

Pride TO – Black, Queer and Trans Excellence Podcast: S2E3

Aisha Fairclough

LENGTH – 59:10

SPEAKERS: Hollywood Jade, Aisha Fairclough

Hollywood Jade 0:00

You're listening to pride Toronto's black, queer and trans excellence podcast, where we honor and celebrate the black experience through the lens of the LGBTQ2+ community with honest conversations about embracing Black joy. I'm your host Hollywood Jade (Music plays.)

Hollywood Jade 0:29

Coucou bonsoir. Welcome back to another episode of Black, queer and trans excellence. I am once again your host Hollywood Jade and happy to be here. I have a very, very special and very important and influential guest. today. My guest is a filmmaker and television producer, co founder of body confidence Canada, she has developed and produced unscripted content for several networks including own Canada slice HGTV, Showtime Global TV, Food Network Canada, and honestly guys, this list just goes on and on and on. This guest sits on the board of the Inside Out LGBTQ2+ Film Festival. They are on the Advisory Council for X University. Like just so impressed with and honored to have the one and only Aisha Fairclough here with me today. How are you?

Aisha Fairclough 1:32

I am good. I am honored and excited. slightly nervous because I don't know what I'm going to say to be on this podcast, depending on your question. So thank you for having me on.

Hollywood Jade 1:42

Please don't be nervous. I'd really like people to think of this and the feedback that I've gotten from doing this is people literally feel like they are in a conversation with me and a friend around like a table. You know, so like, hopefully, you, you don't feel too nervous because all of this conversation is rooted and based around you and all of your amazing accomplishments. I guess where I want to start having this conversation with you is around how did you get into like filmmaking and television producing because I don't know too many black women who are filmmakers and television producers personally

Aisha Fairclough 2:26

Okay, well, you know, I'll make a long story short, I actually started in high school. I had a wonderful Co Op teacher who helped me get an internship at a company then called Electric entertainment. The show, the company produced a show called Jane Houghton live. They also produced sex with Sue Johansen that's how long ago but I'm also like 16 So I don't know how all this is possible...haha... But Sex With Sue Johansen so I, I was able to sit in the studio. I also did the teleprompter there once. And from there. I worked there every summer, and I got to observe how some shows were being made. After that, I actually interned at Much Music. Back when there was Master T. Master T on, on the Da Mix.

Hollywood Jade 3:20
On Da Mix Yup

Aisha Fairclough 3:21

And that actually happened. I don't know if she knows this. Oh, you do keep in touch. I had stopped Namugenyi in Eaton center. And I told her I really wanted to get into TV, how do I how do I do this? Like, I wonder I want to intern the rap city. And she told me to contact the producer. So you know, on this journey, there has to be people that help you along on your way. So she was pivotal pivotal in me getting my internship just because she took five minutes to speak with me. So I contacted the producer, a black woman at the time pedal Baptist who was wonderful. And I interned at rap city I interned at Da Mix I was there when Master T had his I believe it was a 10th anniversary. I met all cool celebrities. I have no pictures, no documentation. Because you mean a it's, it's work. And B we didn't have our we didn't have cell phones like the way that we do now. Right?

Hollywood Jade 4:17

Yeah, it wasn't it wasn't giving stop and take a picture because you'd have to actually bring a camera.

Aisha Fairclough 4:24

Right! This is this is taking me back. So you know, meeting, meeting some celebrities and being a kid and being excited and nervous. But I did it. I did it because there were people that that helped. There were people that said hey, you, you have you know, you have this thirst you have this hunger, you want to be here, do it. So I started off interning working there when they had also electric circus, a little bit of MMVAs just, just wrangling PA work. Kind of whatever. I could do

Hollywood Jade 5:01

Yeah. Learning, learning about the industry from the inside of the industry. Yes, yes. And working your way up

Aisha Fairclough 5:08

Working, working my way up. And then from there, I did research I was at... I don't want to go through my whole resume. But you know...

Hollywood Jade 5:17

No please, that's what this is about. Because like, like I said, like, for me, it's really impressive. Knowing you in a personal way, but also knowing you in a professional sense and seeing like, one of the things that I didn't mention early on which we will get to later is having the privilege of working with you and under you as talent on one queen, five queers and seeing a black woman and pardon my French, but just be a boss ass bitch was like the, like, it warms my heart. And like it always, for me triggers the question of like, how did you get here? And like you said,

there's people on along the way who have helped but you've had this inside of you. There's like, there's like, I can see it, it radiates out of it, there is a desire to make a difference.

Aisha Fairclough 6:13

Yeah, you know that you hit the nail on the head. I wanted, I wanted to make a difference. I started to intern in high school. Because I wanted to make a difference, you know, grew up, I would some people say shy, I like to say quiet or, or reserved. I speak when I need to. And when I have something to say I will be sure to tell you. And I have no problem being behind the scenes.

Hollywood Jade 6:36

Ahh, that's another good point.

Aisha Fairclough 6:38

Yeah, no problem doing it. I mean, I've done things in front of the camera. Cool. I'll do it. I won't say no...haha

Hollywood Jade 6:45

Right, but you're also okay, being behind the scenes, and a lot of people, some people aren't

Aisha Fairclough 6:51

No, totally comfortable with doing that. And I wanted to make a difference. And I thought that, you know, television was a medium in which a way, it was a way that you could you could make a difference. I've been privileged to work on some shows, that I think has made a difference. Just in terms of casting, you know, being a black, queer woman and not necessarily always seeing yourself on television, you know, growing up having to deal with homophobia and all that was just a treat. Not Not, not a treat got really, really difficult, really difficult. But there were there. TV has such such a huge impact on on who you are. It also has an impact on how your family sees you at time. You know, my mother is a black Jamaican woman. And she has she's come a long way. Not perfect, but she Oh my gosh, so much more supportive. Now she'll say to me, Oh, I Aisha. Do you know so? And so? You should call them and I'm like, maybe not all gay people know each other. Like, she really thinks that "oh, you should contact," when I was doing you know, the plus blogging, "Aisha you must contact Oprah, contact her. Shes going to want to see you" and I'm like...

Hollywood Jade 8:16

yeah, just just just just casually call Oprah.

Aisha Fairclough 8:18

She's on my phone, I'm just gonna, I'm just gonna call her I'm just gonna call her...haha

Hollywood Jade 8:23

Isn't and, and you're saying a lot of things that I'm sure not just me, but most of our listeners can probably relate to were like, That's what also makes your journey so impressive is like, I

know that the battle here for you, being a black queer woman was not easy. Like we there was a lot of of following things and, and, and turning the other cheek that I'm sure you had to endure in order to now be in the position that you're in.

Aisha Fairclough 8:56

Yeah, you know, I did. I'm I wish I didn't have to endure it. I mean, at times, I did use my voice. You know, I've had subtle things say to me, oh, my gosh, I had somebody referred to me as Medea onset.

Hollywood Jade 9:10

Oh, my gosh...

Aisha Fairclough 9:12

Um, I've had, I had a director I worked with many, many years ago who said, you know, well, don't tell the producers that you're gay. Don't tell the producers because you know, you know how they are. Yeah, countless, countless experiences that could be deterring, and they are discouraging, and they hurt. You know, pretending to these things don't hurt or make you question. Do I belong here? Should I stay here? Who can I speak to would be false just oh my gosh, it's been perfect. It hasn't been perfect. There have been times when I've been downright depressed because of the industry and questioning my value and my worth and my contribution. Happy that I've stuck in grateful that there are organizations that have been around for their origin Patients that have come and go. There's BIPOC, film and TV. Just to name a few. There's real world there's access real world there is REMC. There's OYA. There's a ton of organizations now that I wish existed. That being said, in the past, there were I remember I attended something called Innoversity, which was about promoting, you know, well, now we say BIPOC, "BIPOC," which is my favorite term because I'm a black woman.

Hollywood Jade 10:30

Okay, I just want to pause you for one second, can we please just talk about it? Because honestly, fame. I mean, sometimes I feel like a black woman, but I definitely am a black man.

Aisha Fairclough 10:41

Yes, yes

Hollywood Jade 10:41

And that is okay. It is not degrading to me, and then I'm not insulted by that. And I get that we are in a culturally sensitive and transformative time. And, we, I, I am and you are a generation where we didn't take everything and internalize it so much. So like, Thank you for saying that. Like, and it's it's refreshing to hear other people say, because I feel like I, it's almost we're almost made to feel like saying, a black man is inappropriate

Aisha Fairclough 11:14

Is inappropriate. Like, yep, I understand. We're trying to be inclusive and we want to include everybody but by being trying to be it...I might not even be articulating this probably by trying

to articulate certain identities means you're leaving some out. And you're less than, I'm not less than for being a black woman. I am a black woman. I've even seen people of color, you know, be like, Oh, I I'm BIPOC I'm like, What is BIPOC? What? What exactly? You know what I mean? It's like they're afraid. They're afraid to identify as black. And some people. It's, this is a whole can of words, but I am black. i Please don't call me BIPOC.

Hollywood Jade 11:57

Yeah, I told I take pride in it.

Aisha Fairclough 12:00

Yes, I take pride and I told my dad the other day, I said, Oh, Dad you know you're BIPOC He said "what the what?!" He never heard, he said "What!" Like, literally he was like, burst out laughing. It is okay to say black, we all have unique experiences. And by not saying it, it takes away from it.

Hollywood Jade 12:23

I agree. And, and, and to anyone who is offended by that I understand from your experience, why you might be offended by it. But my personal lived experience, I'm not offended by the term, or being referred to as a black man.

Aisha Fairclough 12:40

Exactly. All people of color we have different lived experiences. So we shouldn't be lumped into one. I understand why some people at times will use BIPOC for grants for this for that. But it also erases our own experience, which I, I don't like. But that's a whole...

Hollywood Jade 12:57

Me niether. But that's a whole other chat and a whole other conversation.

Aisha Fairclough 13:01

That's a whole other chat. It's fun, I can see how we can talk about everything. Oh, boy...haha

Hollywood Jade 13:08

Yes. See, and that's what I want. Like, because this really is about a celebration of you and your blackness and your queerness and, and you know, talking about visibility, and you do a lot of work surrounding body positivity. How did you? How have you been able to so successfully because it at least translates that way to me views your two worlds together? Because this is this obviously is is an area that is important to you. How did you get into that?

Aisha Fairclough 13:47

Yes. Very, very important. Works work in, in in progress, progress, I can't even speak properly - a work in progress. But body image work started, um I want to say maybe around 2008 ish or seven, along with my partner, Jill Andrew. We did events. Let me thank gosh, I'm dating. I'm like 2006 What did you do in 2006? We did an event or she did an event and I assisted or maybe we both did remember called Curvey catwalk. It was a fashion fundraiser that had models of all

shapes and sizes on the runway. We did a fundraiser for Sheena's Place and Netic and that was amazing. And then we also did a film festival called bite me that we had partnered with the NFB and we did a (in audible) for girls. We've done speaking engagements. We then started Body Confidence Canada to do some more advocacy, around body acceptance and inclusion for many many different things. And we sent to Body Confidence Canada awards. Um, we kind of took a little bit of a hiatus from that, but that will be returning shortly and Body Confidence Canada awards, has awarded over 25 people across Canada who have been doing work, um who have been doing body advocacy work. And that has been so so rewarding in terms of oh my gosh, how have I brought that in with television?

Hollywood Jade 15:28

I want to pause you for one second, guys, did you hear the list of things that she just randomly off the top of her head, just re-live? And you are doing all of this simultaneously while you are working and developing and moving yourself forward in your career in film and television?

Aisha Fairclough 15:46

It sounds impressive, I guess.

Hollywood Jade 15:48

Yeah, it is impressive. And this is what I'm saying. That's why like, I'm so thrilled and happy to be here. And this is what one of the things that I love about having these conversations is because we're doers, we're goers we put our head down and we just plunge forward. This is an opportunity for you to sit and reflect and think and just be acknowledged for the contribution that you've been not just here, but like globally.

Aisha Fairclough 16:12

Thank you. Like, I don't I? I don't I don't sit a lot. And I mean with COVID We all sit? All right. Yeah. But I guess I don't, I don't reflect a lot on what I've done. I think moving forward, I would like to share more. It's funny, I love sharing other people's stories. I love seeing our stories. But I guess I haven't shared a lot. I've been told share more, share more. And I'm because Oh really.

Hollywood Jade 16:49

It's really inspiring. Like I'm listening to you name all these things, often some events I have already been aware of. But hearing it and watching your face, I know you guys out there and in podcast land can see but seeing your face light up as you reflect on these, these these moments, this is what this has to be about. Like, we see so much suffering and there's so much negativity and there's so much like the downtrodden story of the the struggling artists and the the queer narrative and, and the the not feeling included in conversations as a fuller size woman like and you you, you have and are currently still helping to change those narratives and bringing that to life because it's your experience. It is beautiful.

Aisha Fairclough 17:45

Thank you, thank you, thank you

Hollywood Jade 17:47
So beautiful!

Aisha Fairclough 17:49

Oh, I like you...haha... You know, it has been so important to me. Um, because when you see yourself and really, really changes your life, it really changes your life. And I can tell you having to deal with homophobia, not not seeing myself and having to deal with it for a long time. I mean, I've, I've been open with it. You know, I was outed, my dad didn't talk to me for 10 years. And this is all during, you know, my work in the industry with body image. Um, I feel very strongly had my parents been able to see more images of people like myself, yeah, I might have had a different outcome. And it was hard. It was really, really hard. It was like walking around with a cloud, you know, and I know we're about celebrating excellence. Um, but that is part of it, but it's part of it, it is part of it, we all have a different story. And some people are lucky enough not to have to deal with homophobia and transphobia and all those those those things, but you know, I wasn't I had to deal with it. And I still live through it. Now things are not I would be honest, things are not perfect. They are getting there.

Hollywood Jade 18:58

Like you talked about it. Like there's there's there's growth and there's acceptance, and there's understanding and the narratives that you have helped create, directly or indirectly, whether it be in film or television, or, you know, being a Cover Girl in 2019 and being featured on the cover of shuttling magazine like you you are making it possible like you, you we there's a whole generation of young queer folk that are going to grow up in a world where they have examples and references that they can show to their family and their parents as like, this is an example of a queer person of color who is thriving, not existing, not surviving, thriving you are, you are, thriving, and it's, that's why people want you to share more of your story. And that's what's so beautiful about this conversation right now.

Aisha Fairclough 19:51

Thank you. It is you know, I will share more. So much to say so much to say I just I want people to know that ah boy, what do I want people to know? What do I want people to know? That it is a journey, that this is all a journey. And I'm also telling myself this, that no act that you do is unimportant. Everything, everything is a step. You know, whether you are in the office, or you are a PA, or you're painting, it doesn't matter, doesn't matter what you're doing every step, everything is a step in a direction. Sometimes, if doors aren't open for you, you literally have to bang them down yourself. And it's exhausting. And it's tiring. But if we wait for people to open doors, sometimes they're never opened they're slammed in your face.

Hollywood Jade 20:48

Sometimes nobody's in the house, you're banging on the door of an empty house and all you had to do was kick it in.

Aisha Fairclough 20:54

Yeah, kick it in, make a plan, have small goals for yourself. Sometimes we have these big, lofty goals, and then you end up not doing them because it's like, Okay, I'm gonna do this, this, this, this, that, and I'm gonna do it by Friday.

Hollywood Jade 21:07

Right!

Aisha Fairclough 21:07

Um...Just, just do one thing by Friday (both laugh.) So what happens is that we get discouraged, because you know, we didn't accomplish these 25 things...

Hollywood Jade 21:22

by Friday, your absolutely right.

Aisha Fairclough 21:23

Give yourself one goal, and everything, everything will add up. It just takes time, have patience, do your research. And, you know, believe in yourself, and you don't have to believe in yourself every day. Because, you know, I would be lying if I said that, you know, you believe in yourself every day. You know, we're discouraged sometimes. We are discouraged. But surround yourself by people that lift you up young people that you are proud to be around people that don't make you feel smaller. People that, people that elevate you, if you don't have those people, you know, there are books. There's the internet that's also full of many terrible things. But if you can find something or a person that inspires you, you know, my body image work has kind of been at the center of everything that I do in terms of representation in terms of who I want to see on television, you know, as a black woman, I say I use the word fat. I didn't use that before my partner, Jill, I remember. She's says "oh, you should you know, or I identify as fat. And I was like, okay, good for you. Good for you."

Hollywood Jade 21:47

Hahaha...Aisha's like, "I aint having none of this conversation hunny, I don't know what you're talking about."..haha

Aisha Fairclough 22:44

"That's, that's, that is what I thought," I said good for you, I don't and then I started to be more familiar with with fat activism and what that means. And I said, you know what, fat is a word. It's a description. Not a prescription for hate. You're skinny. Some people are fat, it does not make you less than, the more that you use the word the more that you can make your the more that you accept it. You know, I was on the subway. A while ago, it's part of the reason why when I was was blogging, somebody like you fat bitch, you fat bitch. Um,

Hollywood Jade 23:20

Wow...

Aisha Fairclough 23:21

Yeah. Yeah. You know, I feel like I'm all over the place.

Hollywood Jade 23:26

No, no, you're, there's a there's a thread here. I'm following keep going.

Aisha Fairclough 23:31

Okay, okay. But yeah, no, my work has been rooted in who I want to see and what I want others to become and feel like they have no limits. So to be able to, you know, cast a show, to to work, whether it's a home renovation show or a food show and say, you know, what, we need more representation. We need a black person, we need queer families, we need, we need more people of color. It's kind of been everything that I've done and moving forward. I mean, it's the only type of programming that I want to be able to produce and be a part of, I mean, in the unscripted world, sometimes that doesn't happen. Where you're working on a show, where you're like, Well, I'm not gonna share because this is good or not so. So great show. But moving forward, I'd still like to continue having our narratives at the forefront otherwise, it's otherwise it's an interpretation of what our lives are and exactly our actual lived experience.

Hollywood Jade 24:35

Perfect. Exactly. And that that you had said something about representation. And yes, it's great that it's the representation is on the screen, but having someone like you, being part of the decision making process is really where the impact needs to start. Because if it wasn't for people like you advocating for authentic representation and genuine narratives of people and our our lived experience, it wouldn't happen. Because we've seen it before where where, you know, like even and I'll use like being Caribbean, for example, like they will have somebody on our show who's has a Caribbean accent Oh, and air quotations. Like eat most recently I was watching this show called Harlem and Jasmine Guy has this very strange, and I'm like, first of all y'all film this in New York City. There are a lot of Jamaicans or people of Caribbean descent. But it's clear that someone of Caribbean descent had nothing to do with the creative part of it.

Aisha Fairclough 25:47

Right. I was thinking the same thing. I'm oh my gosh, there's a show on BET. Jill Scott is in it.

Hollywood Jade 25:54

Yeah, First Wives Club

Aisha Fairclough 25:55

First Wives Club. Oh, my goodness. The accent the Jamaican accent is so horrible. And listen, my, my Jamaican accent is also horrible. When I say horrible, you're like, we're aew.. This is real. I don't do it. I do it as a joke. I've been told I sound like a pirate.

Hollywood Jade 26:13

I'm screaming!! haha

Aisha Fairclough 26:16

Yes..Really bad...haha. That being said, I've heard you make an essence my whole life. There. There's no person that is casting a Jamaican accent. But that's plenty of black, Caribbean, Jamaican, you name it, Trinidadian, Guyanese, whichever actors, and they are probably not getting the opportunity. It's not that hard. It's really

Hollywood Jade 26:40

hard. And at the bare minimum, at least then and this is where people like you are so influential, and why I really feel like the narrative around in particular, like Canadian programming has changed so drastically, is now and we can link this to having people like yourself involved. Like when I when I look at the casting for one queen, five queers. And each group of folks were so diverse and so different, that everybody can see themselves in at least one of the guests that were on one of the episodes. And I didn't I didn't watch the original regularly because I'm just like, This is not my lived experience. Like, you know, and and though their narrative is still being heard and still being presented, but so is mine, and so is Denzel's and so his Tia's like you know, and it's, it's painting a more fuller picture of what the community that we know actually looks like.

Aisha Fairclough 27:48

Yes, I was so honored to be the series producer. On One Queen, Five Queers. That's on Crave, I was involved..

Hollywood Jade 27:56

Sorry, can you can you say that one more time. Just so so the people in the back can hear, one more time.

Aisha Fairclough 28:02

I was honored to be the the series producer on One Queen, Five Queers, that's currently on Crave. I was involved from the development all the way to post production. And I was also involved in casting kudos to Mike Yerxa, who did a great job.

Hollywood Jade 28:20

Love Mike Yerxa.

Aisha Fairclough 28:21

Right, amazing. And he was actually on the original one of the original One Girl, Five Gays, so I know it's a full circle moment for him. But I didn't watch one girl five gays. I saw it. I mean, I've seen bits and pieces, obviously, in preparation for this show. I watched everything, but I didn't see myself. I did not see myself. That's why it was so important. With this iteration with Brooklyn, exec, who was fabulous, along you know, with Steve and Manny and Brian, Nigel, the editors, I don't want to forget anybody's name; the whole team that we were able to see ourselves, and our fullness and all our identities and all our shapes sizes. I needed my fat girls on the show, we got them, they were fabulous. And they went in bold and unapologetic.

Hollywood Jade 29:16

Yes! It was so refreshing. Like it really was so refreshing and like and not just on screen, folks because like I was on one of the episodes but even behind the scenes, seeing the representation and the inclusion of bodies and voices and and and perspectives and even conversations off camera. We're like I love it here. So good.

Aisha Fairclough 29:44

Yeah, all producers all of this there's all the producers on this show were queer many of them BIPOC or black.

Hollywood Jade 29:54

Yeah, yep

Aisha Fairclough 29:56

The exec is queer, another executive also a black man doing wonderful things. So it is so important. That's why the show was so, it was so I don't want to say colorful, but the show had so much juzz to it so much personalities, because there were so many so many different hands. But we wanted the same outcome.

Hollywood Jade 30:19

If you haven't watched it, it is still screening, not screening. It is streaming on Crave right now please go check it out, share it with your friends. I love what it what it has done for me and my circle of friends is it's created conversation. Yes, after each episode, we'd all be on our little Whatsapp group being like, "Hey, so what did you think about this? And what did you think about that, and it's opened up dialogue. And yeah, and as a as a queer man and someone who's finding his identity and figuring himself out when the original was on, I didn't see myself reflected, I didn't feel connected to it. And with greatest people, from all walks of life, gay straight, like, the conversations that are being had now are so vital, like being able to share that, like, you know, I, I was a lot of people's first taste into black queerness. And, and realizing that and then, and then my cousins realizing it, and like my cousins are commenting on my stuff now, and they're like, We love you. And we're so proud of you. And it's like, this isn't stuff that I heard 10 years ago, 15 years ago, you know, our, my sexuality was a secret and, and the platforms that you have been instrumental in creating have allowed for me to be seen as a whole person instead of just as someone who sleeps with the same sex.

Aisha Fairclough 31:58

Yes, we are more than who we who we sleep with.

Hollywood Jade 32:02

Right? And even with you and having these, these big girls and these full size women on the show who don't hide themselves.

Aisha Fairclough 32:13

Oh, no, we have we had crop tops we had. We had boobs, we had many things that were out and they were, they were confident they were confident and what I love is that there were no

executives that said, "we don't want this type of body" on the show I have worked on shows in the past, where, you know, we're casting at the beginning. And you know, I've brought in a certain amount of different bodies, and I've had execs be like okay, well

Hollywood Jade 32:48

"thats not really what we're looking for..."

Aisha Fairclough 32:49

Thats not what we're looking for, they are too big for television. So many things where you know, I've had to I've had to fight I've had to advocate sometimes I would win other times it would just be sorry maybe next time but for this particular show, there were no barriers because the world looks like so many different people,

Hollywood Jade 33:09

especially the world now. Especially the world now. Yeah, it's so lovely to be included in a part of these conversations and I think about even the conversation we're having right now. Some young person gay straight black white near or far can listen to this and be like I know that that's not my necessary necessarily my lived experience but I can take from this that I am I enough just as I am.

Aisha Fairclough 33:42

Yes. I think what I learned from so many people even, even some of the most recent show is that I am enough, we are enough just the way we are. We are enough!

Hollywood Jade 33:52

Just the way we are! It's, It's, It's so refreshing. Like it really is refreshing and I'm happy and honored and thank you all again for including me in that platform and me and my classmates were all like the best of friends still...haha.

Aisha Fairclough 34:10

Well, you, you, you, you were fabulous and I remember the, the eye makeup the eye makeup and you know,

Hollywood Jade 34:18

Yes! Shout out to Shadae my makeup artist , love her!

Aisha Fairclough 34:21

Yeah, yeah, when we were doing the rehearsals to see you and James sitting across from each other and then you know, Danielle and Jamie I thought wow, like we are we are making this...

Hollywood Jade 34:34

Yeah...

Aisha Fairclough 34:34

We are making this and you know, some, some of the conversations on the shows are racy some are some are a little more racy, where you're like, Oh, this is a little spicy.

Hollywood Jade 34:41

I'm like, I'm like in my dream girls mode. I'm like I can go further. I can go further. And I'm ready, and I think and it's necessary like I really it really is and you, you guys have a great, great job and like it's, it's it all circles back to you being inspired and wanting to be in this world. Because you wanted to make a change you want it to be the difference and here you are being the difference and not just as a producer but you also have written and directed a short film?

Aisha Fairclough 35:24

Yes, yes. Um, I was like, Oops, I forgot. I didn't forget. So, last year, during the watch, it's still happening. Last year, the heights of the panorama, um I was privileged enough to direct a short film that premiered at hotdogs. It's called Body Politics. And it's part of Citizen Minutes and it's actually airing on Crave as well.

Hollywood Jade 35:52

Come on!

Aisha Fairclough 35:32

Yes, it is! On my partner who I just say I call a Jill, but she's Dr. Jill or MPP Jill Andrew. I have..

Hollywood Jade 36:02

Casually...haha

Aisha Fairclough 36:03

Casually, yeah, she's just casually Yeah, she's she's just yo, who drives me bananas.

Hollywood Jade 36:09

I love it all.

Aisha Fairclough 36:12

But I actually I had started filming during her campaign in 2018, I was helping out with social media just as a partner taking pictures. But you know, being the nosy person, filmmaker I am, I thought, oh, my gosh, all this is happening. There's no way I'm not going to film.

Hollywood Jade 36:31

There's something here...haha

Aisha Fairclough 36:02

Oh there was something..haha. So I filmed a lot along with taking pictures. And then dogs had a submission call for citizen minutes about people that are active changemakers making change in the community. And I applied, got it was thrilled had to pivot a bit because of the pandemic

what I had anticipated to film I couldn't. So we use some archival footage, as well, as you know, filming her at home, you know, she's working and I've got the camera.

Hollywood Jade 37:02

Yes!

Aisha Fairclough 37:02

I got the camera. She's like, "Don't film me." I said, "No, I'm filming you. Sorry." Um, but I wanted to show, I wanted to show who she was, how she contributed. And one part of her, part of, I wanted to show some of her journey into becoming a politician. Um, but she's also as I say, also just Jill. So there's this idea of, of what a politician looks like, you know, you look on the walls at Queen's Park, and they're all white men.

Hollywood Jade 37:32

Mm hmm.

Aisha Fairclough 37:33

Jill is not a white man.

Hollywood Jade 37:34

Not no more

Aisha Fairclough 37:36

Right? Not anymore. So I wanted, I wanted to show people again, I guess this brings us back to representation. That you don't have to look a certain way in order to be a politician. I wanted to show people another side of Jill, she often wears her heart on her sleeves. And I just really wanted to show what contributed to who she is and the work that she does. And to remind people that no matter where you are, that you still can make a difference. And not to forget it in the film, I highlight, you know, an article that she wrote in 2013 at York University, working for, I think it was Excalibur as a student. And one of the, I think a quote is, you know, "Do not forget the power of your voice." And that's something that we all should remember never to forget the power of your voice. Really, really proud of the film, it's a short, it's on Crave. Fingers crossed, it will be released at some festivals in the states this coming year. There's also an educational guide right now as part of curriculum for schools. So if you are an educator or community group, we can screen it we can have a Q&A. Um, if you're a teacher, there's a teacher's guide. Yeah, that we can learn about the work that Jill's done that also learn about our body image work. So really, really proud of it. Really, really proud.

Hollywood Jade 39:05

I'm sitting here just smiling ear to ear listening to all of this and, and thinking about 17 year old me 18 year old me coming into this community and, and finding all of you guys and finding all of this and how our paths have intersected and the fact that I know so many brilliant and talented and gifted people who 30 years from now 50 years from now, people will be looking at as examples of having created drastic change in the landscape of Toronto, and what and what,

what the queer voice and the black queer voice looks like. And because 30 years ago, there wasn't a place for us.

Aisha Fairclough 39:39

No, there, there wasn't, you know, ugh... without me getting emotional. I remember, you know, when I was newly out, outed, whatever you want to call it. I, ugh, give me a second, such a hard time the hardest time, hardest time of my life. I have to pause for a minute.... You know, thank you for saying that the fact that there will be somebody that will see your work, our work, and it'll have an impact on their life is kind of, it's all that I was all that I want to be able to do. And I guess I, I forget that, you know, we're so busy sometimes that we don't reflect enough. So thank you for giving me the opportunity to reflect back in 2008 it was on some website, I actually, I started something called I think I had called it some some of the website, Black, Black Queer Archives. And I had applied to the arts, one of the Arts Councils, I didn't get it. But through community one, I did a screening called Black Queer Lives on screen and I also sponsored a few parties. I wanted to start, I wanted to start an archive. I didn't, I wasn't able to stick with it because of all the homophobia that was in my life. I thought, oh, my gosh, I can't have this as a career. What are what are my parents gonna do? What am I, I can't do this. And I was reminded the other day, actually, everything is the other day, but it's not the other day and 2020...(both laugh)

Hollywood Jade 41:40

Haha...things, things that black people say "the other day, oh, like Tuesday, no, four years ago."...(both laugh.)

Aisha Fairclough 41:48

Haha...I ran into somebody that I contacted for the archives. And she's like, you're in my book. So I have to, I have to get the book because she said, you know, I, this is an archivist that said that she was she, her book is on, you know, archiving our history. And she said, You know, I didn't forget you. You contacted me years ago, because you didn't see enough, there were not a lot of black archives, black queer archives. I know Courtney has started, I'm forgetting the name, but archiving black queer history. She's had exhibits. There's also a film by Philip Pike, I'm forgetting the name...

Hollywood Jade 42:28

Our dance of Revolution.

Aisha Fairclough 42:28

Yes, Our Dance of Revolution. There's Bigger than We, there are events that have happened over the years that document our past, our current and our future. And it's so it's so important.

Hollywood Jade 42:43

Yeah, It's so funny, you say that I watched the I cuz I interviewed Philip, last for the last season of this and watching the documentary. I literally was like, it is part of my mandate that the next time the next generation of documentary makers, I need to continue to do the work that I'm

doing so that I can, I feel like it was necessary to pick up the gauntlet of the, the work that they have already done, so that we can continue to carve out our identity in this country as black queer folks.

Aisha Fairclough 43:19

Yes. Yes. How amazing of them to have done so much wonderful work, I think of Debbie Douglas. What was it? What's I think it's Doosan House? Yep.

Hollywood Jade 43:31

Yep Doosan House.

Aisha Fairclough 43:31

Yep. Oh, I know her. I know them. You know.

Hollywood Jade 43:38

That's how I feel about you.!

Aisha Fairclough 43:40

Oh Stop!...haha

Hollywood Jade 43:42

That's how I feel about you!!...haha. Like that's but, but that's but that's really what it is, like we are that now is the next generation of movers and shakers. And what's great is that our platforms aren't just happening within our little microcosm, unity. It's like yes, it's we're here, and it's out there. And it's good. It is quality, like the content that you are producing. And that you've been involved in, in making; it's quality stuff. And, and, and they're honest and true narratives of our experience. Like I love that you said like, because of Jill, you've claimed, reclaimed the, the word fat and this is an important narrative for people to have, especially people who have body imaging issues, like knowing that it is okay to embrace who you are in all of it.

Aisha Fairclough 44:36

It is okay. Otherwise you end up, ugh, you end up being a shell at times you end up shrinking for other people. You know, you end up having a closet full of clothes that you you don't wear because you're always waiting on this size like okay, well I bought this in this size and I'm going to wear when I get to, you might not ever get to just wear what you have to wear. Just be, be just, just be and it's again, it's not easy. It's this idea of okay, I'm gonna love myself today. It's a journey. It takes time. It's hard to love yourself when many images that you see are those of you know white, smaller people. But when you see more images of yourself it it starts to change, starts to change your narrative and there's different ways that you can advocate. You can advocate online, you can advocate on your work, you can advocate for yourself and your own family. It starts sometimes at home, you know, the first time many people will hear anything negative about your body is at home. You know, a parent who's always on a diet. A

parent who's criticizing, you know, as, as a parent as a person with Jamaican parents, you know?

Hollywood Jade 45:50

Yeah, I was, like, "Why you have a looks-sa?"

Aisha Fairclough 45:53

Right, always poking and prodding, and why are you eating that and just leave me alone. Leave me alone, but we have to be able to speak up to those that are in our family. Because that's really where a lot of these body image issues start, you know, there are a lot of people of color that have eating disorders. Yes, we don't talk about that enough. More research is being done. But they're more, it needs, more research needs to be done. And eating disorders are affected differently. You know, and sometimes we don't even want to name it as an eating disorder. Right? You know, I'm clean eating Oh, I'm, I'm doing my cleanse. Oh, when did you eat Tuesday? What day is it today, Friday, this approach?

Hollywood Jade 46:40

Haha...I shouldn't laugh. But and I'm not laughing at it, It's it's how we how we rationalize things in our brain. That's what I'm laughing at. I'm laughing at our, our how we normalize this erratic behavior. And, and, and like he said, especially within the black community at the black Caribbean Community, things like mental health, eating disorders, child abuse, assault, rape, these aren't things that we, we openly discuss, because we come from a time and a generation where children are meant to be seen and not heard.

Aisha Fairclough 47:17

Yep, oh, yeah, you know, so many things that we can unpack in our in our own community or right, from, you know, sexual abuse to labeling it that. Yeah, and leaving that, you know, I will, I can mention this, my partner, Jill, has openly spoken about being sexually abused, but she received counseling, she got counseling as a child, and she always says to me, my mother believed me. When I told my mother what happened, my mom believed me and this was at seven years old,

Hollywood Jade 47:50

Crazy.

Aisha Fairclough 47:51

My mom believed me and some parents...

Hollywood Jade 47:54

and what a difference that made...

Aisha Fairclough 47:55

It made a difference. It made such a difference, the counseling made a difference belief made, belief. Her mother believed her the fact that she received counseling made a difference. And is

allowed her to be such a strong advocate for so many people today, but parents have to listen to their children. Yes, when they speak, it's not Oh, that's, oh, that's just how he is or that's the uncle or this or that or she don't say anything. You have to you have to speak up, you have to speak up.

Hollywood Jade 48:22

It's, it's it's necessary. And I again, I'm, I'm happy to see the progression. Like I have a lot of other Americans, a lot of American friends who all we all talk about seeing a therapist and, and normalizing these conversations around going and act you seeking the help that you need, you know, and it's great. It's great to that now, there are therapists who look like us, right? And understand us.

Aisha Fairclough 48:52

Right? You could you can Google, you know, black therapists, black Canadian therapists, BIPOC therapists, because it certainly helps when you have therapy, therapy from a person that looks like yourself that knows your experience that gets the cultural nuance, you know, the nuances and you know, all that in his body image. There's the US this idea when people talk about body image body images, just sighs it's just size, body images, race, class, ability. There's all these all these things, all these all these intersections, you know, I think it was 2014 or 2016. But there's Body Confidence Awareness Week was adopted by the Toronto District School Board, as well as the Winnipeg school division. And it is a week that allows teachers and educators to I mean, this should be in curriculum all year round, but it's a specific week that allows educators and teachers to talk about body image issues. And I think part of the work that's being done now and part of the work that needs to be done is to it's just expanding what when people say body image, what it actually means.

Hollywood Jade 50:03

Right? It's not it's not it's not just...

Aisha Fairclough 50:05

It is not just size, it is not size, it is it is everything and it is everything. It is everything that I do, always, always. Yeah, always at the forefront of what I do right now. I am having the privilege of being a casting director for a Heritage Minute in which I am looking for Jackie Shane. I am so proud Jackie Shane was a trail blazer, a black trans woman who it's about darn time that we get to see her on the screen. So I am I'm looking for someone thank you to everyone including yourself for sharing. I will continue to share. I'm excited, excited!

Hollywood Jade 50:52

My Google search yesterday when you posted this thing I was like, but, but, but again, that's what I love. I love the education around it. I love that there is culture here that existed before 2002 and like being educated on it, and that's what's so important. Like had I been exposed to this narrative, the trans community, my relationship with the trans community would probably have been a lot stronger. Knowing that there were like people out here at a time when it was literally life or death like do you know what I mean? Like literally life or death and knowing that

a black trans woman was out here leading this charge in an, an even if it wasn't in a big activist way but just showing up and being present and, and knowing that they were enough as they were.

Aisha Fairclough 51:49

Yes and unapologetic about who they were. Being you is enough in all our in all our glory all our splendor. Be extra if you want to be the extra be minimal, if you want to be because I also like to be minimal at times. I do miss, I miss I miss being glam I miss, I miss dressing up.

Hollywood Jade 51:13

Oh, I know...

Aisha Fairclough 52:16

It is what it is until it's not. And we have to be very, very grateful that we are living and that we are breathing. And that we have food and that we have shelter. So the days when, and it's also it's okay to be struggling, it's okay to have a good day in a bad day, despite what we have. But I for myself, I've reminded myself that the basics are enough. Some people don't have the basics.

Hollywood Jade 52:41

Some people don't listen, being able to pay this rent is a blessing. Okay.

Aisha Fairclough 52:46

It's a blessing. Eating food that you enjoy is a blessing. It is a blessing you know, I won't get started with food insecurity. But you know, again, that's all also part of body image. That's also part of the discussion. That, you know, the idea of body image and that, like it needs to continue to expand. Yeah, I'll go and I won't go on a tangent. But yeah, lots, lots of work that still needs to be done. I think body image is certainly commercialized now where some say, "Oh, I'm body positive." And you know, you see a skinny white woman and you're like, wow, okay, and listen, it is okay. Everybody has their own issues. So I'm not going to tell somebody that they don't have a right to speak about this issue. But certain bodies come with certain with privilege. So when you are talking about your body that might be thinner than mine, you have to think of the privilege that your body has the fact that you can shop in stores, the fact that you don't get stopped by police. Right? Yeah. You are not the angry black woman. Think about the privilege that you have when you speak about certain issues.

Hollywood Jade 53:57

Yeah. And this is, this is great, because this is a clear indication of where your mind is and goes to. And that's why the content that you have been a part of, is changing the landscape and the narrative. I, I do so looking forward to this Heritage short that you're working on. Is there anything else you have coming up in the works that you can share with us?

Aisha Fairclough 54:26

Um, nothing that I can share per say. But I would say good things, that things are coming. I'm terrible at promotion. I'm trying to think anything that I can share...haha.

Hollywood Jade 54:38

No, it's Ok.

Aisha Fairclough 54:39

You know, really nothing that I can share right now. But just kind of keep keep an eye out some good news soonish soonish, it will come out but the minute that I can share, I will. I would say something that's coming up that I can share took a little break from Body Confidence Canada awards, because we had to pivot because pandemic, we would like to bring that back in some shape or form. So look out for that so we can continue to grow the body image conversation, because it has to center and include us and yeah.

Hollywood Jade 55:16

So just really quick. Let everybody know how they can keep in touch with you. So when when these are now announcements do come out and when this Heritage short is done, everybody can like, share and subscribe. Let us know how we can stay in touch,.

Aisha Fairclough 55:30

Um, they can find me on my instagram @aishafairclough_ Um they can also find me on Twitter @AishaFairclough, shall I spell or will it be

Hollywood Jade 55:44

No its ok, it'll be in the episode Your name will be in there.

Aisha Fairclough 55:47

It'll be in the episode. So yeah, first, my first name Aisha last name, Fairclough underscore on Instagram, same thing on Twitter, I'm on Facebook don't really post a lot, we to work on that. But yeah, they can just find me online. Working on some great projects looking forward to sharing thrilled to be the cast and producer on this. Working with a great team, one queen, five queers, you can find that on crave body politics, you can find that on crave, you're an educator, citizen minutes, go to the website, you can book us for speaking education guide. That's kind of it for now.

Hollywood Jade 56:25

Not that's kind of it. That's a whole lot. And I love it. I love it. I love it. I love it. And, and thank you for being here. And thank you for sharing. And thank you for existing. And thank you for being and I am so elated that I get to share space with. So such an amazing being like you are a light and I personally have benefited from you being who you are, and from you being in my life. And I'm just so much gratitude. And I want to just speak into you and pour into you and know that you are and have always been more than enough. And I just want to continue to live in a world where we create space and an opportunity for folks such as yourself and myself and this next generation that is coming. Because they're it's our time and you're, you're crushing it.

Aisha Fairclough 57:22

Oh, thank you,

Hollywood Jade 57:23

You're crushing it,

Aisha Fairclough 57:24

You are crushing it too. And I just I, I look forward to a time when there's just so, so much more of us. Of Us. So many young people, older people that hasn't hadn't been hadn't had a chance to, to use their voice. You know, there needs to be more of us. And we have to lift each other up. It's not always easy to do. But you know, it's never good to be the only person in the room and I think we have to think we have to remember that.

Hollywood Jade 57:49

Yeah, it's that that that way of thinking of there can only be one, I think we we were doing a good job of getting rid of that. And yeah, where there's an opportunity for you. That is right for you that people are coming to you with that opportunity. And you you I'm so happy. This was so great. This was so great.

Aisha Fairclough 58:13

I like this. I can I can talk and talk and talk! I was like I didn't talk about this. I didn't mention that. Dang!

Hollywood Jade 58:22

There, there will be more there will be more like I think I say it all the time. I'm an advocate for communication. And I think the more conversations we have, the stronger and better the community ultimately will be. And like let's get let's keep talking. Like, let's keep talking let's keep sharing, because there's, there's more intersectionality than we even realize.

Aisha Fairclough 58:48

Yep, I think we are we are connected in so many different ways. So thank you. Thank you so much for having me on. I had a great time. Would do it again too. I liked it!

Hollywood Jade 58:57

We will do it again. Thank you all thank you all for listening. I hope you enjoyed this as much as I did. Be kind to yourself and know that you are enough. Peace, love and hair grease!