I was a new face and It was great that I was accepted in and I was able to use my voice and tell my narrative. And no one was talking over me. And that was that was really refreshing. And, you know, I think, overall, the pandemic really led to us wanting to do better for each other. Everyone wanted to, I mean, not everyone, but I think I think a good a good portion, a lot of us really just wanted to do better after having almost a Skyfall you know, with the pandemic, I think everyone

wanted to do better and not be the same person, they were 2019. And before, because it was eye opening, and then 2021 You know, it was 2021 it was also I don't think anyone really switched up, honestly. But I do think things toned down a bit. And things kind of went back to, you know, but I think everyone became more aware, you know, people were sharing black stories, black authors, black poets, people were really like, hammering down, you know, Native Americans and how this is their land, and not ours. And I just think that, like, so much truth was brought forth. Or us that you had no, but you had no reason to, I don't know, live with so much ego. As before, I think I think the pandemic became a very humbling experience, if you were really willing to, to allow it to be

Kit Heintzman 32:16

I'm curious, what does health mean to you?

Tatiana Shirley 32:21

Gosh, I don't even know anyone. I don't even know anymore. I feel like personally, I was a lot healthier. Before the pandemic, I think I paid attention to it more. And then during the pandemic, I was super, super. After, like, I settled into the idea that we are on lockdown. I started, you know, everyone would drink, like, a wine every night, go on Skype, chat with their friends, and it just be wine nights wine, and movies. And I think that's like, for me, I really got into that. And that was like, one of the really big downs of the pandemic is there was you just you're so bored. And you just want to add a drink to spice it up. So, I don't know, I'm like, in that position where I'm having to shift the idea of health and, and get back to it because before I before the pandemic I was, I was vegetarian. And so I wasn't eating any meat. And I didn't really do it for health, I just kind of was just living that way. Um, and then the pandemic happened and I was bored and I wanted to drink. And then now we're, I would say for me personally, the past year 2021 I reshift I shifted back into societal acts of you know, going back to work because even though I have an online business, I still work a nine to five and you know, so I overall was back in a desk and I was just sitting on my computer and you're just sitting on your computer all the time, especially from the pandemic everyone's remote. Or if you go back to work you're a lot of us are at a desk and we're just at a desk on our screen. So I don't know health is it has to be redefined for for me because I am back on that journey. I actually want to get back into not my old ways but because those probably weren't healthy too but in a new way that feels good for me. And also feels like ok, this is this is great. I mean, of course, with how, you know, I prioritize the COVID-19 and not wanting to get COVID. And I prioritized, you know, drinking water, you know, those were like the things that I I kept prioritize. And I think, you know, that's probably a good start for health. Um, you know, and movement, you know, it's nice to take a walk sometimes just move or dance. I think that is my favorite way to just move is to remember that I am able to just listen to music and and move to it. And I just I like to do that. But like I said, health has to be redefined for me because it's gotten a little wonky.

Kit Heintzman 35:58

What are some of the things you want for your own health and the health of people around you?

Tatiana Shirley 36:05

For my own health, I definitely want to feel good in my body. You know, and same for the people I love. I've noticed a lot of my peers, I'm in my 20s. And so, so I talked to a lot of my friends. And it just seems like we're all in that depressed state of will we even get a future, you know, because of climate change and natural disasters. It's, it's very odd. For us, because 10 years ago, we were thinking about a time of, yeah, 10 years with or, yeah, 10 years ago, I'm sorry, we were thinking about a time where it's like, you have to be successful, you have to get a

job, you have to do this, you have to do that you gotta go to college, you got to do this got to do that. And that was like, on everyone's mind. And then here we are 10 years later, it's not the same. And a lot of us are like, I think in a state of limbo. So overall, for health, I would just love it, if if we could actually enjoy getting up in loving our bodies and being comfortable in our skin, I think that is probably one of the best things we can try to do for our health. Because if you don't, if you're not, you're you're literally stuck with your body. So you have to get, get comfortable with it, you have to hold it, you have to nourish it. And we haven't been given the best, you know, best space to do that. But, you know, when you're in the middle of millennial and Gen Z, you are like, Oh, my world is collapsing. So who cares anyways? and then you're also like, but what is there that I can enjoy and feel gratitude for and, and experience? That makes me remember, I'm alive. So I don't know, it's a really big toss up. Like it's a side of two coins. But I think it's it's best to lean toward hope. Because when we look at the pandemic and everything and like I mentioned it, it really humanized a lot of us and I think if if we continue during continue toward a path of humanity, or choosing, choosing people there there is hope for the people who are teenagers and young adults and adults and, and elders and everyone, there's chance for everyone, you know, my my generation doesn't even want to have children. Because, I mean, obviously that's not the only reason but one of the reasons is if you've if you've wanted children before, a lot of us don't now, which is very odd. So it's it's definitely interesting. So I think all I want really is us for us to feel good in our own bodies and and like waking up with the sun and like putting, you know, drinking water and and brushing their teeth and making like combing their hair, just little things that like remind you that there is a body and it's yours and it's okay to give it love and give it nourishment. I think that would just be a really good start.

Kit Heintzman 39:59

What does Safety mean to you?

Tatiyanna Shirley 40:04

Um, safety, to me, means home. I think, personally, for me, it's just, it's just nice to know that you have home and that can be a person, it could be a place, it could be an actual home, but to know that there is that they're waiting for you, or that they're available to you is, is a really safe feeling that there's some something or someone to return to.

Kit Heintzman 40:48

There's been this very sort of narrow functionalist conversation about safety in the context of COVID-19. If we were to shrink down to that conversation that we've been having, I mean, like us as a structure, not you and I right now. What are some of the ways you've been determining what feels safe to you? And how have you been negotiating that with others? I know, you had said that you are living with family. So how have those conversations gone?

Tatiyanna Shirley 41:20

Yeah, um, you know, wearing wearing masks being vaccinated. You know, I think when we're looking at that, it's, it's do you care enough for the people around you, you know, because other than that, I don't think you care too much about your own safety. I don't think that you care too much about yours or others. Actually, funny story, someone I knew, was throwing a New Year's party, but you couldn't come in without being tested first. Well, someone had a positive COVID test, and begged the host to let them in, begged them. Please, please. It's okay. Like, I just it's what like, What am I, what else am I going to do spend New Years alone? Just thinking so selfishly. So. I mean, to me, I just think that is cruel. And obviously, the host was like, No, you cannot, you need

to go home, you know, and then on a very calm, like, on the opposite side of that someone else had a positive and accepted it and went home and was like, I understand I'll, and spent the night home on New Years, which is nothing wrong with that. But the other person who begged to come in after being told to go home, just went to a bar to celebrate. And I just think that is the lowest thing you can do, especially when every time you turn on your phone, turn on your computer, you look outside, there's someone out like this, there's there's someone dying of this, of COVID. And, you know, that, to me is it's like you don't care, you just don't care about any ones safety, about anyone's well being and you are so self driven. I mean, it is one night is one night of being alone on it. And if you do that, and you surround yourself with your friends and you get your friends sick, then well, what the hell, now you know, all your friends are sick, and it's, it's on you. And then because because there are times where it's unintentional, but that is like the most intentional thing you could do. You know, when you don't know you're exposed versus knowing that you've been exposed. And there are people who have to, if you don't live with your parents or your grandparents and they're older, maybe you're a caretaker, maybe you go visit them, maybe you go see them. And that is that is a huge thing to try to do. And that bar she went to I'm sure someone in there takes care of someone and it's just not it's just not okay. You know, showing that you're vaccinated showing that you have a negative are all parts of taking precautions to ensure that the people you love and your species the human race is okay. Is the least. As you can do it is, it's not the end of the world to have to stay home and miss a party, especially when you're younger and your survival rate is higher, you have a better chance and you're overall a healthy person, you're going to be able to go back to your lifestyle and parties and 14 days, you know, like, you'll be able to bounce back, you know, and so I just think that just just sucks. And anyone who was probably like, oh, I don't know if I want to go out tonight, I don't know. And then I was like, you know, fine. I didn't do anything last year for New Year's, I'll do something this year for New Years. And then they're just going back, innocently, they did their part, they made sure they were negative. They're just like, they're to enjoy this party. And they did their part. And they're hoping everyone else did their part. And now they've been exposed, and are probably like, Why did I go out and regretting the whole thing? Because someone else could have prevented the whole issues to begin with by staying home. And so you just, you screw up a lot of people. And in a very, it's just very selfish.

Kit Heintzman 46:21

Can I ask how your New Year's was?

Tatiana Shirley 46:24

My New Year's was very lovely. I spent it with my boyfriend and his family. We had went to New York for Christmas. And before, I mean, once we got back we tested. So that way we could know if we could go. And it was interesting, because so we did the PCR test. And it takes a few days. And we did not get it on New Year's Eve. I mean, we were waiting all day New Years Eve there was no results. And then two hours, three hours before the party, we got our email negative, negative. And it was, it was nice. And then we spent it with his family. And it was cute. So good time.

Kit Heintzman 47:22

What's partnership meant to you during the pandemic?

Tatiana Shirley 47:29

I actually really struggled with partnership during that relationship. I, my boyfriend I have been together on and off for about three or four years, and we broke up during the pandemic. And I found myself just like dating and exploring because I, you know, he was my first serious relationship. So I start to date and talk to other people

through like Skype, which is really cool, or FaceTime, which is really cool. Because you actually just start to really get to know people. And then you're just talking for hours. But overall, I think after lockdown, I really started to think about what was important to me. As I'm like transitioning back into the daily life, I started to realize what was super important to me. And all the other people that I talked to. It was it was just it wasn't companionship that you could see like, oh, I want to be by your side during moments like these, you know. And so me and my partner, we got back together. And I think we really, really grew a lot from the pandemic and being able to honor and nourish each other a lot more. And I think that's just really important for relationships in this moment, you saw a lot of people get divorced after having to do the lockdown. Even my parents separated from the lockdown. And so it's really interesting how I think you really just it going back to like, the fast pace of America. You're always at work. You're never around your spouse, you're never around your children. So you forget kind of what they're like or who they became, you miss a huge chunk of everyone's life. And then you're now you're sitting with it every day. It's a pandemic stress levels are high. And that's that's what's so intense. Seeing it, there's a lot of love missing prior to the pandemic. Because no one really had time to nourish love, no one really had time, or made time, there's always time, but no one made time to nourish love. Instead, it's just about, oh, this, this bill needs to be paid. And this, I have to have this new car because my neighbor just got a new car. It's just competition. And it's just, you know, just ego all around. And so I think that's really interesting is that you don't, you end up forgetting who, or missing out on a lot of new changes. When it comes to your partner, your children, your, you know, best friends, let's say you're rooming with them, and you're confined with them. And, you know, for me my relationship, I was just, I was young. So I was I was just kind of like, what else is there and then you realize the what else doesn't always shine, you know, the grass is always greener, where you water it. And it's, it's really interesting how that can play out and what path you choose to take when both roads are open to you. You know, some sometimes there isn't a path to choose, just really end up in a situation where it needs like rescuing. But when you have two paths displayed, or I mean, there's always more than two paths, but when you have these paths laid out for you, it's just interesting how it can play out what based off your decisions. And I just really, really saw how relationships really had a lot of love lacking because of everything that society demands for us. And you end up you end up losing sight to a lot of a lot of things.

Kit Heintzman 52:21

I would love to hear a little about how you decided to get vaccinated, but then, after that decision, how accessible was actually getting the vaccine? And then what was that experience like?

Tatiana Shirley 52:35

Yeah, um, I'll be honest, I was kind of scared of the vaccine. But that's because I didn't make time to do my, to read up. I didn't make any time to do it. So I was honestly very scared of the vaccine. Just because I was I was very uneducated about it. I was like, they made it so fast. What is, like, I don't know if I need this, like, what, what is this? And I grew up in like, a vegan household. So we didn't really grow up with medicine, everything was very holistic. You know, if you had a cold, you didn't take Advil, you, you know, there were other things we would do. And so and we're not used to like my household is not used to having colds or getting sick. So this is just like very, like, oh, gosh, like, you know, um, but when we, when the vaccine came out, I I took my time. Not only was it not available to me, because older people got it first, you had to be a certain age to get it. And then Florida took its time to to really get it together. You know, our governor. I don't even know who it is Ron DeSantis is one of those guys. He Yeah, Ron DeSantis. He, it just it was always like really challenging to or the, they didn't rush it, you know, it wasn't a priority for us here and especially in my age group. So it wasn't assessable like that, but it gave me a lot of time to think about if I wanted to do it. And then my my boyfriend is also a nurse. So fortunately,

I had his very intelligent-self teach me a thing or two in about the vac how this vaccine is safe, you know, because, like, I don't go anywhere. I don't know if I need the vaccine. I don't know what this is. And he's sending me articles, send me facts. Let me ask my questions. And I was like, oh, oh, oh, so it's like any vaccine. It's like any vaccine. And, of course, I went and got my I got vaccinated in June, a little earlier than maybe May, June, May or June, I got vaccinated. And, yep, I live. And a smallish town, Coral Springs is pretty small town. And we have a Walgreens right next to us. So I was able to do it pretty conveniently. Um, once I made the decision to. Now getting tested for COVID is a huge challenge. Getting vaccinated became very accessible, I would say in in the summertime It didn't matter, If you were, you know, not an elder, or, or not, you could you could get the vaccine, and they were, it was it was started, it was becoming very encouraged, actually. And so I think that's something to be said about people who are a little anxious about, you know, a vaccine like that, is that there, there's a lot of research that's done, these are professionals, they're scientists who, in their health care specialists that really know what they're talking about, and they do a lot for us. And, you know, I don't think I don't think at the end of the day, when you have people showing you and informing you and not making you feel stupid, for wanting to not know of being on the fence of something, when you have someone who educates, or, you know, makes you aware of something. I think that's a really great thing, because so many people are scared in this era. And it can make you freeze, or it could make you unaware of situations because you don't want to always look at the news. So that I was actually I was very happy that I did the vaccine, I did the Pfizer, so those two shots, it went swimmingly for me went very well, um, maybe a headache I got after the second, but nothing memorable. Um, where it was like, Oh, it was a really bad, bad shot. And it wasn't for me. So overall, I was even if it were a bad one, I was like, Okay, you're dealing with a cold for two days or a feeling of a cold for two days. And then you are better protected. So it was a happy with that I that I went with it. And it's accessible. I'm not too sure. Now, this was 2021 in the middle of 2021. So I'm not too sure how accessible it is. If you haven't gotten it yet, in the south Florida area.

Kit Heintzman 58:23

You had mentioned that testing was less accessible. Would you say something about that?

Tatiana Shirley 58:28

Yeah. There are lines that wrap around the parks and streets to get a test, it took, it takes like three hours to get a test, you know. And then three, four or five days to get your results on PCR when PCR did a pretty good job of 48 hours. And some people were waiting, like, yeah, 3,4,5,7 days a week, you know. So that's something that just really started to complicate things, and then to get an at home test is pretty challenging, too. You know, I went to go get a test done. So that way I could go back to work. And I couldn't get tested anywhere it was it was absolutely mad. And finally I found one at a pediatrician. And I was like, Oh my gosh, I'm probably too old to be here. And so they, you know, they tested me and everything after I waited five hours and I had an appointment. It was awful. And a big part of that was apparently there's an exposure at one of the elementaries nearby and everyone was bringing their sick kids and and so that's another thing Florida, does not care about masks mandate, they don't care about seeing your vaccine card, they don't pay attention to any of that. That's why, you know, I was really amazed when I went to New York and I was just like, this system needs to be implemented in Florida, because it's a really effective system. And so, right now, people were being exposed and not wearing the mask anywhere. And then all of a sudden, you're feeling symptoms, and you want to get a test. And now you have to wait three days to get you, to take a test. And then you got to wait five days to get your results. And then next thing you know, it's already day 10. And let's say you come back positive, sorry, day 10 of your, of having COVID. Because of the extreme wait that comes, and usually COVID Takes about 14 days. And now CDC says

if you, if you don't feel symptoms in five days, and still have a positive, you can go back to work, which I think is just gnarly, it's absolutely just mad. So that, that's, that's the reality, more people have a higher chance of being exposed. And then to get a test takes forever to get your results take forever. And next thing you know, you're probably almost done with your, your, your COVID.

Kit Heintzman 1:01:37

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Tatiyanna Shirley 1:01:43

2022 gratefully, so has been a pleasant start. And so that makes me feel definitely hopeful. I, I feel that the future, immediate future could go one or two ways, you know, we can keep creating chaos, you know, and trying to pick sides of a pandemic, when the pandemic is always just going to be a pandemic, who you cannot, you know, use a pandemic as a tool to make people do what you like, like, I don't I just the pandemic has become such a tool to make people act out. And I'm like, if we just get a grip on this, we we wouldn't have been in year 2022 Still wondering, you know, when can things you know, when can there be be be real, a real difference and the stats and the statistics. So but if everyone gets vaccinated and learns more about the vaccine, vaccine, and, you know, honors humanity honors each other, prioritize, you know, moving with love and, and being with in sizes of quantity, quality over quantity, I think I think we have a better chance of, of learning from each other and doing better for one another.

Kit Heintzman 1:03:34

What are some of your hopes for a longer term future?

Tatiyanna Shirley 1:03:36

No pandemics, like no extreme climate changes, no, things like that, you know, I actually just, I just wanted the world to be safer, a safer place overall. I mean, there's gun violence, there's extreme weathers, there's the pandemic, that who knows could be be still going on in 20 years, and a different scale, or a new pandemic. And you know, and so, I just, I would rather us come together, because there are obvious signs of issues. That no one is, not enough people are doing something about it, and they very much can. And there's a lot of people who can do something about it, but they're leaving it up to citizens who make, you know, four or five and six figures a year. And there are people in power who have millions and billions of dollars. But you want to take out of the pockets of like someone who makes \$7,000 a year or even someone who makes \$100,000 a year, it's nothing in comparison of their wallet and what they can do. And they just don't because it's not a it's not a, quote unquote good business choice. It's just an insane what's the point of having a business? If it's not if the whole world collapses, you know? So it's, it's a lot of greed that goes on. And I definitely hope that we can do better by that kind of forgot the question [inaudible] went into? Hopefully, I answered it.

Kit Heintzman 1:05:40

You did. Everything, everything, every answer you give is a gift, and I'm really grateful.

Tatiyanna Shirley 1:05:44

Oh, thank you.

Kit Heintzman 1:05:47

What, so you've already touched on some of this already, but I was wondering if there was anything else you had to say about what self care has meant to you during the pandemic?

Tatiana Shirley 1:05:55

Yeah, um, maybe, maybe I'm biased, but exploring your body, because you realize that it's yours. And you spend a lot of time, um, you know, like, if you're actively having sex, you are, like, so infatuated with this person and their body. And that this, and then you're mean to yourself later, or like, in your private privacy, and I just, you know, I think that a big part of self love is like, being able to look at yourself in the mirror and look at your body and look at your, the parts of you and just think, Wow, look how much my body does for me, like holding your stomach and being like, thank you so much for feeding me and giving me new nutrients. And, you know, like, Thank you like thinking all parts of you, things that you think are shaped funny actually have a very useful value to it. And so when you realize that your body is literally just this amazing, amazing, like, light, like living thing, like it is literally they're taking care of you. You don't even have to think about your you don't even have to think about like, your heart beating. It just does. It just does. And that's a it's a really cool thing. And so, self love, I think it's just like looking at all those pieces that you pick apart and just realizing like Wow, you are doing so much for me and I love my body and I love what you do for me. And also, another is like, your inner child something about the pandemic, there's just nothing to do. So what do you what, what's a good way to feel? Like entertain your mind? Drawing, you know, how when's the last time you got crayons and markers or paint out, you know, dancing or putting on music or playing, you know, just feeling good to play. And that that's a big part of like, really connecting with you, yourself and your body and your being because it is a fascinating thing that we get to experience once you realize like, you are here and no one can really explain why but we're here and we don't, and we can bend our fingers and we can put like we can, you know like there's just there's just so many things about us that are fascinating. And if we take that moment to be like wow, I am fascinating I am I am so here like there this is it this is real I'm really here and be amazed by that and just loving your body like you know it's okay to touch your body it's okay to like you know when you're like oh my gosh, that person is so sexy to say that for yourself to um so I think you know big part of self love yes there's like, put in your face mask or you know I don't know good do yoga like those things, of course are another like another assisting I think to assist you with like, serotonin, but I think once you go deeper, because sometimes you can just be doing things to feel like whole but when you like reconnect with your inner child and you like honor your body and listen to your body, and just like realize what your body is a it's just it's the greatest tool of like into self love.

Kit Heintzman 1:09:59

This is my second last question, and it's a little odd. We know we're in this moment where there's a flurry of biomedical research happening. And I'm wondering what you think people in the social sciences and in the humanities can be doing right now, to help us understand the human side of this?

Tatiana Shirley 1:10:21

Well, that's a really good question. Um, I think one is looking outside of, because I don't really know what the biomedical point of view is my perception as a person outside of that is, they probably look at things from a capitalistic point of view. But I could be entirely wrong, I truly am just not sure. So I don't want to seek that. But like, at the end of the day, like, I feel like the most human thing you can do is to have the people in mind and what's going to best benefit them over then, you know, a trophy, like, you're the first to discover this, or over the, you know, how much money you can make for discovering that. I think if, you know, with humanity in mind, and just wanting to have the solutions, thinking about, you know, what the pandemic has shown us, and really just

letting us like, letting letting like humans like be your driving force, for for results and for action, is the best thing you can do. Just like when I think of like social justice for black people, it's like, okay, let's step away from like, this is not a political issue, this is a human issue. And these were getting killed, or like, we're not a political moment for you to kind of like, well, this is what my side says, and this is what you're in, this is my sign and all this nonsense, it's like, there, there's a tiny person that law enforcement just killed. And he, like, we're really gonna, like, make this political right now. Like, it's, it's, it's it just, I think people are so desensitized to a lot of things. And I think, you know, and with science, and, you know, research like that, I know, they do incredible things. But overall, if if they are doing it with humanity in mind, then I think so much more. Recently, I think it'll just lead to better better results, you know, because even climate change, a lot of things aren't happening because of capitalism, you know, and now and the vaccine, it's like it was a race to who's going to do it first, you know, who's going to who's going to come up with the first vaccine. So, it, everything ends up being capitalistic, and you forget about humanity. I know, there might be a sprinkle of it in there somewhere. Or maybe it's not the forefront for a lot of scientists. But I think that'd be the key is just to erase the capitalist, trophy winning mindset of it all. I hope that answered it.

Kit Heintzman 1:13:46

It absolutely did. This is my last question. It's also odd. I want you to imagine some historian in the future one far enough in the future that they have no lived experience of this pandemic, this pandemic [inaudible] to at least one generation later than that.

Tatiana Shirley 1:14:08

Okay.

Kit Heintzman 1:14:08

Speaking as someone inside it right now, what stories would you tell them are fundamentally important to be remembered, what can't be forgotten about this moment?

Tatiana Shirley 1:14:25

Let me sit with that for a second.

Tatiana Shirley 1:14:33

I would, I would definitely say one thing you don't want to forget. Is that about the way we treated each other, and the results that came with it, you know, the way we handled our politics, the way we handled our neighbors, our, our jobs if you guys have jobs or, you know, we, we lived in a world that was so competitive, and so motivated by money, capital, and it destroyed a lot of our minds. And it separated us it led to killings, deaths, people going against each other, dividing us, amongst each other, if there is such a thing, it's so far ahead as black and white, you're told, let it be a verse, you know, don't let it be verse black and white, you know, because it really, it really leads to a lot of a lot of pain. So I just don't want you guys to forget about the way we treated each other because it was all done wrong. It was it was done. Not in the best way. And when you remember, you know, like you, you shouldn't forget slavery or the Holocaust, because it's a remember, it's a reminder of how this just was wicked, it was just wrong. So love each other, love people better. Think with people in mind, humanity, and mind. Because everything else in between, it's just not worth it. At the end of the day.

Kit Heintzman 1:16:47

Thank you so much for your time, and everything you've shared. And that's it for my questions. At this point, I just want to open up some space. If there's anything you'd like to say that my questions haven't facilitated.

Tatiyanna Shirley 1:17:02

Um, yeah, no, thank you so much. This is actually a really, really refreshing to do. Even though I'm sweating, like, wow, that was, you know, it was really cool. And no, I mean, I feel like I said a lot into overall, I think there is hope, because life itself, Earth itself will continue with or without us. And if 1000s and 1000s of years into the future, there's someone who can access this hundreds or hundreds of years who can access this and, and see, you know, see this, we, overall, I just I like, I'm sorry, I spaced out. But I'm just rounding it back up the life continues with or without us. So if we want to make sure that we can do better for this earth than we have to start. Because How amazing would that be to know that someone can hear history from 2022 and 100 years later, hear it and see what we did. And what we could have done better. You know, I would love to just be able to see what life could look like in 100-200 years. Because it would it'll be fascinating. Life will always be fascinating and life will always continue. And so yeah, it's really it is really awesome that this that you guys are doing this.

Kit Heintzman 1:19:05

Thank you so much.

Tatiyanna Shirley 1:19:07

Thank you