

Let's Talk Fatphobia w/Angelina Moles
Episode 4 Transcript

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Guest: Angelina Moles

Ramón Real

Hi, everyone, welcome back to In The Margins Podcast. This is Ramón Real my pronouns are they, them, theirs, and here is my co host,

Francis Astorga

Francis, pronouns are also they, them, theirs. And today we have our guest Angelina Moles.

Angelina Moles

Hi, I'm Angelina and my pronouns are she, her, hers, and also they, them, theirs.

Ramón

Angelina, we're so excited to have you here like I'm--like legit--I'm so fucking excited to have you here. Do you mind just kind of telling us a little bit of what you do and a little bit about yourself? If that's cool.

Angelina

Yeah. And I'm also very, very excited and I feel very, very honored to be on tonight. So, a little bit about me. I am currently a professor at San Francisco State University, as well as City College of San Francisco and College of San Mateo, where I teach communication studies with an emphasis in performance studies. So some of those classes are like, intro to public speaking all the way to like performance and feminism and how we communicate about those topics. And--

Ramón

Um, okay. Yeah. (Giggling in excitement)

Angelina

Yes.

Ramón

That's awesome.

Angelina

Thank you.

Francis

I've always wanted to be one of your students, honestly.

Angelina

I mean, come on over please. (Francis laughs) I would love to have you.

Ramón

Can we audit your classes?

Angelina

I mean, why not? Because like, here's the thing: now that we're all online, quarantine has kind of, like, created a space where like, I could have you in my class and I could either have you as students or I could have you as like TA's or like "Mentees," how ever I wanted to phrase it. And, you know, that could be a thing!

Ramón

I mean, I would love to learn from you and then dive into some like really cool topics that you teach.

Francis

Yeah. How do you get there?

Angelina

Yeah. How did I get where? (Giggles a little)

Francis

So how did you get to SF State? What was your journey to being a professor and then delving into those topics of performance art, but also, very, you know--

Ramón

--activism and feminist work as well?

Francis

Yeah.

Angelina

Yeah. So it's kind of messy, but clean at the same time, I guess. So like, as a first generation college student, I was very confused, like how to navigate college and I found myself in my final semester at CSU Stanislaus, and I was working at a radio station and I was like, well, maybe this is the path that I'm going to take is like, go into radio and do performance as a part of that because I also was getting my minor in Theatre. And then I had a professor who I really admired and looked up to and they were like, "Hey, you know, maybe you should apply to a master's program. Have you ever thought about that?" And as a first generation college student, I was

thinking like, um, excuse you like, who do you think I am? Like, I can't do that. Are you wild? Like this is--my parents, you know, couldn't help me with like the basic things because they didn't have any experience in it, which, as you all know, like on similar journeys, it's like, How am I supposed to apply for like grants and loans if like, my support system also doesn't know how to do that?

Ramón

Mm hmm.

Angelina

So basically, like that night, I was like, let me look into this program. And I did and I applied and I got in and I was like, I guess I'm moving to San Francisco. *(They all laugh)* It was really weird. And so it felt like it happened overnight. I like, quit my job. I was working at a sports shop. And *(Angelina laughing some more)* I like, packed up my bags, and I was like, I guess I'm moving to San Francisco. And--it was just kind of weird how one of my friends that I had met the year before was also at San Francisco State in the master's program and they had a room opening up. So everything kind of, like, fell into place really nicely. I feel like the universe was, like, pushing me there for sure.

Ramón

Like, girl, go, go, yeah.

Angelina

Yeah, like get out of here. What are you doing?

Francis

Mm hmm.

Angelina

And that's how I found myself there in the master's program, which is, like, also where I started teaching and getting into my fat politics. And then I moved back home after my master's program to start teaching at a college, Emerson College actually. And then I found myself just being really, really sad and really stuck and hurting to want to be back in the city. And it was a really scary decision, but I did it and I came back and I feel very happy with my decision. I think it was worth it. But that's how I got back to San Francisco.

Ramón

Nice. Um. Angelina, you mentioned--You just mentioned something: fat politics. Do you mind elaborating a little bit on that?

Angelina

Of course, yeah. So, because your listeners might not know this, I'm fat and I have existed in a fat body all my life. And I kind of, like, dabbled or like fell into body positive movements when I

started joining, or when I joined Instagram, in like 2011 or 2012. And it was more like, oh, like I'm seeing bodies who look like mine. And this is so wild that, like, I'm finally seeing bodies who look like mine who don't exactly hate themselves, like what's going on? And when I went to my program at San Francisco State, I read one article about medical mistreatment and weight bias and I was also experiencing a really intense moment with a lot of doctors being really fat phobic. And that's how I kind of stumbled into fat politics. So fat liberation and fat acceptance is all about looking at our society, especially the US because we are a very thin, idealized society. So it's looking at how we use "capital O" which is like obesity rhetoric to label fat bodies as health hazards as unequal as not enough. And we have like a war on fatness as something that's undesirable and something that shows like a failure of a body, which is why it's also kind of intersected with disability politics a lot and also queer theory and all that good stuff. So fat politics is just about like radicalizing the way we think about bodies and the way we specifically think about fat bodies.

Francis

What challenges do you face personally kind of deconstructing that for yourself, right? Because I'm sure that through the grad program, and just learning like, Oh, these things I've experienced, but, what was it like, personally, on a personal level,

Angelina

(Sighs) I mean, the personal level is really, I think intense because when I started to go on the journey towards fat acceptance and fat liberation and I also was myself, like, checking in on my own internalized fatphobia, and also like working to push back against diet culture. And so it kind of reframed my whole relationship to my family, and to friends who were very fat phobic, but like I didn't have a word to place on it, I just knew that it felt shitty. And I really think that the challenges that I faced was believing that my work was good enough, believing that my work deserved a space in the Communication Studies field and in the field of performance studies, because I wasn't seeing a lot of it at the time, although it's definitely gotten bigger now. And also, there was always people doing that work. I just might have not felt like it was happening because I wasn't seeing the visible people who are doing it because most people who do that liberation work are black, thin, queer people. And so of course, you know, they're really on the margins and their work doesn't get publicized the way that white academics do. So.

Ramón

Mm hmm.

Angelina

I wasn't often seeing work. And so I thought I'm alone in this and everyone who reads my work just thinks that I'm a fat crybaby--which I am, a fat crybaby--but like everyone is just going to disbelieve all the things that I have to say. And so I think the challenge, really the biggest challenge for me was believing that what I was doing was good and needed and necessary. And I think I still struggle with that idea on a day to day basis because fatphobia is so huge.

Ramón

Angelina you mentioned fatphobia a couple times. Do you mind elaborating on, as well, of what that term means?

Angelina

Yeah, I think that fatphobia has many different levels, but I think at it's, like, root is the deep... like, deep centered fear of fatness, but the fear is rooted in hate. So it's like this hate towards fat bodies, towards fatness, towards getting fat. It's why we have also, like, medicalized the fat existence as a problem or as something as a disease, which is why scientists created the term obesity is to now take a body and place it as a disease rather than to have it be still a human being. So fatphobia at its core is just a here--a here (*laughing to herself a little*)--a fear and a hatred of fatness and fat people.

Francis

And something else you mentioned was diet culture, right. So, and I'm sure like we all know what it is, but what, in terms of its relation to fatphobia and fat people, what does that term mean?

Angelina

Yeah, I mean, diet culture. I think a lot of us know how it feels. It's like all the Weight Watchers commercials and all the, like, Nutrisystem and all those things but it's also the idea that--

Ramón

Herbalights and, what is it Herba?

Angelina

Right, exactly. All those like Herbalife whatever they are--skinny tea, all of these systems that are--

Ramón

Body Bye Bye

Angelina

Yeah, exactly. All these systems that are basically put in place to say, the more control you have over your body, the better it is. And so diet culture is this idea that we have to maintain a certain body to be worthy, to be accepted, to receive proper care. So in the US specifically, we have a very thin idealized society, where we see celebrities who are healthy and who get the praise. And that's like, reified by watching movies that have fat characters as like the fat funny friend, they're never the lead and their story is always about them being fat, you know? Like, I have a challenge for my students every semester. That's like, I want you --If you can bring me a film, or a TV show, by the end of the semester that doesn't mention any like fatphobic rhetoric, then you can get 15 extra credit points, and I have yet to have a student be able to do it. So like, that's how steeped it is in our culture. So that's diet culture. It's like the idea that, like, you have

to have control over what you're eating over what you're doing, because that means you're accepted. And that means you're worthy. And that means, like, you deserve care.

Ramón

And this is all like, like, you mentioned, like, deeply rooted and it's all over the media, right? Like every media that we consume, whether it's magazines or TV shows, movies, it's all there. Right? You were mentioning, like, the usually, like, the character type of the fat best friend, right?

Angelina

Yeah.

Ramón

Or it's sometimes, or most of the times, fatness is used as a tool for comedy. Right? To kind of make fun of us and our body types, right?

Angelina

Yeah.

Ramón

But you also do a lot of performance art, right?

Angelina

Yeah.

Ramón

What does--How does that look? And what does that entail? And how do you bring your activism work within your performance art, as well?

Angelina

I think my performance art is, you know, it changes every time. And I think like all of you, as performers know that your mood and like every day's like a different performance that you kind of want to dabble in. And so some of my performance is a critique on society. And a lot of my performance is really, you follow like an emotional rollercoaster ride with me. And I do use humor at the beginning because I think that buys in my audience because they're like, haha, we can laugh with you, right? And then I like, I emotionally punched them in the mouth with kind of like a guilt trip, essentially. Like you've done this. (*They laugh*) Right, like you've done this. You've done this to me, you're doing it to me right now, actually, as we sit here and I perform this for you. And so I want you to think about this, I want you to feel guilty, I want you to hold this space for me. And I'm going to take up this space too. And I am going to rant and I am going to do these things. And a lot of my thesis performance was about structures, both physical and social structures, like a roller coaster that I got kicked off at, at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

Ramón

Wait, what?

Angelina

Yeah, yeah, I like, one of my, like, biggest pieces of my thesis is, I went to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk at a smaller size than I am now, and I got on the roller coaster and it's got like, you know, two bars that have to click in and the second bar just would not click in and so there's like, probably like 300 people, like, in line, on the roller coaster. And they're like, "Yeah, I mean the rides not gonna go with you like this so you need to get off the ride." And I had, like, the, the walk of shame, the walk of being too fat to fit, too fat to have fun, you know. And that just like, shows everybody there too that: okay, as long as I'm not like that person, right or like, this is a consequence that this person put on themselves that they're too fat to enjoy this ride versus like them thinking, hmm, Isn't it weird that a ride doesn't fit everybody who wants to go on it?

Francis

How does fatness then--does that intersect with disability? Or just, I think in the terms of just things not considering every body--

Ramón

--or being accessible?

Francis

Mm hmm.

Angelina

Yeah, yeah, I mean fatphobia intersects with you know, white supremacy, all of the things together. But I think at its most important or--not "important," but it's like very clear to see intersection is with disability studies. Because, yeah, like fatness as being an issue for finding things to fit is similar to folks who have differently abled bodies who need to navigate those spaces. And a lot of like, I think a really good way to understand this is a lot of times in both Crip Theory, which is disability theory and in fat studies theory, there's a lot of talk about failure. Like, seeing the body as a site of failure. And looking at it in that way. Like that's how capitalism and society looks at it is to say, like, these bodies are not the most productive bodies. And so they must not, like, get the same access as these most productive bodies are getting. So you know, access ramps, seating that fits folks who either need to move a wheelchair into the spot or like doesn't have armrests so that people can sit in them, booths, all of these things like amusement parks, all of these moments of people cannot actually fit at these places because these structures have been made to not include them is like a very clear moment of Disability Justice and fat liberation, kind of like holding hands together.

Francis

And then I mean, I mean, I've followed you on social media for a long time because we're friends but also now very like as a way of informing myself but also seeing your, your advocacy

and activism and then one thing that, to me is shocking, but like Instagram is, like--hashtags are like policing what bodies are appropriate to be displayed. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Angelina

Yeah, like the, like people tagging me as a violator and like having Instagram take down fat people stuff, like that moment?

Ramón

Okay, wait, what?

Francis

Yeah, yeah that moment.

Angelina

Yeah. Yeah--

Ramón

Is this like, like shadowing or what's like going on--I'm sorry, I mean, I know Francis just asked but I'm like wait--Shadow ban.

Francis

Like shadow banning?

Angelina

It's like, all of the above, it's like they shadow--I probably get shadow banned, like at least once a month. And a lot of other fat people and fat accounts, find that same thing to be happening. And so a hashtag came up, like maybe into like, maybe june of 2019. And it was fat--#fatisnotaviolation because so many fat accounts were getting blocked. Either blocked, shadow banned, or their images were being taken down even though the images didn't break the community guidelines. But essentially what Instagram always has to say is like, oh, it must have been a glitch or must have been a mistake or, you know, they have like a system I guess that if there's a certain amount of skin showing then they automatically flag it as like nudity. But then that in itself is, like, pretty fatphobic because fat people are gonna have more skin. We're gonna have more, like, surface. So if you have a bot that is like taking off photos where there's more skin showing that means that like me in a bathi--like my size in that photo would be too much skin and then that gets a violation and gets flagged and gets taken down. So there and this is not just like in a fat realm, they do this to almost every marginalized body, like a lot of trans folks say that their stuff gets, you know, taken down all the time too. And a lot of women of color, more specifically black women, get their posts taken down too. And even, like, places like Tik Tok released an article admitting that they do not put trans, people of color, disabled, and fat creators on their "for you" page. And--

Ramón

Wow.

Francis

What...

Angelina

Yeah, it's very open and honest about it, you know? Um, which is great, I'm glad that they're open and honest.

Ramón

Yeah, I guess they were like owning up to it. Instagrams over there like, "Uhhh, it just, you know, not gonna see that and yeah, you know, it just happened, I sorry, like," Come on...

Francis

Oh, my gosh.

Angelina

Yeah. And you know, Tik Tok admits it and I'm like, that's cool. But like accountability means that you admit something, and then you do something about it.

Ramón & Francis

Right.

Angelina

And I feel like they--I do see more creators of, on the margins on their "for you" page after that moment happened. But it's clear that these social media sites only want a specific image for their pages, like, and that's, you know, pretty easy to see like when you're on the "explore" page or the "for you" page on Tik Tok or the advertisements that you see on Facebook. It's really clear what message they're trying to sell and who they're trying to silence and very ironic because then it's like, I had, I just recently had an account who was trolling me, and they were using my picture and they had my same name, my username on Instagram is @fiercefatfemme. And they had the same thing, but they switched one letter, and they were going and trolling people. No, I swear. I'm like, what is this?

Ramón

So someone impersonated you to go like talk shit to other people?

Angelina

Correct. Like, they were posting like, "Make America great again 2020" on--

Ramón & Francis

Nooooo... *(In exasperation)*

Francis

That takes so much--

Angelina

I know!

Ramón

And also for our listeners, Angelina if I'm correct you are an Instagram personality, right? Like you are--what do they call, a public figure?

Angelina

Yeah, I mean kind of I have like 33,000 people following me so I'm not like some big, big name--

Francis

Influencer?

Ramón

But either way though, it's--yeah an influencer, but you have a certain amount of what's the word like, you are an influencer? Right? You have this, this following. So then to have people, maybe even people that follow you, all of a sudden you coming in--or like the fake you, right? Saying like Make Amer--MAGA 2020. Damn. But yeah, so what was happening during that?

Angelina

Yeah. So I mean, it was horrible because I had so many people coming into my like DM's and stuff and being like, I cannot believe that you would say these things like and it wasn't even like the MAGA stuff they were also going to a lot of my fat like comments who were like, Oh, this is very relatable, and then they were commenting back to them, like, "lose weight, asshole" like stuff like that. *(Francis gasps)*

Ramón

Oh my god.

Angelina

Yeah, like they were attacking all these people who were being very vulnerable. And because it was like one letter was switched in the name everyone was thinking it was me because it was such a small switch. So, um, you know, a post of mine will get reported in less than five minutes of it being up. But it took me a week to get this account reported. And I had like lots of people reporting them saying like, this is a person impersonating this account. And Instagram was like, oh, you know due to COVID-19, things are going slower. And I understand that, but I'm like, it's very clear that this person is bullying me and you don't take this seriously. You don't take white supremacists seriously. You don't take the KKK posts on Instagram seriously, but you will flag

any person whose body or existence is different then the mainstream culture that you want to broadcast.

Francis

Right.

Angelina

Yeah.

Ramón

And so you mentioned COVID. So this is something that happened very recently.

Angelina

Oh, yeah, it was last week.

Ramón

Oh, my God.

Angelina

And it's happened since then. So I got them reported. They left. They created probably like 10 other sub accounts, and continue to do the same thing on my page. And then earlier this week, they came back again as the same username as before with my picture and did the same thing. And DM'ed saying you'll never get rid of me. *(They all pause for a moment)* Yeah.

Ramón & Francis

Wow.

Ramón

That--That's intense.

Angelina

Yeah, I'm pretty sure It's either gonna be like a 12 year old white boy whose parents are white supremacists, or it's like a 55 year old white cis-hetero dude who's just like pissed that he didn't have my pussy in his mouth. And so. *(Ramón and Francis laugh)*

Ramón

That's why they're always upset.

Angelina

Right.

Francis

So that's what someone who's not an ally looks like so (*Angelina giggles*) what, what--what is an ally--What can an ally do for someone who's experiencing fatphobia, like, fatphobic remarks or whatever what's like the best way for them to stand up against those comments?

Angelina

Oh yeah. That's a great question because I think what happens a lot is like performative allyship, you know? Where it's like, "Yeah, I love fat people" and then like they go to their doctor and their doctors like, "oh right so BMI, that's a real thing" and then they don't say anything against it. So, um, you know, I think that like, specifically thinking about like, thin folks, a way to be an ally is to really look out for your fat friends, which means when you go to a restaurant, if you're with a fat person, don't choose a booth. Like, don't choose a booth. It's really simple.

Francis

Right.

Angelina

Don't choose a booth. And also, it's like, as simple as being like, "Hey, is this seat comfortable? Because if it's not like let's get something that feels good." Or even like advocating to a restaurant like, "Hey, this meal was great, but accessible seating would make it better." You can also think about ways to advocate to medical people like if you have fat friends who are going to medical appointments and you feel comfortable and they feel comfortable, they've given you consent to come with them. You can then be the person who advocates for them by doing your research like reading, reading books about, like, fat activism and fat liberation to like really educate yourself on these issues. And like pay people who are doing the labor for you, like buy their books. Pay them on Venmo. Subscribe to their Patreons, whatever you can do, like people who are putting labor into these things, both emotional, mental and physical, need to have ways to be supportive, because they're giving you education, you know. And when it comes to an online atmosphere, I think it is about, like commenting back to these people. I think it's also about sharing fat creators' work, supporting them in those kinds of ways, too, because sharing their work is just as important as liking their posts or, you know, commenting back to a troll, but I think it is about really like educating ourselves on the systems. Like, reading some books and at the end, or I can give you, like, a list of books that I recommend for people. But yeah, I think that's really what it is, is like, educate yourself and then advocate and don't be a performative ally actually do something about it.

Ramón

Mm hmm. You know, yeah, I love me, my performative allies. (*They all crack up for a bit*) Oh you know. You know... Angelina, you--You've mentioned the medical field a couple times. Um, and it just, it reminds me of a lot of times when I go to the doctor and like, especially for some reason like I always remembered the childhood visits where, specifically, I remember there was a couple of times where I was very very sick and I was taken to the doctor and you know of course my mom doesn't speak Spanish you know, she's Latina. And we go in there--

Francis

She does speak Spanish.

Ramón

I'm so sorry. Yeah, perdón, perdón, she speaks Spanish, she doesn't speak English. (*Francis laughs a little*) So, you know, we go into the appointment or whatever. I'm not doing so well. And the doctor, the first thing that he says is that I'm drinking too much milk and that I need to lose weight. And that was it. So then we go to another doctor. And when we say, oh, that I'm drinking too much milk and the doctor goes, "No, you're not drinking enough milk, you need to drink more milk." And it's like, and you do need to lose a couple of more pounds, right? And then they would throw around obesity--

Angelina

Mm hmm.

Ramón

--and that everything was being caused because of my weight. When there was like--no bitch, I had pneumonia. But no one here was able to diagnose that because they--

Francis

Looked past it.

Ramón

Yeah, it's like because they would see my body and that's all that they would do is the first thing or the, pretty much the thing that was just causing all of my issues was my weight. Right? But they wouldn't do any of--

Francis

That happened to me when I had mono.

Ramón

It's frustrating, right? It's like I had to go to a different country to actually get diagnosed. I mean, I probably could have gone to another doctor, but like, you know,

Angelina

But I mean, you're gonna find the same thing--like, that's the thing about the medical industry is that they're all getting taught the same things but like in different iterations. So, I like, when I was first getting started in my master's program, I was also going through an abortion. And I had a doctor straight up tell me as I'm, like, in the process of, like, thinking through my decision, she told me, "Honestly, you should really think about this as a blessing because unless you want to lose 150 pounds, you'll never conceive again." And I remember like being so baffled, I walked out right at that moment and just like bawled my eyes out on the way home, but like, in that

moment, I was like, what, like, what do I have to do to find a doctor who's going to take care of me? Like, they're literally--their code of ethics they have is like, do no harm. And--

Francis

Right.

Ramón

Supposedly.

Angelina

--they're doing so much harm because of--right--because of the rhetoric that they've been taught. Like, it doesn't matter, you know, what school they went to if it's within the US or like, even within most westernized countries that have a thin ideal, they're learning that body mass index is an accurate way of diagnosing anybody with anything. When BMI is an outdated system, it's actually a socially created system. That doesn't make any sense to use at all and really never has. But people based so much truth in it, because we've also been taught that like, doctors are good people. We've been taught through, like, television shows, and through our parents and other folks that doctors are there to help you. And doctors also go through a lot of schooling and that must mean they are credible. And so we package that all together. Okay, here's a person that's meant to take care of me. They know what they are doing because they've spent a lot of years at school and they're super credible. So when they tell me that obesity is real, or that my fatness is the issue, then I should believe them. And that narrative then makes it so that so many people are being mistreated in so many ways. We have, like, the highest rate of eating disorders in this world and yet we don't turn our lens or our focus to the doctors who might be creating them. Like in those moments, I think all three of us had mentioned moments of childhood things--I remember when I had pneumonia, I lost a bunch of weight because all I was eating was Saltine frickin crackers and sprite, and my doctor was like, "Good job, keep it up." And I'm like, that's, that's hilarious. That's hilarious that you would like me to keep up a disease. An issue like pneumonia..

Ramón

Yeah, you know--Yeah. And you know, like, what's interesting too, is that I think it took me a while to get a doctor. I think it wasn't until 20...15 until like, a doctor finally flagged that I wasn't eating and was like, what the fuck are you doing? And then started to point out all these different things, and was like, "Wait a minute, is this how you've been kind of living?" And then like what you mentioned, right? It's something that is celebrated when you go to different medical people, right? It's like, "Wow, look at it. Look at what happened in a week. Look what happened in a month, you lost X amount of pounds." But it's like, but you're not even taking into account what my actual health is right now. Right?

Angelina

Right. Yeah, for most of the time, they're seeing a number or maybe not even a number, they're looking at us and they're viewing us as already a problem without looking into anything else.

And that's like another intersection of Disability Justice and disability theory. Crip theory is the idea that when you see a disabled body, you associate all of these failures to it or all of these like emotions onto it without any consent from the person. Like I've actually seen, you know, people, like, touch somebody's wheelchair, like move them out of the way, without, like, asking or whatever. And, yeah, and that's similar to when you know, fat people get unsolicited diet advice from, like, grandma in a store. You know, like, I've had people take things out of my cart before at a grocery store and make comments about my body in public settings. So it's like those moments--and those are like big, kind of like my, like, macro aggressions in a way. And, you know, there's so many, like, micro things that don't go under the lens of negotiation or like understanding that that's also a part of fatphobia. Like the small moments of somebody being like, you're not fat, you're beautiful, like, that's reaffirming that like, there's a connotation of fatness being not good and so like fat and beautiful do not exist, like are not mutually exclusive or inclusive or whatever it might be. So, you know, all of those things are (*sarcastically*) super fun!

Francis

And that--

Ramón

They're so fun. (*They chuckle*)

Francis

That brings me to the idea of beauty, right? So I was thinking of like, how that bias of, like, the policing would go into like, a thin person posts something and they have like a giant plate of food there's no criticism on their fatness, right, they're just seen as being skinny. And so like, if that post was made by a fat person, then all that advice would come in. Right?

Angelina

Yeah. And I think like, those are the beauty standards that we have that are based on European beauty standards of like, also the attachment to whiteness too as a part of it. And, and I think that's such an interesting moment is when I see people who are like, Oh, yeah, all I've had today is like 15 boxes of Cheez-Its. And everyone's like, "Oh, my God, yeah, me too. That's like, like, such a mood. That's like a vibe." (*Ramón & Francis cracking up in the background*) And then as a fat person, I, like, pull out a snack. And they're like, "Oh my god, like, do you know how much like fat is in that?" Or like, "Have you heard of keto?" It's like--Go fuck yourself, actually.

Francis

I'm so excited to hear you don't like keto.

Angelina

Oh my god, same like, so we--because it's COVID-19 we got like a food delivery service for groceries. That's like 20 bucks a month, which has been really nice. And one of their things that they send us is bacon. And on it, it's like (*sarcastically*) keto and paleo approved! And it's like,

stop, like, stop labeling foods as these are okay diet foods, like *(sighs)* morality attached to like body sizes. And like, you know, foods being labeled as good for you versus bad for you--Like that dichotomy is not helping anybody at all. We've got to be able to separate it and say that food is food. If things like make you hurt like, you know, if you're lactose intolerant, then maybe milk is not good for you. But in terms of, like, what it's doing like in terms of adding weight to your body like those things, we have to break apart the idea that you there's junk food, like I hate that notion, so much like it's food. That's, that's what it is, it's food. And if it makes you happy, if it makes you feel good, if it nourishes your body, it's good food for you. And that's how we need to be defining those things, is not saying that like, this is good or bad because of what your body might look like or because of, like, the nutritional info, but rather on how it makes you feel and what it does for you as a person.

Francis

I think that's a really good healthy approach to food is just basically focusing on, like, this makes me feel good so I'm gonna pursue this food.

Angelina

Mm hmm. Yeah, especially I think right now, like there's so many conversations about, like, food scarcity, and like, what to buy at the grocery store, and all those things, and those are all very real. And also accessibility is a part of that too. And also, like if I go to the store and I'm buying like, I don't know, cosmic brownies and ho ho's and ding dongs and like all those things that have a really good stable shelf life, like, I don't need to hear from anybody about like what that might do to my body because it's sustaining me right now in a time where like there is this, like, unprecedented amount of trauma. So I think we have to also realize that like, people's food choices are their own food choices. And we just like, as a general rule, don't comment about people's food and don't comment about people's bodies. Like, I feel like that's a simple rule that I live my life by.

Ramón

I like that. Don't comment on people's food and don't comment on people's bodies.

Angelina

Yeah.

Ramón

Fuckin mind your business.

Francis

(Laughing) Exactly.

Angelina

Yeah, because who the hell knows? Like when people compliment weight loss, like you don't know what you're complimenting. One, you're complimenting this idea that, like, thin people are inherently better than fat people, but you're also, like, showing a compliment about like, who knows? Like some people lose weight because they have an eating disorder. So you're complimenting that behavior. Or you're complimenting the trauma that they went through, like, just it's not necessary instead just like, shut your mouth. (*They all crack up*)

Ramón

I had a question that I totally forgot about.

Angelina

Okay.

Ramón

Uh, no, so... yeah, no, nevermind.

Angelina & Francis

No?

Ramón

No, no, no.

Angelina

Why?

Francis

What's your question?

Ramón

Because I forgot the question.

Angelina

Oh, okay.

Ramón

Um, no, it had something to do with your artistic performance art work, but I don't I--don't know where I was... Anyway.

Angelina

Okay. I mean, yeah, some of it's burlesque, some of it's me rolling around in cake. Some of it's me--

Ramón

That's what I was going to ask! *(Angelina and Francis laugh at this)* You had mentioned burlesque you-- *(Ramón now laughing too)* --you mentioned burlesque in one of our conversations and that you were exploring that avenue a little bit more. Now I was just going to ask how has that gone? And you know, what have you done, and how have you liked it?

Angelina

I loved it. I feel like I, you know, I live my best Scorpio life of being kind of like the center of the scene and like, harness a lot of sexual energy. And I feel like that's really exciting as a fat person to harness that.

Ramón & Francis

Mm hmm.

Angelina

And so I think with burlesque, it is amazing to be fat, the center of attention, harnessing sexual energy and power and also taking up space in a very powerful sense. And so the performance that I do is like not really traditional burlesque. But it's kind of like a striptease, and an eating and offering of food to other people around me kind of burlesque which I like to incorporate food into a lot of my performances, which might seem kind of cliché, but I think that it's really powerful for me to kind of have a thing that's kind of, I've had like a war with food a lot of my life so having it on stage like as a friend with me or like a colleague--

Ramón

Like a partner. Yeah.

Angelina

-yeah, it feels really empowering to continue to have that relationship be built. So I think that's why I incorporated a lot but yeah the the burlesque I mean it's it's kind of sad because now I can't do it because of COVID-19 but I was dipping my toes into that pond of harnessing that energy and I also like started doing like, go go dancing at clubs and and I think that is like my--

Ramón

Ughh! How fun.

Angelina

I wish I was in the audience because I wish I saw more fat bodies in like the queer clubs that I would go to not only just as like patrons of the club, but as the go go dancers and like, I hope that there's like that people in those clubs that are seeing me and they're just like, oh my god, this is like, this is everything I've ever wanted.

Francis

I was there. And that's what it was for me. *(Angelina giggles)*

Ramón

I want to be a go go dancer with you like--

Angelina

Yes.

Ramón

I want to be across that table just dancing to some EDM music.

Angelina

Yes!

Ramón

But queer--Okay, so the queer world with bodies that's a completely other thing, right? Oh, man. That is...

Angelina

Tell em'.

Ramón

I think we need like another, this is, like, a part two.

Francis

Yeah. *(They're all laughing quite a bit)*

Ramón

But, you know, for listeners of this episode, just know that, you know, if you don't know gay culture--you know, super white, super skinny, you know, like, not like me or Francis or, you know, but anyway--um, you know, something that you mentioned, Angelina was a food, right, and how you're talking about how you incorporate it now because it used to be something that you struggled with, right? But it's very interesting that in our cultures, food is such a community thing, right?

Angelina

Mm hmm.

Ramón

Like, that is how we commune. That's how we get together and bond and share experiences over food. Yeah, at least speaking for myself and from how I grew up the same.

Francis

No, same.

Ramón

And it's something--

Angelina

Same.

Ramón

It's something interesting that happens when it goes from this thing that is celebrated that brings us together, to all of a sudden, it being something that you'll feel guilty about, at least talking for myself. Right, going into this realm of, "Oh, I can almost gather with y'all because I feel guilty about eating this."

Angelina

Yeah,

Ramón

For some, you know, in that realm.

Angelina

Yeah, I think it's, I think it happens a lot when whiteness starts to really creep itself into the household more and more, like assimilation, politics of like, assimilating to US culture is when it still happens--and like, you know, my family, I grew up with a fat family with fat parents with a parent who decided to get bariatric surgery, gastric bypass when I was very young. And food changed at that moment, but we still always have gatherings around food. And it's like a lot of food, just food, food, food, food, food. And I incorporate that even into my classes like on the final day, we always have a potluck because I'm like, food is what holds my community together. And so having a war with something that like brought so much joy, and so much warmth and so much comfort at one time, is really hard to hold. And even though I don't, like have I feel like I'm in, you know, full recovery from my ED that I had. Still food is hard, like, you consume something and then you think about like all the things that society might be thinking about it or like, ideologically, how we're thinking about it or all the things that you've heard about the food, and then you get stuck in your head and it's just like food loses all of the amazing sensations that I brings. Like, I always think that like, if we weren't meant to enjoy food, like, why are there so many bomb ass recipes? Like, why are there so many cooking shows? Like, why does food taste so good if we're not supposed to enjoy it? (*Ramón and Francis have been laughing in the background through this list*) Like that's why I think that it's a hoax that we *are* supposed to enjoy food. It's a conspiracy theory! Like diets are all just a conspiracy theory. It makes no sense. And it's so sad that diets don't want you to enjoy the pleasure that food brings. Because food does bring pleasure. Otherwise, like, you know, we wouldn't be seasoning our foods and I know some of y'all listening don't season your foods and like, why? Why aren't you seasoning your foods?

Francis

Yeah.

Angelina

But like, it's supposed to be a pleasurable act. You know, it's supposed to be like, we have so many sayings around like, "feed your soul," right? Like, that is a saying that comes from, like, food being pleasure and food having a really important place in our lives. And I'm just like, I'm really hoping and I'm really ready to make sure that like, the generations beneath me and like my niblings, which is gender neutral for my siblings' kids. I really don't want them to grow up in a world where they hate food. I really, like, I just don't want them to hate food. I want them to sit around and enjoy it and have no thought come into their mind about calories or any of the nutritional info but just like enjoy it and have a good time with it. And I hope that for us, too.

Ramón

Yeah. It's all in the decolonization I guess, right? And going back to our roots and what we know to be true and also not being asses to one another.

Angelina & Francis

Right.

Francis

And I think, I think something that I mean, I'll take from this conversation is the idea that you showing your performances, like, the food offering I think that's something that, at least for me, it's very, like culturally grounded for that to be very incorporated into whatever art I'm involved in, even if it's like, prior to performance or post performance that offering food is a very communal event that is needed in performance spaces.

Angelina

Yeah, like permission almost, like, even though I don't want anybody to have to wait for permission, but so many people in my audience, I think, do hold on to like a restrictive way of seeing food. And so it's this moment of like, here's permission like eat the cake, like eat the damn cake. It's here. It's ready for you. Like, are you ready to give up the idea that it's not good for you?

Ramón & Francis

Eat the cake.

Ramón

Eat, eat the cake!

Angelina

And whatever type of cake that is, you know literal, metaphorical--

Ramón

He he he... "eat the cake" (*Giggles at this innuendo*)

Angelina

...Exactly.

Ramón

Thank you so much for being here with us, Angelina. What are your Instagram handles so in case anyone wants to follow--

Francis

Or how we can book you.

Ramón

--and y'all listening should follow.

Angelina

Yes! So my Instagram is [@fiercefatfemme](#) and that's F-I-E-R-C-E F-A-T F-E-M-M-E and I think I spelled that right, oh my god, clock me if I'm wrong.

Ramón

They're gonna follow your troll. (*They all laugh in comedic dread*)

Angelina

Oh my god... no! No, the real me has my pronouns in my, like, name so you'll see that. Um, and in terms of booking you can just send me either a DM or my email is available on my Instagram page as well. That's where I do most of my things. But you can also see some of my performance work on my YouTube channel, which is also [Fierce Fat Femme](#). And I think that's like mostly--I'm trying to get a website up. I'm trying to maybe do like, something over summer where I host like a zoom workshop on, you know, letting go of fatphobia. And so like, if that happens, I'll for sure, let y'all know. And I just want to say once again, like I'm so thankful and grateful that I had to, or I got to have this conversation with all of y'all because I obviously love talking about these things, but also as the people like all three of us have experienced these things at so many different levels. And I think that brings such like a--a beautiful perspective to it, like a big piece of community care is present in this conversation.

Ramón

Oh, absolutely.

Francis

Yeah, thank you.

Ramón

Thank you, thank you so much, Angelina, for being here. And for those very deep profound words like okay, mi corazón yes.

Francis

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