

**NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

**NIKA LOMAZZO**

**Interviewer:** Nico Fuentes

**Date of Interview:** December 1st, 2021

**Location of Interview:** Crown Heights

**Transcribed by** Jamie Wild

**NYC TOHP Interview #195**

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Nico Fuentes: Hello, my name is Nico Fuentes, and I will be having a conversation with Nika Lomazzo for the New York City Trans Oral history project in collaboration with the New York Public Libraries Community Oral history project. This is an oral history project centered on the experiences of trans identifying people. It is a March 13th? 12th! And this is being recorded at Nika's apartment in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Hello, how are you?

Nika Lomazzo: I am good. Thank you for having me.

Fuentes: Yeah, I'm so excited that you wanted to sit down for an interview. How's your week been?

Lomazzo: With everything going on, it has not been horrible. But with all this coronavirus news, a little bit stressful. But nothing I can't handle, so it's been OK. UM, so you know that we had discussed kind of what I would talk about and and so I've been thinking a lot lately about basically charting my own trans experience, narrative in the last few years, especially with recently moving to New York in the last month

Fuentes: Yeah. What's your relationship with New York?

Lomazzo: So I lived in New York from 2014 to 2016. I went to the new school where I studied creative of writing and and I went away for a semester in 2015, transitioned there or began the process of transitioning in Rio de Janeiro. I was there for six months, came home, started medically transitioning went on hormones in New York and and that was was a period of like the last four or five months that I spent in New York. So that was the spring semester of my sophomore year of College in 2016. And then I went home thinking that I was just going home for the summer and then coming back to New York and found out pretty quickly that my parents would no longer be paying for my tuition and found myself kind of just stuck in Rhode Island, where I'm from, so I spent the last 3 1/2 years in Providence. Didn't really come to New York for close to two years. I just like at that point it was too painful. I felt like I had or I didn't feel I had kind of lost most of my trans and queer community that I had just kind of become a part of when I transitioned. And so I went home to a very straight city where even the queer scene is very small, and I wasn't plugged into. So I didn't come back for a few years and spent the last three years in Rhode Island just trying to build a life for myself. I didn't think that I was ever going to come back to New York to live here, so I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what my life as, especially as a trans woman in one of few trans women would look like living there. Which was interesting and I got into a lot of interesting scenarios.

Fuentes: What was? Going back a little. Whoa, whoa. Why Brazil?

Lomazzo: So I took a year off after I graduated from high school in 2013. I went to a private Catholic High School. That was very heavily centered on the idea of mission trips, which was less about converting people and more about just going out and volunteering and kind of spreading the privilege spreading the wealth. So after I graduated from high school, I knew that I was not ready to go to college. Yet I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I was kind of inspired by the idea of going out volunteering. Having that duality of helping someone may

help. You sounded nice as like an 18 year old, so I ended up going to Brazil very randomly I-

Fuentes: Where in Brazil?

Lomazzo: To Rio! So I was there for two months from January to March of 2014. And I actually I came out as gay while I was in Brazil the first time, fell in love with the boy, fell in love with the city. Totally unexpected, like super cathartic and then I went to some other places, went to school in New York. And like just could not shake the feeling of wanting to go back to Rio. It was a very weird kind of feeling of I knew that I had started something that I wanted to finish. I didn't like, know what it was to me it was just. I thought it was going back to, like, find this boy and I was going to go back and find this boy and see if I really loved him.

Looking back and I realize that it was kind of, I don't know that it was finishing, but delving even further into the process of coming out. Because I remember when I came out as gay there it was. I was like, well, this doesn't really feel like what's up, but it makes more sense than me lying and telling people that I'm like a straight boy because that's obviously or a bisexual boy at the time. That's not what's going on. I guess gay is like the next step. And then I went there and made the decision to transition almost two years later umm so yeah.

Fuentes: So you were in Rio? For how long?

Lomazzo: The first time for two months, the second time for six months. And and when I went before I went back the first time I had been in New York for my freshman year and I started started kind of moving through identity, started identifying very softly, identifying as non binary didn't tell any of my friends at home or my family. But was, you know, asking professors to use they them pronouns was asking my peers to use them pronouns, was starting to dress in a way that felt more comfortable. And was having lots of experiences where people who weren't trans were asking me if I was trans and would get very, like, defensive and frustrated. It was almost like they, people were kind of seeing something that I was not seeing. So when I went back to Brazil, I kind of went back to Brazil and kind of went there in this mindset that that I was, it was kind of like my last hurrah to being like a gay boy. Like, I got really hairy, I grew all my facial hair. I was still like, very effeminate, but was like having a lot of, you know, fun gay sex and was like topping a lot, which was not something I had historically done and and was very much living my life that way, I felt great. And then in the last like month or two, it started really sneaking up on me that I was about to transition. I kept having moments where I would get very drunk and would, you know, get really emotional with myself. Or there was one moment where me and the people it was studying abroad with there was a group of seven of us? We were on the beach in a city in the north of Brazil in Salvador. We were like watching the sunrise and we were all very drunk and I took it upon myself to ask everyone in that moment, I was like, oh, why don't we play this game or like, we all reveal something really deep to each other. And I was casting them because I was like, maybe I'll come out to them and and the first person to respond like said something

really dumb. That was like a joke, and I was like, OK, this is not the moment or the people I want to come out too. But I remember that night specifically because I was wearing a skirt on the beach and a crop top and was like very drunk and very high like smoking weed all night and it was like OK, it's either going to be tonight or it's going to be very soon. And that was the end of November and then I came out to friends and then gradually over the span of a week to family a few days before Christmas. So yeah, it kind of all imploded within the span of, like two months. Yeah and then I came home and and re- kind of, you know, introduced myself to my family, reintroduced myself to my family. I didn't tell my dad or my step mom, who I was living with at the time kept it hidden from them because I was just very nervous, didn't know how my dad was going to handle it. He's older, he's in his 70s, not politically conservative, but like very much an Italian American Roman Catholic. So just was not sure that he was going to get the trans thing. But I told the rest of my family. They were great about it. I went back to school. Everybody you know welcomed me back. I mean, I was at the new school, so it just it was very it was, it was pretty acceptable and almost like mainstream to be trans or to be non binary at the new school. It's like all the cool kids were doing it. So and my dad found out like a month later. From going on my new school page to pay like a tuition bill and saw my ID photo where I was wearing like, really bad purple eyeshadow and like orange lipstick. He asked my two older sisters like, what is going on? Like did, is she trans like what is going on? And they were like, you should have that conversation with her. And to his credit, he was like, she, you know, she's a 21 year old, like, adult when she went. She didn't tell me for a reason. So when she's ready to tell me, she will. I'm gonna be quiet. So I called him. I remember I was in. I was like, on the Columbia campus leaving a class. I don't know what class I had on the Columbia campus. There's even the Columbia campus in, like high heels that were killing my feet because I was really just really like going for it. When I first transitioned and would wear like Kitten Heels and then like stilettos like mix between those two class. And like, just ridiculous outfits.

Fuentes: Who were you like looking at for this aesthetic?

Lomazzo: I don't know, to be honest, I. I didn't have like anyone specific in mind. I mean, Hari Nef on Transparent is like definitely what made, me that was the show. I was watching the night that I was like this is what it is, so maybe her a little bit, but I just think I was going for this like I was just going for a very high fem aesthetic of being like a young girl in the city, which is, like, not what I go for anymore. I'm like pretty lazy now umm

Fuentes: Where are you now compared to that?

Lomazzo: I don't know. I get called a soft Butch a lot, which I don't agree with. I think I'm a I don't. Yeah, I don't know where I fall on the spectrum. I think I'm like a lazy fem. Yeah, you know, I mean.

Fuentes: What's a lazy fem?

Lomazzo: UM, like I own two tubes of lipstick and no other makeup, and I have one pair of heels and like from the months of like basically from fall to the like beginning of spring, I try to appear as being a little bit feminine, but I'm like pretty lazy in what I wear when summer and spring come. I'm like very, I'm like stunting around but still with like I would never get into makeup because I'm bad at putting it on. I was like never watching YouTube tutorials, they just frustrated me. Yeah, I mean my luck for the last few years has always been inspired by, like, I'm a young mom on my way to pick up my kids at soccer. So yeah, so that's that's usually like I would say, effortlessly femme, not lazy femme. Who knows? Who knows? I don't know where people put me. Yeah, but yeah. So I-I called him and we had a conversation and it was like, you know, very nice. I finished out the year or the semester at school, which was like pretty turbulent. I was like, hanging out the Jane Hotel a lot where, like all the cool trans girls were hanging out. But it was just a mess. I like didn't know what I was doing. I was wearing thank God I deleted the photos like liquid, I would put on liquid foundation with like I'm pretty sure it was a blush brush, on my face every day before class and then I would go out. And it was like orange and was like pencilling in my eyebrows and like, not wearing makeup that looked good on me. My wardrobe was just like, literally like a plastic like

container of hand me downs that, like my cis girlfriends had given me from, I think forever 21. So I was like, doing that and hanging out with trans girls. Who had like? Not I don't even know if they had transitioned long before I had, but they like, had it together in my view. They were like hot. They knew what they were wearing. Most of them had been on hormones for longer than I had been.

Fuentes: Yeah. Who were you, who were you hanging out with?

Lomazzo: I was on like the periphery of this scene, but like, I don't remember her. She goes by a new name now Norada? Patricia? UM, we were in school together. Charlene. Uhm, who else? Karin Hamilton. Lots of like, lots of really hot trans girls that were like in the nightlife scene would be at these venues most. It was like Metro and, and the Jane.

Fuentes: Uh. Where? Where was that located?

Lomazzo: Oh, where was it located? It's still there. It's on. Is it on? I think it's on Metropolitan. Yeah. OK. And and I don't know if it's still like a trans space, but it was to my memory then.

Fuentes: So, who? Why?

Lomazzo: There being like drag nights that were heavily populated by a lot of trans girls rather than like cis gay men. And a lot of trans girls and then a lot of like non binary folks.

Fuentes: And this was around?

Lomazzo: This was in 2016. This was in Williamsburg.

Fuentes: Williamsburg, 2016, Metropolitan Bar, Dragon eyes.

Lomazzo: And then the Jane hotel in Manhattan in the West Village? In 2016. Those are like the two spots I would go to.

Fuentes: What was the party at the Jane?

Lomazzo: I don't even remember. I don't remember. What it was. I'm pretty sure that it was on a week. Night I have forgotten a lot of these details and I've been like trying to re like remember them in the last few months. Now that I like live back here. But I disassociated hard and I also did a lot of, like, subconscious work of blocking out that time that I spent in New York just because of at this point. Now I'm like not sad when I think about. It, but when I went home, I was like almost like ashamed of like that girl. Like messy what felt like this messy like pre pubescent trans girl who like was just a mess, like didn't have a proper haircut, like didn't know how to put on her makeup, like didn't have a personal style. I was I think if I met that girl now. Be like what is going on? Like, let's hang out. Let me help you umm because like I said, I was existing on the periphery of like, a lot of this community. So I didn't have, I didn't really have close friends that were in this social group. People knew me or knew of me. But my friends, for the most part at this point were like cis straight girls. Which was historically my like social group, well after I transitioned until really until I moved back here. So yeah, that was my social life. And then I it was that mixed honestly with like a lot of bad fetishistic, fetishistic sex in my apartment and Park Slope with a lot of chasers which at the time I didn't consider bad sex. But looking back now I realized that it was like not the jam.

Fuentes: Do you remember any of the names of the parties that were happening at Metro?

Lomazzo: No, I just remember the people that were there and their people I have seen since I've been back.

Fuentes: Like who?

Lomazzo: Charlene is one of them. Charlene and Carnate, Pierce Hughes, who has become a close friend. We actually met at one of those parties. Slater Stanley? I remembered them. They like they were they were like one of the people that I was like, a little bit close with. Like I remember my coat got stolen one night and they were like one it's freezing now you're not walking to the train and two, you're trans you're not walking to the train. It's like 2:00 AM. I'll get you a car. So, like little community moments like that, those are the only people I specifically remember. In terms of names. UM, yeah. UM. And so then I went home in May and I went home in May and basically, I-I kept saying to my friends at home I was like, I'm excited to come home. I really want like a summer of being like a 16 year old girl. Like just that whole semester was it was intense. It was intense, obviously because I had transitioned. I also it was kind of the beginning of when I look back now as a diagnosed bipolar person, realizing that that was kind of the 1st, those were the first months of that coming to fruition. It was just a lot of like popping Adderal and drinking a lot of coffee and like not eating and going to class

and then going out and partying and blacking out. And I was just I was kind of, like, untethered and all over the place. And so I I wanted to come home and have what I thought was going to be this, like, cinematic movie summer with my close friends, which it started out as that. And I ended up I got kicked out of my dad's house and in June. So like a month and 1/2 in and got kicked out of his house and ended up getting a studio apartment in Providence that while he kicked me out, he also paid my rent in the studio apartment. So it was like a very weird experience because I don't know. It's like most people when they get kicked out there by their parents, especially trans people, like they have no resources. But I was kind of like living in this like Ivory Tower apartment. It was just it was strange and I like, didn't really know how to reckon with it, but I was living there and was like working at Urban Outfitters and going out again, a bunch hanging out with my friends, but was like, so depressed. I mean, I knew I wasn't going back to school which like was not a part of my plan and the summer was great because it was just a lot of partying, and it was a lot of being home. And it was summer, so who cares? But as soon as summer came to a close and my friends started packing up to go back to their respective colleges and I realized That, oh, like, fall is on its way. And then winter is on its way. And then, like, it's going to be a year then I'm like, not living in New York in this apartment, like, working part time at a retail store. That's when things started getting really messy and dark and that. It was a it was a tough year I really like double down on the sex that I was having with these chasers. Started dating a chaser, not realizing that he was one. Started doing a lot of cocaine. Most of my friends who were cis, cis gay guys and then also like cis straight girls pretty immediately stopped talking to me once summer was over because I was like basically summer was over and I like wasn't like the fun party girl who's like apartment you could crash at. So I think I think it became apparent for them that my transition, it going to be like a lot to handle. So yeah, I am I spent that year pretty lost and didn't really do anything to make anything better. I just I like I slumped really hard and I didn't know what was going on and. I don't even really know when things started? Oh yes, I do! Things kind of started having an uptick when and so this was 2016 in March of 2016, I decided I was going to get bottom surgery. Which was not something that I had had a previous desire to do. I didn't have kind of like that textbook case of dysphoria that is expected of trans women to have that, you know, people assume we're all going to have about our penises. I was fine with it. I used it. I liked it. But I don't know I don't even. I was thinking recently that I don't even remember for most major life decisions I can remember. Like what I was wearing, what I was eating. Like what everything smelled like. Like exactly what was going on. The moment that I decided to do this thing, I really have no memory or recollection of where I was or what I was doing. When I like sent that e-mail to the surgeon to get surgery, I knew I had to have been in my apartment. I know it had to have been cold out because. It was. March and it's Providence, so it's quite cold that time of year, but I know that it happened really fast because I remember when I told my family I emailed a surgeon. I'm going to get surgery. They kind of wanted it to be like a group discussion because they were worried and they were like this feels really impulsive, even for you. You're going to get a major surgery and you've never expressed a desire. And I was like. Well, like fuck it, I'm doing it. I want to do it. I mean, I think it was just like a control thing at that point. I felt so out of control and was hanging out with so many cis straight people and was really. Kind of living was living in like a realm of being. This like cis straight passing trans girl. And so that was like my ticket into that world at that time. I was like, this is my ticket out

of being. I am the only trans girl in the room and it's like my ticket into ending this transition and just getting out and becoming a part of this world assimilating. So I expected the wait list to be like a year and then I emailed a surgeon in Thailand, Doctor Chad Chatawa. Yeah, in Bangkok and he was like, well, I can get you in in three months. So I was like, OK, and I like I sent in all my paperwork and I booked my flight. And I was there in May. Those two months flew by really, really fast. And I was also again doing a lot of cocaine and drinking a lot. And those two months were a pretty big grieving process of UM of kind of mourning that I wouldn't reproduce because I just decided not to freeze my sperm and so I spent those two months heavily grieving that and kind of doing the most to not think about it while reading it. It was all kind of entangled and then I-I went away and got surgery. And I didn't go alone. I was really lucky one of my very close friends, Brianna, who was from New Jersey, but who I met in Brazil and who still lives there. She flew from Brazil to Bangkok and came with me and took care of me and and it was gorgeous and amazing. Like being there was gorgeous. It was, you know, I was in a guesthouse. And it was summer in Thailand and I was just really pampered by my friend and really taken care of.

Fuentes: What was the care like from Doctor Chet and his team?

Lomazzo: UM, so the surgery was six hours, and then you're in his private clinic for four days. Which in my case I was pretty out of it for those first four days, so I don't remember much except just throwing up a lot. Then you got moved. I got moved back to my guest house and it's a team of nurses that come twice a day, so they're around the clock and it's very intimate. I mean, they're literally like spreading your legs open and, like, swabbing your, like new vagina with, like, Q-tips to clean it and, like, stick a dilator inside of you. So you got close. Pretty fast. And uh, yeah. So I had them coming in and taking care of me. And then I had my friend Brianna going out and getting me food and coming back and feeding me and, like, helping me bathe. And that was it was a really beautiful experience. And I was absolutely on a pink cloud, which I was warned about by other trans girls that had gotten bottom surgery, which is that you go get surgery, you're on this emotional pink cloud. And then you kind of fall off of it and karine. But I'm stubborn and so I never think that those things are going to apply to me. Looking back, I realized that not only was I had a pink cloud, I was absolutely triggered into a manic episode because of surgery, because before I got there, I was violently depressed.

Got there. And when I got home, I realized now that I was in the longest manic episode of that I've ever been in, which was three months. I just thought life was amazing and I was like, life is amazing. I have this pussy. Like, it's great. I'm just now like we're done with being trans. It's not a thing. Even though my gender marker was still male and I hadn't changed my name, but I didn't care. So. Yeah. And also let me correct myself, this was 2017, so not 2016.

The beginning of 2017. So yeah, I came home, got myself a balayage cut some new bangs. I got a new wardrobe. And just felt like I was on top of the world. My life still really had no purpose in terms of, like doing anything that I cared about. I was still working part time

Fuentes: At Urban?

Lomazzo: I left Urban and was like now working part time at a bar in Providence called Lilly



Marleens, which has since closed. And I-

Fuentes: Did you was? You're so going from a retail job to a bartending job like in Providence, where was it challenging finding work or what were your?

Lomazzo: No, it ended up being pretty easy because before I went away I was constantly at this bar called Justines in Providence and I-I had a bunch of friends who worked there, became friendly with the owner, who also owned Lilly Marleens. So when I came home he he was like, you know when you come home from Thailand I'll give you a job. And when I came home, I held him to it and I was like, I need a job. Give me a job. So he gave me the job. I wasn't bartending, I was waitressing. It was a bar with like 3 tables, so it was like very low key. I was making very little money. But I didn't care. I moved out of the studio apartment on the east side of Providence a month after I got home, or two months after I got home and moved into an apartment on Federal Hill on the West End of Providence. So it's like literally separated by a river and and the West End of Providence is a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood where my family has some roots, so I moved. I wanted to be in the neighborhood because I was on this whole like I'm the Princess of Providence, spent that summer kind of dipping my toes into community organizing.

Fuentes: What do you mean?

Lomazzo: So I came home and I it was summertime. I came home and I got asked to speak at a rally. Not the Trans day of Remembrance was a rally that happened nationwide for trans people. I don't remember what it was called. It wasn't the Trans Day of Remembrance. There was something else this was in. This was in May of 2017. It was like a right around pride. I got asked to speak at that and I'm a performer, so I love to speak at rallies. It's like very invigorating for me umm and so I loved it and got really involved. And I was like, OK, you know what, like, I just got surgery. I'm, like, living the dream. I'm living like my fairy tale Princess life of being this like cis passing trans girl. Maybe I should like maybe this is? My calling like being a local organizer for trans rights.

Fuentes: Yeah. What did you talk about at the rally?

Lomazzo: I talked at the rally about my specific experience as, and this was kind of the talk I gave all summer, which was that, you know my specific experience as a trans woman is not the norm. That as a white trans woman who you know, I think passing is bullshit at this point. I don't think that it is, it exists from like one space to another. It's not always real. It's very arbitrary. But I do often pass in spaces and so my the talk that I would give or the speech I would give. Would be that as a transwoman who passes in a lot of spaces, I am college educated I have a family who supports me. I had financial support to get surgery, to go on hormones to, you know, live this life where people accept me in the room because I am digestible to them, to cis people, I don't scare them away because I don't they I don't seem as militant to them as I actually am because they find me pretty and fun and I'm cute and they want to hang out with me. That you can't. Just like, listen to that one voice and that it's the role and I still believe this. It's the role. It's the responsibility or not the role but it's the responsibility, you know white, I think specifically white, trans women with financial privilege and any societal privilege to um grab the mic from from the LGBTQ community at large, which

is historically and kind of still presently run by white cis gay people and white cis queers. And to grab that mic and then to pass it on to trans women of color and trans people of color. Any trans or non binary person who is more marginalized than I am. Because I would get frustrated and I got frustrated that I came home and was being asked to speak at rallies was being constantly told from the minute I transitioned how brave I was and then in the same token. Oh and "I didn't, I wouldn't even know you were trans. I mean, you're so pretty." How brave I was. I often get told because I love to talk about my experience as a trans woman with cis people, because I just think that I'm willing to do the labour of talking about it, and it doesn't even feel like labour to me a lot of the time. But I would get very frustrated, especially that summer with the fact that cis people would think that that was the norm, you know, then they would go out and they would ask they they would come back to me be like. Well, I was talking to this trans person and they were just, they were not as gracious as you are. And I would say to them, you know, like, well, not all trans people want to talk about this, not all, and they don't owe you anything. No, we're not a monolith. We're a community. Yeah, we're not all the same. Umm and so that was, that was kind of like the the rally, the rallying cry that I gave that summer.

Fuentes: Where had you started encountering the ideas that you were expressing? Was it through literature? Was it through other trans figures?

Lomazzo: The first person that I encountered this from was and this is what made me begin thinking of even transitioning was reading Janet Mock's redefining realness my freshman year of college. I we had to read that book and then Audre Lorde's Workshop class where all techs were centered around kind of her mission. And we read that I think it had just come out. We read that and that really informed how I felt just about the trans experience in general and how I felt about where I fit into the dialogue as a white trans woman. And that, yeah, that was kind of my, my Bible. It still kind of is whenever someone comes to me who isn't trans and has a question about anything to do with the trans experience, I'll often point them to that book and tell them I think they should read that to start out. So yeah, it was that. And then just a lot of Twitter dialogue, honestly. And I was also really active on Tumblr. So a lot of Tumblr dialogue.

Fuentes: Who were you like active with on Tumblr?

Lomazzo: I was following the main person that I remember following on Tumblr was Hari Neff, and she would often post really cool stuff which I wish she still did. I don't remember specifically anyone that I was following. I deleted my Tumblr in 2017, which I big time regret. But yeah, that and then honestly, just my own, it was a lot of it was like Janet Mock's book and then her second book, and then also just a lot of my own intuition and my own reactions to, like how uncomfortable I would get with, with hearing how people would with hearing, like what people expected of trans people, it would just make me very frustrated. And that summer, the first the my first taste of deciding that I wanted to community organize was coming home and reading that the trans panic defence was still. Applicable on the law books in Rhode Island, which is the trans panic, is that I think it's it's only been taken off, it's only been made illegal or taken off the the books and I believe three states now, Rhode Island or 4 now, Rhode Island being the 4th is that if a trans person is murdered by someone then the assailant can say that they went into such a state of duress and panic because the the trans

person wasn't the perceived the the gender they perceived them to be, that it caused them to flip out and then kill that person. And which the three of the people who murdered Gwen Araujo in 2001 used that, and two of them got lesser charges. So I came home and saw that that was still active in Rhode Island and it kind of made me flip out, and that was the first thing that I was like, this needs to get this needs to be done and I want to deal with this. I'm going to do it and maybe it's a little bit narcissistic of me, but I was self centered, I don't know, but I have always been very aware of the fact that people listen to me and most of the rooms that I'm in. For better or for worse, and so, when I came home that summer, I just knew I was like people in Rhode Island are listening. They were going to listen to me, so I should start doing some work to to get this done. Getting rid of the trans panic Bill or defence, hosting rallies. This was also, you know, almost at the in like the middle phases of the Trump administration. So this was the summer that the trans military ban was first proposed. That was a rally that I hosted an emergency rally with some other really amazing trans activists. Yolandi Fajir being one of them. She's recently passed away, but she was very radical and involved. And so I was just very lucky I had a lot of people kind of reach out to me and pull me into the movement of community organizing in the queer community in Providence and pass me the mic. And that was the first thing I wanted to do. And then I met someone who's still my best friend, Kat Kerwin on Providence that summer. And she is a community organizer, less on the activist spectrum and more on the electoral politics spectrum or side of it. Rather, she's been working in the mayor's office since she was 14 like the youngest intern in the City of Providence. I met her and we just instantly fell in love with one another. And she kept pushing me that whole summer to get involved in politics. And she had a plan, and she was finishing her sophomore year at the University of Madison, WI, and she was going to come home and run for umm a city council seat in the 12th Ward in Providence. Which was amazing and felt very badass to me because she was 21 or 20. She was 20 and and she kept trying to push me to do it. And I was like, I kept telling her, like I'm not political or I'm political, but I'm not a politician. I think there were three lanes. You know, there's the activist, there's the organizer, there's the politician. I don't think that often there's a successful crossover, so I'm going to stay out of it and I'll continue doing my organizing and yelling in the streets and being loud. I don't want to run for office and she was like, OK, well, I think that you should. So, uhm, September rolled around Denica Rome became the first trans woman in the country to win a state legislature seat. I remember being at work at Lilly Marlene's and getting the notification on my phone that she had. I immediately texted my friend Kat and said, you know, Danica Rome, just one. I think maybe I want to run for office how do I do it and after like squealing about it because she was so excited, she sent my name and contact information mind you, this was just a thought. It was just an idea, but she took it and she ran with it and she sent my name and my contact information to Patrick Ward, who at the time was the head of the the head of the Providence Democrats, which was like a like a little society essentially, they helped to elect Democrats in Providence, and he is also the husband of the current president of the Providence City Council, Sabina Mantos. So he has a lot of sway. And he messaged me the next day and texted me and was like, hey, Nika, I'm Patrick Ward. I heard about you through the Grapevine. We should meet for coffee and talk about you running for office. And I was like fuck. OK, so we're doing this now, I guess. UM. So we met at seven Stars, which is a coffee shop in the district that I was living in at the time on Federal Hill District 8. And at the time I wanted to run for City Council, I

didn't want to be in the General Assembly. I wanted to run for council. I don't remember my reasoning behind wanting to be on the Council. But I just knew that I wanted to, so yeah, I want to run for the Council. I wanted to run. I would have been running against Brian Principe, who was like a very chummy Councilman, like fun, hot dad who, like, runs through the ward that goes for jogs every day. And it's like, hey, pal, how are you? But community organizers really did not like him. OK, so now I remember. Actually, it was because community organizers did not like him. They thought that he was inefficient. They thought he was a bit of a snake and and they thought he was just like, you know, an affable but, like, not great politician. So I wanted to run for that seat, but Patrick Ward talked me out of it because. Brian Principi and Sabina Matos were very good friends and very good allies on the Council, so obviously Patrick Ward being her husband did not want me running against his wife's only ally, so he put me up to run for state representative in District 8. Against John Lombardi. John Lombardi had-grew up on Federal Hill in the district. He is currently in his late 60s. My entire family going back from the 1880s, grew up

or, yeah, grew up on Federal Hill. When my family came over from southern Italy, they settled on Federal Hill. They didn't leave to move to the suburbs and other neighborhoods in Providence until like 1986. So. So we go way back in that neighborhood. John Lombardi and my family have, like, a very connected relationship. He was at my baptism. He was at my First Communion. He was the City Councilman. He was a City Councilman in that neighborhood for about 25 years. He was interim mayor for a year because he was the City Council president and at one point our mayor went away to prison. So he was interim mayor and and he then became state representative. He was a judge in Providence, is still a judge. So everyone knows John Lombardi, including me. And Patrick Lord wanted me to run against John Lombardi, and I was like Absa-fucking-lutely not like I'm not running against John Lombardi. I cannot do that. My family will kill me. Everyone in the neighborhood loves him like he is, he is great! Like I'm not running against him. Why would I run against him? But I got talked into it and my family, surprisingly, was like you should do it. This is actually kind of funny and cool like we don't care. It's politics. Go for it, run for the seat. And I didn't tell him I was running against him. I didn't tell anyone that I was running against him. It just got announced in the newspaper. So it was like it was pretty savage. Like he picked up the Providence Journal and was like, uh, what is going on? Someone is running against me, OK? And no one had challenged him except Libby Kimsey 4 years before I did, and she didn't even really make a splash because she was a Brown University educated community organizer and Providence residents hate Brown University students. It's it's a very contentious relationship. We despise them, we think they're elitists, we blame them for putting our property taxes up because they don't pay property taxes on their campus, which takes up like half the city they insert themselves in politics and we got upset because they don't really have a pulse on like the average person. So when she ran, especially in that neighborhood against John. People were like, who do you think you are? No way. But. When I announced that I was running a little Italian girl whose last name is Lomazzo against Lombardi, whose family grew up going to Zocalo Pool, where he was a lifeguard, it was. Like a pretty fierce battle because it was kind of like the, you know, the old with the new like which-which so you know, who do we want? But

also they're both kind of the same. And I was working it like I was wearing like my Jackie Kennedy coat and like little uh, I had my bailage like would show up and like my heels and skirts, like my wardrobe for my campaign was so good by this time in my transition, I really knew what my look was. It was very like, I'm like, alive in like, 1976 and like I'm wearing bell bottoms to like a town hall like we've got this. So I look, you know, my hair was flowing. I looked great.

Fuentes: So what was your plan?

Lomazzo: So my plan. I decided to run and the the first thing which I don't really talk about a lot. The first thing that I wanted to actually do before I even decided to run for a seat was that I wanted to unionize Rhode Island service workers, I wanted us to have our own Union tipped workers to have our own Union I-it had been. I had seen it kind of been talked about in California and it was a really radical idea. They were doing some work on it and it really started because I was working at this restaurant with all women and we were all broke. No one had healthcare and I just saw the ways in which we were being abused. In the ways in which we were disposable. And so I started getting frustrated and I met with someone who's still a good friend, Mike Arujo who? Is heavily involved in the DSA, Democratic Socialist Alliance is a big time community organizer. He's from New York. He grew up in the Bronx and then he moved to Providence and has done a lot of really radical work in Providence. And I met with him and he wanted me to run for counsel. Patrick wanted me to run for state Rep Mike thought that this plan was, you know, would be more effective on a city level. Patrick thought it was more effective if I got it done with legislation. I didn't know, so I I was like, I don't know. Who to listen to? So I just decided to run for state Rep, but that was my first plan. I wanted a union for service workers. I met with a few bartenders, managers of restaurants. We started doing like a-a Community survey where I would go into restaurants and like, talk to workers. We're down and ask them, like, do you like your job? Do you feel protected? Or do you feel like you could ask for time off if you needed it like etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And we did this for about two months and then it kind of fizzled out because it was really hard to. Get people to talk. Even people who hated their jobs didn't want to talk because they were afraid they were going to be fired. Looking back, it was pretty ballsy for me to even be doing this because the owner of it was a small restaurant like the owner knew I was doing this and could have fired me, but he didn't. That was my first plan. The second plan was that I wanted to strengthen trans state-state protections for trans people in Rhode Island. This is where things got very contentious with me and the trans community in Rhode Island. I pissed off a lot of people.

Fuentes: What happened?

Lomazzo: Well, the trans community in Rhode Island is pretty much run by two, uhh two

white, older like in their 40s trans men, Ethan Huckle and Jay Watts. They've done a lot of good work. They they they've done a lot of good work, but they're also older and I think they saw me, they saw me blow through full steam ahead and. I think it pissed them off. I think that they one kind of wanted me to like kiss their coronation ring and ask their permission to run for a seat as a trans person, which happened a lot. I had, like the progressive movement gap passed off because I didn't ask them if I could run. I had the trans community get pissed off because I didn't ask them if I could run and. And in my mind, and still to this day, I always thought I don't really owe anyone an explanation as to why I'm running. Like I'm running as a trans woman, but not for the trans community. I'm running as a progressive, but not for the progressive community like I'm not. I'm not running to represent any one community. In my mind, the everything that I wanted to do was to bridge the gap and it was to bridge the gap between activists, community organizers and politicians because I saw the distrust that was going on and I saw that, you know, at the rallies, I would organize my like fellow comrades they didn't want politicians coming because they felt it was going to be a photo op and the politicians didn't want to come because they thought it was a waste of their time. And so I my thought was, well, maybe it needs to be a photo op sometimes, and maybe also they like politicians need to realize that they need to be here if they want to be elected again come next year. They need to show up to these events. They need to know that they might not be. Voted back into office. So I was kind of just, I was trying to get everyone to see the bigger picture and to realize that you need to shake hands with scummy people sometimes and people you don't like. And you need to kind of Polish people's egos if you want to get the bill written and which I still stand by that or, you know, the law passed, et cetera. So Ethan and Ethan Huckle and Jay Watts, were really upset with me and their problem was that they felt that if I and their words drummed up this bill to get the trans panic defense taken off of the books in Rhode Island, it would then drum up opposition laws and pieces from more conservative groups in the state. I was also told by both of them in a private message that they didn't see an immediate need to get rid of that bill because rarely are there trans hate crimes in Rhode Island, which, quite frankly, as a young trans woman who has to walk home alone at night and is sexualized because I'm a trans woman, it made me pretty pissed off that these two older white trans men who live in the suburbs. One of them is married with a baby you know, men who heavily passed as cis men who are protected, who are men in general, regardless of how they came to being a man. We're kind of talking over me and it pissed me off, so I-I-I pushed on anyway and and that was something I kept experiencing. I kept getting written off as being, you know, an inexperienced, uh, like, too bubbly, too inexperienced, too effeminate. You know, just too much of anything that, like, wasn't good enough to be a candidate in a race, but then on the other end there were people who were. Really taking me seriously and paying attention and. So those were my two plans it. Was was inspired by. Service workers being unionized? Then I wanted to get the trans panic defense taken off of the books and my other issue was addressing the rapid gentrification in District 8 in Federal Hill. I didn't know exactly when I started how I was going to do that. I when I started running I started looking into figuring out how to rewrite the spot zoning laws in Rhode Island to make

like to to create more inclusive zoning laws so that people weren't being pushed out when when a new building was being built, or so that they had to go through more of a process, developers to put a new building in an empty lot in the neighborhood. And that was something I was really, really passionate about seeing all the boarded up, you know, tenements in the neighborhood that were sitting vacant and then being set on fire and then developers picking them up and turning them into luxury housing. And having lived in New York for two years, I knew that you know what was happening here was only going to happen in a matter of time in Rhode Island. And I didn't want to see that happen. And then my third thing was less policy and more symbolic. I the entire vision of my campaign was that I wanted young people in Providence, young musicians, young artists, anyone who was young and who was a creative and felt disenfranchised or disillusioned, I wanted them to see me running and I wanted them to understand and to realize and to feel that they had a home not only in their state Rep if I were to win, but in politics in general. You know, I-I spent I spent that campaign heavily getting people involved telling them that, you know, here's when you can go sit in on a council meeting. These minutes are public. You can go online and look them up. There's a schedule online. You can go sit in this Chamber at the State House. On this day, you can go testify for this bill, even though you're just a concerned citizen. You can register on your phone when you're at the bar. Like, give me your phone. Let me register you and and that was the biggest thing when I started running. I didn't think that I was going to win and I didn't really care. I started running to make a splash and that was the goal at 1st and I just wanted to make a splash. I wanted to move the conversation left and I wanted to move it forward and I wanted people again, young people, to feel inspired, included, involved. And then as time rolled on and more people came to work on my campaign, like people who were established Democrats, I started realizing that I actually had a chance of winning. And that's when the campaign took a turn for the worse, because I got really freaked out and. I started realizing I was going to win and I was like FUCK like I don't want to win. I don't want to be a state Rep like I'm 22 years old. I don't want to be in office if I don't want to be in Rhode Island for three more years like I might want to move cack to New York one day.

Fuentes: Did you have a slogan?

Lomazzo: Yeah. So my slogan was transitioning for change and my-my campaign posters were the trans flag. Yeah. So but

Fuentes: Were these like plastered all over?

Lomazzo: I didn't get that far. They were like in the newspaper and like they would use them if I was in an interview. But I didn't print them out and like I also lived in a heavy tenement neighborhood. So a lot of. People weren't putting up posters that would have been what had happened. If I had stayed stayed in the campaign longer, I-I.

Fuentes: So you realized you didn't want. To do do it anymore. Then what happened?

Lomazzo: Well, so while I was running and kind of like living this fantasy of being like a political

powerhouse, I was also severely battling a coke problem that no one knew about. So I was really living 2 lives. It was like Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde, like 2 very separate. Lives that like were very quickly you know, two trains on the same track. And that's when I started being like I need to drop out. I have a drug problem or like, you know, I'm struggling with coke. It didn't like die down from 2016. I kind of had months where I would stop and then would start again and I was like, I'm doing coke all the time. I'm drinking all the time. I'm like going out partying. UM, lot of really intense like bad shit was happening that I it like it was about to explode and I knew I had to to solve this. So that made me want to drop out, obviously, and then also just realizing that I-I knew I wasn't ready to be a state Rep and I-I knew that I didn't want to be that girl who ran for office in a community that didn't ask her to run for office because I didn't care that the progressive community didn't want me to run and I didn't care that the trans community, you know, the older trans elders were gatekeeping and didn't want me to run what I cared about were my constituents. And when I started realizing that the the people who were excited for me to run were the young gentrifiers who lived in the neighborhood and not the people of color that lived in the neighborhood that had been there for generations you know, for decades who were disenfranchised, the low income residents who were just like, none of those people were showing up to my fundraisers. None of those people. Were were reaching out to me. They weren't. So I quickly realized that. Like those people? They're not asking me to run. They don't have a problem with Representative Lombardi. He has a good relationship with them. What am I doing like? What am I doing here? Why did I insert myself into this race not only with no political experience, but with a potentially very volatile mental health problem going on? Because now I realize that it wasn't really a drug problem, it was an undiagnosed mental health issue. You know, it was selfish of me to continue on in this race. So I kind of went the campaign kind of went silent for like 2 months people around the city and the state started kind of getting an idea that something was going on when I stopped, like fundraising, and I wasn't doing interviews anymore and I was pretty so I wasn't, you know, putting my tweets out every day about, like, this is what we need for the community. And and I also announced really early. So I announced in November most people announced between the months of like January to March. So I announced extremely early. I dropped out very early, so I never had the campaign. I dropped out officially at the end of March. So I never had the campaign where I was like going to town halls, etc. I wish that I had. Because I would have decimated Rep. Lombardi in a debate and this like as much of as much as this was like an impulsive like a bit of an idealistic driven idea. It was also something that I had wanted to do for most of my life, was to one day run for office. I just always thought. I would do. It when I was older. So yeah, it wasn't like that crazy. It was just it was the right idea at the wrong time. So I ended up dropping out in March. Me and Rep. Lombardi had a great conversation and and are still friends to this day. We still talk. He's very sweet. A year later, the trans panic did get taken off of the books in Rhode Island, and I do feel responsible for that, and I'm really proud of that. I still have people when I am in Rhode Island or who will even message me who you know, they'll message me and say things like, you know, to this day I'm still involved politically on a local level because you made me realize that like it was that easy to get involved, et cetera. So I have, I did have some like cute, good things come out of that run. So yeah, I am. This is the one of like the first times in a while that I've gotten to talk about this in a way that isn't self deprecating and like sardonic. I-I'm a comedian. So I've spent the last few years



turning it into material and joking about it, which a lot of it was funny and a lot of it was ridiculous, but recently I-I have been having these moments where I've looked back and I think it's because it's a campaign season right now, so I just get like sentimental but looking back where I'm like. Oh no, I really did set out to like, do something righteous. And I did have a whole background that brought me there. It just wasn't where I was meant to go.

Fuentes: When in this process of looking back at it like, what do you? What do you? See now when you think about the what you were trying to do about looking at electoral politics and and activism like where do you sit now with with that?

Lomazzo: I still kind of-I still sit really in the same place that I was sitting in three years ago when I sat out, which is that I think local electoral politics are so, so important. And I tell people this all the time. You know, after Trump won, people got really, really deflated naturally, it's been dark since even before Trump won, you know, even within eight years of an Obama presidency. I think people were deflated because I think that you know, federal, a federal election is often bullshit. It's really hard to push a president in a direction that you want them to go in. It's a lot easier to push your state representative or your Council person in the direction that you want them to go in, especially when you live in a city like Providence, which has 100,000 people and 13 wards or we have 15 wards. That's a tiny city, so. I think that...It's the most, I think it's the most important or maybe not the most important, but I think it's one of the the best ways to affect the like radical change that you want to see in your own backyard is to be involved in local electoral politics, run for a seat. You know, we-we saw in Rhode Island. I saw so many people the year that I dropped out. First time candidates moms, my friend Kat Kerwin, who is now 22 with no experience, moms with no experience teachers, just people all across the state-run. I think it was a we had 117 first time female candidates run in Rhode Island. And like 60 of them won various seats from like school boards to the General Assembly to the Council, to count to other city, to town councils. And I think that was really important and we're seeing we're seeing the the way that that is positively impacting the state right now and positively impacting the city. And I don't say that because they're women, because I hate that idea that, you know, when women lead. I think that's not real. I think often female politicians are just as corrupt and bad as a male politician, but I think first time candidates running is really important and I think young people running is really important. And so I think that, you know, people like Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, Danica Rome, you know them running and and that becoming national news and then trickling down. To inspiring other young people to run. I think it's extremely important and I think it's important for queer people to run for office if they want to. I don't think anyone should feel pressured to, but. Uh, you know, another slogan of mine which wasn't a slogan was just something I would always say when I would give interviews when I was running was that, you know, a community doesn't get representation in my opinion, until someone from that community decides to step up and represent. And I don't think you need to be asked. I think that if you have the right intentions, obviously check in with your community, but if you have the right intentions, run and and I saw that happen when I ran, I

dropped out and a community organizer who is so much more amazing than I ever could have been as a community organizer. Justice Gaines, who is a black trans person in Providence. They ran a few months after I did for a Council seat and came pretty close to winning. They got like 40% of the vote and and you know, we both have had the conversation that-that wouldn't have happened if we both, you know it it wouldn't have happened if one of us hadn't done it first and we like now we both, as you know, two trans people who really love the city of Providence, even though I don't live there anymore, are now hoping that, like another generation of trans people out in Providence, run for a seat or queer people in general. Providence historically has had, you know, a lot of gay men run proceeds. We had a gay mayor in the early 2000s who is now a Congressman, David Sicilline. So we have like we have a history of being a queer city, but I don't think it's a queer city. It's a gay city, it's a gay city that has often had white gay representation, but not a lot for trans people.

Fuentes: People, how do you differentiate queer and gay?

Lomazzo: UM good question. When I think of queerness, I know that there obviously are gay, gay people who identify as queer, and I think obviously they're not mutually exclusive or, you know, they don't. One doesn't cancel the other out. But when I think of queer community versus gay community. It's just it's more varying identity is to me. So when I say that Providence is more of a gay city, it's. That the people who have had the mic always and have been represented, and who have led the movement have been. Mostly gay men who congregate in gay bars in gay clubs who don't come out to fight for trans people who don't come out to fight for non binary people who don't want trans people in their bars, in their clubs who don't want nonbinary people in their bars, in their clubs. Who are not interested with umm caring about the conversation at large. So that's what I mean when I say queer versus-queer versus gay, yeah.

Fuentes: You mentioned briefly the Obama administration. What was happening in your life? During the administration.

Lomazzo: Well, let's see, I. Was in the. 8th grade when he first got sworn into office, I was. A-a sophomore or junior in high school, when he or a junior in high school when he got sworn in the second time. So I mean, I was pretty much like my formative years were under the Obama Biden administration.

Fuentes: What did you when you say formative, what do you?

Lomazzo: Oh well, just as a forming as like a teenager as a as a young person from, you know, the I was 13 when he first became president and. Then I was. In my I was twenty when he left office. So very large chunk of time. I mean, yeah, I-I mean, I came out as bisexual when I was fourteen. I dipped back into the closet when I went to my private high school, came back out as bisexual when I was 17. I started, you know, forming my ideas of what activism looked like to me when I was like 16-17 in high school-

Fuentes: School, which was based on what?

Lomazzo: I mean, at that point it was. I don't even know. I mean at at that point, activism, to me was definitely not what it looks like to me now. I was very much like a white CIS gay boy who. Really, I just didn't get it with a lot of things. I mean, in high school, I-I would say I up until I was eighteen, I didn't understand why reverse racism didn't exist. I didn't understand why trans people would get angry when, when when Jared Leto played? Or maybe it was before that. Somebody played a trans woman when I was in high school in a big movie, and I remember getting into an argument on Facebook about it, before I identified as trans or even knew of being trans was. I just didn't get it, so I kind of likened myself to being like a-a boomer white liberal as kind of the activist that I was when I was like 17. Yeah, like you should be nice to me don't raise your voice or like you might, like, push me away. So that was kind of that was my my idea, but I also, I mean I had like a tonne of compassion and empathy. I just didn't really get it because I was surrounded by I was in a a bubble of kind of like respectability, so.

Fuentes: How did you come up with? Your transition for change slogan.

Lomazzo: UM I knew that I wanted some funny punny thing about being trans in the slogan because I mean, I-I just thought it was hilarious. I-I think it was going to be like transition to change and a friend was like no it should be or-or no, it was it was going to be transitioning forward together and someone was like, that's too many words. And I was like, OK, what should it be? And the whole it ended up becoming transitioning for change because my whole thing was. Representative Lombardi has represented in one way or another this neighborhood for 25 years. We need change, so I'm-I'm going to be your change. It's a wave of change. It's a new year. It's a a new time. New people live in this neighborhood, like out with the old and with the new. So yeah.

Fuentes: I see. So what was it? Like after you had decided to drop out.

Lomazzo: Well, so I mean, I dropped out and I didn't take a break. I dropped out and I immediately my my statement to the press when I dropped out was that I was dropping out to work on the campaign of my mentor, Sid McKenna, who had been running my campaign. Then midway through, she decided Brian Principe, left, was leaving his council seat, and she decided she was going to run for it. She had been the former chief of staff to the City Council prior to that. She had worked in the urban planning office in the Providence City Council or in in the Providence City Hall before or after that she ran Buddy Cianci's campaign to run for mayor, which was very contentious. He was our mayor who went to prison almost went to prison. Once, stepped down, came back, ran again, went to prison, and then, in 2000, had like, some rape charges against him. Like very, very contentious man there's a podcast about it called Crime Town. The whole thing she ran ge was basically her mentor when she was fresh out of grad school and and she came back to Providence from college, so she she has a a very kind of, she's very infamous in Providence. I immediately loved her. She's a very hot, very hot, cool black woman from the neighborhood whose father was a very active, like Jim Crow activist and then moved to Providence. And founded the South Southside Community Land Trust, which the South side has for since like the 30s, has been a heavily black population. So she she just won me over really fast and she's just she is smart as a whip, like

super, super intelligent. She decided to run my campaign. Then she was like, well, actually I'm going to run for council, but I'll still run your campaign. And I was like, that's just not logistics. Like, that's not going to work so. When I dropped out, I immediately started working on her campaign. And that was a really contentious council race because she was kind of like the darling to win and it was between her three other people, but really came down to her. And Rachel Miller-Rachel Miller was, or is, the one who won. She's the current city Councilwoman for Ward, 13, and she is a white woman who moved into the neighborhood. She was kind of like the first wave of gentrification and like the twenty 10s big time community organizer. It was a it was a rough but fun campaign, so I worked for Sid and then on top of that I was working for Nick Audiello, who was running in a very it was a crazy year for politics for Rhode Island. He was running for a state Senate seat in the same neighborhood. He was running as, like an openly gay man against Paul Jabour-Paul Jabour and John Lombardi are best friends. They're both from the neighborhood, had been in office for the same amount of time. It was a 3 way race with Nick Audiello, Paul Jabour and then Sam Bell, who was like the Progressive challenger. So I worked on both of their races for the whole summer, so I really had no time to rest. They both lost, so I lost two campaigns in one night. Which was really rough, on top of. Knowing that if I hadn't dropped out, I would have won. So it was a lot. Yeah, but that's what I did. I just. I kept working on campaigns and then instead of taking a rest after they both lost, I decided to work on another campaign straight into the general election for our Governor, Gina Raimondo. So I really didn't stop working in politics for close to or for exactly a year. It was my life. Yeah, and that was fun, I guess umm looking back, I definitely have big, big regrets about working on Nick Audiello campaign. But I did it because I believed in his mission at the time. I don't anymore. Yeah, no regrets about working on side campaign. I really believed in what she was working towards. But it took a lot out of me and after-after campaign season was officially done, I. I lost my shit and and was like I need a break. But I didn't take a break. I just partied really hard, partied really hard and then was intermittently doing stand up and was like coming to New York to do stand up and was like getting booked every once in a blue moon here and spent that last year in Providence, so like 2018 to or really the last two years, 2018 to 2020. Doing stand up and still dipping like kind of still working as an organizer, I was doing a lot of like gun safety work with my friend Kat, gun safety legislation, was working on getting Roe V Wade codified into state law was doing that. But it was taking a backseat and I was trying to figure out what I was going to do and that was also another big reason that I realized I didn't want to be a politician was that I love organizing and I love politics. But what I realized that I love the most about politics is that it gives me the same rush that I have when I'm on stage. It's performative, you know. I say a lot that politics is theatre for ugly people, and I don't mean physically ugly and mean ugly on the inside. Because when you go to a fundraiser like that, you're working the room, you're working the room. Everyone's looking at you. You are hot shit. People want to talk to you, people want to shake your hand, especially when you're young, it's fun. It's like being on stage. But it's not because then there's like policy work involved, and there's a lot of nastiness involved in it. It really I'm-I'm pragmatic, but I'm like very much an optimist and I

don't ever want to lose that optimism and I running for office for the amount of time that I did and then working on those two campaigns. I saw how nasty people get. I saw how nasty Rachel's campaign got with Sids. How nasty is how nasty Sam's campaign got with Nicks. Even though I kind of regret working on Nick's campaign because of his own personal politics today, the one thing I'll say is that him and Sid, they both. I'm really proud because they both did a really good job of, like, never getting nasty. We always we never responded to the attacks. We always kept our eye on the ball, which was winning, which was talking about policy, on a city and a state level and. Like that was that and that's how I like, that's how I want to be always. You know, if you need to get negative, you go negative you attack someone, but I-I think that what I experienced is that people attack a candidate attacks another candidate when they know that it's their only way to win, which I mean we're seeing right now, Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders, because my boy Bernard never attacks anyone. And I saw that then and I really didn't like it and I didn't like the effect it had on me in my mental health. So that's when I started doing stand up a little bit more and more and then I that was like another grieving process where I-I spent my last year in Providence being very, very angry with Providence. I felt like I had kind of been, like, chewed up and spit out by the organizing community by the political scene and just really by everyone. And it made me really upset because it's my home and my family has been there for like 150 years, Rhode Island is-it's my home and I never wanted to feel like I was fleeing Rhode Island. I always wanted it to be an active choice that I was leaving and that is not how I felt by the time I left. By the time I left I. I was like, really. I was like, running out and I didn't want to look back. And I'm hoping one day I get back to a place where I like can like look at Rhode Island fondly again, but with that whole experience. It was. It was a rough like year and a half rough two years, yeah.

Fuentes: So what's new? York to you, then what's New York to me? Because it's also a place that you had been before left and have since come back.

Lomazzo: I mean to me New York is just a place that I-New York is just a place that I am like actively in love with. You know, I didn't choose to be from Rhode Island, and I didn't choose to go back to Rhode Island. I was. Born there and then I had to stay there. For, you know, whatever reasons. New York is a place that I chose to come to the first time and I chose to come back to the second time and I really worked hard to come here both times. So New York, to me, is a place where I have agency. It's a place where I-I-I don't feel like I am running away from myself when I'm in New York and Rhode Island. It was it, Rhode Island feels like a rabbit hole where I'm constantly running away from myself in a very small geographical sphere in an even smaller social one. Yeah, New York to me is just, it's home in a totally different way. It's a place, it's a home that I get to create for myself. It's a it's a New York to me is a place where I can establish boundaries for myself. New York to me is a place where I-I never feel like I'm doing the most. When I'm in Rhode Island, I always feel like I'm doing the most. I feel like I'm that annoying loud femme in the room who is laughing too loud or yelling too much or being too much trying too hard when I'm in New York, I feel seen and celebrated, I feel accepted. I

yeah and obviously New York is not no place is perfect. So like obviously I've been here almost two months and there are days where I'm like like why did I move here like there are days where I like, go to bed crying. But I have a moment every single day that I'm here where I'm like, oh, this is why I'm here like I-I click back in and I'm like, This is why I'm here and Rhode Island to me, is my past and New York is just the rest of it. I used to [short pause] I, as a trans woman, I have, you know, kind of always ask myself the question like, oh, when did my transition begin? And like, when did it end? And I kind of for a while I viewed it as my transition ended when I had surgery and my life began when I decided to get involved in politics. That's so not true. I don't think my transition will ever be over because I think people in general and I am stealing this from Janet Mock. So please note that this is not me, but she said in her book that she feels that, you know, a transition never really ends. People are constantly transitioning throughout life, and you're constantly in flux with your identities. And she wishes that cis people focused less on what does life offer or what-when does the transition is over? When is the transition over for a trans person and she wishes that life that people asked more and focused more on, you know what happens next for a trans person. After that, like social part of your transition is over and I feel like for me that's New York. I recently changed my name and my gender marker in Rhode Island. I feel like I am as socially transitioned as I will ever be you know, I don't, I don't hold myself to these crazy, unhealthy standards of being the cis passing trans girl anymore. I don't look at cis girls and think like that's what I really want, which I did in Rhode Island a lot and. I think running for office was there was so much involved in running for office. You know, there was like the and I get, like, kind of scared to talk about it sometimes because it's like there was such a vision behind it. But there also was a lot of, like, insecurity that drove me to run. And I never want people to think that I'm taking that, you know, running for office was this like frivolous idea for me because that could damage a community. But I think like for me like running for office was like a big part of me trying to create a life for myself that existed outside of being the awkward, weird trans girl in the room. You know, because what milestones do trans people kind of? What are we expected? What milestones are we expected to hit? I have two sisters. You know my parents one day or not my mom, but my dad one day wonders like, when will your sister or Lisa get married and have a baby like my sister got married three years ago and is having a baby probably this week. Like it's on the way. I know that he doesn't wonder those things for me and and I know that most people don't wonder those don't ask those questions of trans people. Then you know the the quote unquote normal conventional life milestones that are cis counterparts are just kind of expected to fulfill which there is a curse and expectation, you know, with the with the expectation of fulfilling those milestones. But also like gives your life meaning and it gives your life a bit of a purpose and it gives you like a blueprint to work with. Like this is when I will get married or this is when I want to be a parent. So I think running for uh a seat in the Rhode Island General Assembly after having surgery, which was one big milestone that was like then next step for me, I didn't really know what I was supposed. To do next-I didn't want-want-I wasn't going to continue on, just like being a waitress and reading bad poems at open mics in Providence, so I didn't really know

what else to do. And that was that was the next step for me, because it just made sense in terms of the like structure that I already had existing in my life at that point.

Fuentes: So when you're doing? Let's talk a little bit about stand up. What? Can you describe a little bit more about how you're drawing the connexions between your political work and and what you do, and with stand up?

Lomazzo: Yeah. So a little bit of background. My first solo comedy show that I did was called Impostor syndrome. I did it in a black box theatre at as 220, which is a local, it's a local venue that's really good to local artists in Providence. And I did that show there and I had begun writing that show already and then decided to run for office, and I was. Like, well, I'm not going to cancel it. So I'm going to have it. So I was like a political candidate with a comedy show, it was very strange, but. That's kind of where I got the first inspiration, because that whole show was about me being like a young, messy trans girl who was like, you know, dancing on the top of, like, bars and clubs, while also like running for state Rep. Then I stopped doing that material for a while and started just talking about my body and my sets, which I still do. But I started recently doing sets about running for office and mostly it's just laughing at myself and the kind of the ridiculousness of the fact that truly I was in bed one morning at like 6:00 AM and smelled like a cigarette because I've been at, like, you know, pretty much a frat house doing bad blow and drinking like warm beer on like a Tuesday and was in bed and like, couldn't breathe out of my nostrils and was like mouth breathing. And at like asked myself out loud, said out loud like Nika. What the fuck are we doing? Like what? We need to like figure this out. Like what are we going to do? I it. It was like I knew I needed a lifestyle change and so I decided to run for office. And that's really like, that's the crux of my material about running for office. I thought it was like this. Like, come to Jesus moment and then I ran as I said, thinking no one would take me seriously. And then, like two months in, everyone was taking me seriously, and the joke is that I was saying on stage that my reaction was just fuck like FUCK everyone is taking me seriously this is horrible. So there I was running for state Rep. So yeah, that's the material mostly and that's how it connects to that experience, but-but like I said, I-I-I love that I joke about it and I think it's hilarious because it is funny to me, but I I have gotten a little but I get nervous of having a one track narrative because I don't want people. I think that like things often get perceived as being very black and white, and I want people to understand that like these experiences exist in like several different realms for me, and while I do look back at it and laugh a lot about my own inexperience and turbulence running for office, I also look back and like really, really honor and admire the like. Radical Young 22 year old in me, who decided to run for office. And like was in the Providence Journal. So both of them, you know, I-I hope that both narratives going forward can exist within the same universe and it doesn't have to be. One over the other because I try not to take anything too seriously and I don't want to sound like I think I'm more important than I really am. Because I don't take myself that seriously, but I do also want to honor. The things that I have done and I want to be like I-I want to give myself the space to be proud of my past self and the things that I did while also laughing about it. UM, yeah, so that's where I'm at now and now I now I am just a comedian who who lives in New York rather than a tired, probably would be a really tired state Rep right now in Rhode Island. And that just

sounds horrible so I'm glad that I'm not there. UM I don't know now! I'm-I've been in a place where I'm trying to I'm trying to like map out and kind of chart. Those last like four, I would really say the last five years of my life. So like, right before I transitioned. Then transitioning coming home that like one year of really heavy, heavy darkness of being dysphoric and not really knowing what was up then having surgery. Pretending like I was a cis girl and then running for state Rep is the first trans candidate in Rhode Island. I'm-I'm trying to. Map out and kind of come up with my own. I guess narrative for like what all of that means to me because I'm still piecing it together. I spent the last three years not really. Mentally or emotionally present within myself. So something like this sitting here and talking about this is honestly very helpful for me because it allows me to chart that progress and to hear what it sounds like to someone else. Do you have any questions or do you have a direction I should. Go in because now I feel like I'm rambling a little bit. I don't know. I guess the other. The other aspect of running for office and the other or not even running but, the other part of that. The other big part of my life during that period of time was being a trans girl with a vagina and not not knowing how to cope with any of that and and that is something I've been thinking a lot about recently too. The idea that a trans girl goes away and she gets a vagina and then she comes home and everything is like POOF transition is over. You're good now. Like, get your number in line. Go! And that is not how that journey was, and that is still not how it is I-I hope that going forward more space is given to any trans person in general who has any surgery that is perceived to be kind of like a panacea to your trans woes and and. Yeah, I am-I've been trying to-to process recently or not process to try to remember recently the reasons behind why I even went to Bangkok to have surgery. And like what? It means to me three years later to be a no longer straight, but a trans girl who, you know basically at that point I got my vagina because I was again living as a cis like passing trans girl, even with a penis, but was being read as cis in most spaces. Got a vagina and modified my body in such a major way thinking that I was going to live the rest of my life as this straight cis, passing trans girl who would you know like. Get a get a straight cis husband and, like, be a soccer mom and like, tell him I got a hysterectomy. You know, like go stealth and forget about everyone, or maybe not even do that, but just like still be that girl who, like, was the exception, the exceptional trans girl. Which often I wonder if I would have gone down a different path if I hadn't so heavily used Janet Mock's redefining realness as my blueprint. But I don't know because that really was like my blueprint for transitioning. And I think I was heavily influenced by her own journey. And I kind of thought that that was the only. Way in. Which one? To be a happy trans woman is to kind of be the Super fem, do all the right things, get the surgery going, hormones, clinch the man, get the job, not tell anyone you're trans for like 10 years and then tell them when you feel like it. And that's very much the vision I have for myself. But now, years later, it's been four years. That's like, definitely not the world in which I exist in. I am no longer that girl who, you know, wants to be desired and seen by those cis straight men on like the floor of a nightclub. Now I'm reckoning with being a trans girl who is in love with gay men. I'm constantly and you know.

Fuentes: Yeah. How's that going?

Lomazzo: It's not really going anywhere, you know, just a lot of, like, spirally tweets about it. It's weird, it's really weird and it wasn't a thing for so many years. I mean, I-I repressed it because I was constantly hanging out with cis straight people, so it's like those were the



people I wanted to hook up with and be with and now I kind of have a rule of not hanging out with straight people. That's-that's my personal boundary is that you need to really be exceptional if I'm going to let you into my fray now, I'm in a really cool community of, like, Brooklyn Queers, Brooklyn, queer Men who owe me, but love me the way that like they love a goddess. And let's be frank, no one wants to fuck a goddess except like maybe like ancient Greek people but. Not anyone today! The queer man that I know that put me on the goddess pedestal do not want to fuck me? Or maybe they do? I don't know. I really don't know, but it's not happening and it's.

Fuentes: Do you wanna speak it into the archive if, if any!

Lomazzo: Yeah, you know what? Sure, if any gay cute gay or queer men use this for a paper or like hear this or anything and you guys do want to hook up with trans girls to have vaginas. Just feel free to give me a ring, you know. Find me on the interwebs. Yeah, it's weird. It's complex. It's given me a whole new host of not even problems, just of like things to reckon with. And now I'm just. I kind of am now like, oh, like, what the fuck? Like, another hump to get over, which is why I say, like, my social transition might be done, but like, transitioning in general is just never going to be done because. I'm constantly transitioning into different parts of my womanhood and to what it feels, you know, looks like to me and feels like to me and what my desires are constantly transitioning in all different directions. And yeah, it's weird. It's weird to desire people that desire you until they realize what kind of body you have and then it's like, oh, actually never mind. And obviously I don't fault anyone for like not desiring me. And I'm like, I'm not entitled to anyone's body or anyone's time or anything from anyone. But I do-I do wish that. We could exist in more of like a grey area I guess I kind of I kind of hate that the lines are so defined even within the queer community of who we're supposed to want to have sex with and like who we're supposed to want to be in a relationship with. Because I think that a lot of it comes down to expectations, because I kind of see like. The question marks form, in the eyes of the gay men that I developed these crushes on when we're like flirting at a club and it'll, you know, they'll kiss you, but they don't, they're not going to take you home and like, they're not going to ask you out on a date like I might get like a hey girl. Let's get drinks and like my DM's. But like, that's it. It's like a carry, you know. A carry? What's a carry us carrying together? Like going out and just carrying, you know, and just, like, literally just being, you know, just being like girlfriends. And it's it's interesting, it's weird, and it's been confusing for me because I started. I experienced this for the first time when I first transitioned and, I realized that I was like in love with my best friend Justin, who we had been friends since high school and he is a cis gay man like very gay, not queer, very gay. And and we spent a whole lot of time together, after I transitioned, when I was living in Providence that summer and I when he stopped being friends with me, it was a really, really bad friend breakup. But then someone pointed out to me when I was like, still crying about it, like a year later. They were like, it sounds like you didn't get friend broken up with you got, like, broken up like you just got broken up with, like, sounds like you were kind of dating him. And I was like, no, like, he's gay and he's my best friend. And he had a boyfriend and they were like, we don't mean that he was dating you. But it. Sounds like it sounds like you thought that you were dating him and and looking back. And by the way, this person-my sister Elisa, who is always right. She's annoying. Looking back, it's true. And that was definitely my first experience of

being really confused, of being like I'm not supposed to want this.

Fuentes: Hold on. Your cat is uh, attacking the recorder

Lomazzo: Mug you can't do that when we're interviewing.

Fuentes: Yeah so?

Lomazzo: Like, it's like, who are you allowed to desire? It's a trans woman. And who are you allowed to desire with the body you have. But the thing is is that I feel like I need to not get so in my head because when I had a penis, gay men did not desire me. I don't know if they're desiring maybe it's because I was in Rhode Island. I don't know if, like, because it's more open in New York and the scene is bigger, like I don't. Know if gay men here are fucking trans women with penises. I don't know. And and if they are, you know, and if they are, that might be a whole host of issues because then that comes down to like is it just because they have a dick or like you know, there's there's a lot of complexity complexities surrounding desire and I- I umm it's definitely weird. I feel like Judy Garland.

Fuentes: What's what's Judy Garland?

Lomazzo: Well, she married. She married a gay man. Her first husband was gay, and then she married a second and then Liza Minnelli also married a gay man just runs in the family. I sometimes wonder if I'm just going to be like relegated to being like a beard. Be a beard. Maybe that's my role. Like maybe I'm supposed to be a beard? I don't know. I don't know what it is I don't know what has opened up in me in the last. Last few months it has made me so heavily only attracted to gay men. It's-I don't know if it's like a want what you can't have kind of thing. I don't know if it's the chase. UM I mean? I know a lot of it has to do with the fact that I have stopped living my life in such a bike like trans binary way since like the end of the summer. I mean, there was like a span of six months where I like, just didn't shave my face or my legs. And like my hair was down to my shoulders and then I cut it all off and like, now I. And growing out of buzz cut, and I think all of that really opened me up to kind of giving myself more flexibility in the expectations I had for myself. I definitely had a certain set of rules for myself as a trans woman, which is, which were kind of old school, which is like, you know, shave your face like, make sure you know you're on your hormones, like, get your vagina, you dress like a, you know, dress like a in quotes "like you be the girl", Get the guy, date the guy, date the straight guy. I mean, there was a period of my transition where I wouldn't even hook up with bisexual men or queer men because I thought that it made me less of a girl. It had to be a straight guy, and it was often like a broie. Really gross straight guy. Not gross physically, but just like gross, emotionally. And now you know, I'm, like, getting a little bit older and I transitioned when I was 21. I'm now 25 and I was like freshly or no, I was 20 I turned 21 like a month later, so I was very young when I transitioned. Now that I'm getting older and kind of coming into myself more in allowing myself to have more flexibility, I think these experiences are opening or they're opening me up to more fluid experiences. But with that fluidity does come a lot of grey area and as much as I wish that I existed in the grey area, I'm not great with grey areas. I exist well with structure and with rules. So it's been very confusing now that I don't have these rules for. Myself, just fallen in love with anyone, specifically gay men who I

love with all my heart. And and having a vagina has been weird because. I didn't give myself any space to mourn having surgery, and I didn't give myself any space to feel anything except like pure, unadulterated joy about it. Because I thought that that's what I had to feel. I felt that it was when I came home, I felt it was selfish of me to even like dare to be sad. Because it's something that so many girls want that they can't get because it's such a financial barrier or it can be a barrier if you have health issues and. And here I was who, just like, effortlessly got to get it with, like, my family's help. Like, you know, I I felt like a. I'm not rich, but I felt like the poor little rich girl.

[Cat sounds]

Fuentes: Please continue.

Lomazzo: And so I think honestly, I think a lot of this and I think because I am a more mature now I can accept this is that I think I'm-I think I was way too hard on myself throughout a lot of my early transition specifically with my body, and I think that I or I know that I didn't allow myself to feel a lot of my feelings because again, I felt like I was like the woe is me poor little rich girl. I felt like I and and this sounds like it sounds ridiculous when you refer to yourself as being pretty, but it's just it's something people have told me, so I know it's how I know myself to be because people have told me. I didn't think that I was until people started telling me so. I was like, you know, I'm this like, little pretty trans girl. Who like, has it all. Even had the boyfriend for, you know, the moment. And so, like, who am I to complain or be sad or question anything really? It's, you know, I-I felt like the only thing that I should be doing is to like be the militant. The militant kind of activist that I found myself to be, and to just really do that work and to not focus on the work of, like, taking care of myself. And I don't know it's it's weird when for me it was weird to come home from surgery and to want to talk about how even though I was happy, there was still a lot of trauma I was dealing with. And to have friends and family not get it, to no fault of their own they're not trans, so they don't get it. But I also didn't have any trans community, so I'd known to talk to outside of like people on Twitter and Tumblr, which is just not the same. And the big question I've been asking myself recently is, would you, you know self, would you have done this to your body and would you have transitioned in such a way had you stayed in New York and had you continued hanging out with the girls that you were hanging out with? Because I think going right now a big I didn't get-I didn't have bottom surgery because I hated my body. I had bottom surgery purely out of survival, and I also had bottom surgery because to me it was the one way to take agency back. Not because I felt having a penis took away agency, but because I felt that the way in which my penis was used against me by chasers and in sexual experiences and in the fear of being clocked in a locker room or a public bathroom that was taking agency away from me, from from being able to dance on a dance floor without having to cover my erection with my clutch. And again, that was, you know, it was all about survival. And so I spent the last three years in Rhode Island. Really trying to survive as a trans woman rather than getting to thrive. Someone asked me the other night, like, oh, Nika, how is it being in New York? Are you, you know, are you surviving? And I, you know, I looked at them and I was like well. I feel like I'm thriving here actually, you know, to me survival, like survival, is what I was doing in Rhode Island when I had no community there, that's all I could do here, living in New York feels so much more effortless

for me. Obviously the rent is way too high, the Bills are too much like you don't make a tonne of money you know the those aspects that kind of follow you to any major city those suck. Totally, I hate capitalism, but-I have community here that I am seen by and held by and that I feel reflected with. And and that allows me to-to thrive and and like earlier, you know, you asked what New York meant to me and I coming back to New York, what it has meant to me has been to reopen that chapter that got closed way too prematurely when I left in 2016. I didn't get to write an ending to that story, because that story didn't end for me. And I'm a comedian, and I'm also a writer, so I look through everything kind of through the lens of being like a series of short stories. And like I don't want I never wanted New York to be a short story like I want New York to, like, be my novel I wanted it to be the rest of my life. And so, yeah, and now I'm back here and I those questions have been coming up of what could life have been? But I try not to think about it too deeply. I try to let myself process it and think about it, but I try not to get stuck in that rabbit hole because I think it can be unhealthy and I-I think what's more productive is to acknowledge that I am back here and that I am lucky to be a trans woman who is living in a city like New York with such accessible trans and queer community and family and and I got to come back. So it really whatever happened in the last three years was just like a blip in time of me getting back to New York. And that's what I'm really trying to be focused on.

Fuentes: So we're out of time. Is there any last things that you wanted to? To say that you feel like you didn't get a chance to say or address something.

Lomazzo: No, I think I said it all. Umm yeah, I said everything. I-I had wanted to say. So all I would like to say is thank you for having me do this. It's been very it's been a huge privilege to be able to be a part of this project.

Fuentes: So thank you.

Lomazzo: Thank you!