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EPISODE273 KRYSTAL JOY BROWN 1 TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] Hi, I'm stage and stage's Lin-Manuel Miranda, and you're listening to the Hamilcast.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:18] Hello, everyone, welcome back to the Hamilcast, I'm Gillian, I am here tonight with Krystal Joy Brown. Hello, Krystal.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:00:27] Hello. I'm so happy to finally be here. I remember when I got cast and I was like, I can't wait to get to do the Hamilcast podcast Yeah. Now and then everything shut down.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:37] OK, so wait, before we get started, can you tell me your pronouns, please?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:00:40] Oh yes I am. She her hers and.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:00:44] Yeah, that's it. Thank you. Well, you know, you were the last Eliza I saw because I saw the show on February 23rd, I want to say before this all happened and Fergie and Eddie Lee, who was your Hamilton that night introduced us that I have so much to say about your performance, but I'm obsessed with you. I fell in love with you and your Eliza like immediately. I have a lot to say

Krystal Joy Brown [00:01:09] Thank you. No, I'm here for it. Gas me all the way up. I want to be flamable by the end of this conversation.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:15] Crystal, I hope, like, look, That's the goal. Honestly, that's the goal. That's what I'm going to do. Great, great, great. So yes, you are currently Eliza and Hamilton on Broadway. I also want to say before we get started, really, your birthday's December twenty second mine's the twenty first.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:01:33] Yeah. So do you consider yourself a Sagittarius or a Capricorn?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:36] It's funny, I had this conversation with Sasha Hutchings, who has the same birthday I am growing up was like I'm a Sagittarius, mainly a Sagittarius. And then as I'm then I

Krystal Joy Brown [00:01:45] became a boss ass bitch and I was like, I'm a Capricorn

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:01:49] I'm a hybrid. I consider myself a hybrid. Yeah. Like as I've gotten older, I've I've thought, like, I'm, like, really embracing the Capricorn.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:01:55] Yeah, same. Absolutely same. I was like, I'm wild and free, like, you know, super young. And then I was like, oh yeah. I think that I really like this organized getting things done. And I do like money and I like success. And I'm a hard working, climbing goat who also is spontaneous and wild and free.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:13] Oh my God. Yeah. It's like I'm looking in a mirror.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:02:15] I know. Well, hello. Hi. My God. It's so good to see my own face.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:19] Oh my God, you're so beautiful. Yeah. No, it's like we were saying before we recorded, I would still like to tell you, I was like, it's been a week. And then I realized it's Tuesday. But then you said the same and I was like, wait, no. But here's the thing. We both don't have like days off. No, I feel like we just work...

Krystal Joy Brown [00:02:35] What days off.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:36] What is that?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:02:36] I don't know what that feels like.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:37] That thing for other people say, yeah, there's like a long weekend coming up. And I'm like, what's a long weekend? What do you what do you mean you're taking Mondays off? Yeah, no,

Krystal Joy Brown [00:02:44] especially with the pivoting in the during the pandemic, you've had to hustle every single day or you know, or some days, which is what I did as well, which is just be horizontal for the entire day. Watching the nanny

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:58] also totally valid

Krystal Joy Brown [00:02:59] You know, and living single and like having just like a full nostalgia. Just fill me with the fluffy good stuff. But yeah, it's the time. I'm like, is it Tuesday? Is it really like like what month are we and how is this year going so fast. What's happening?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:15] I know time is an illusion.

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:03:17] Yeah. I have like several calendars around my house and notebooks and like things to remind me of the day at this point and alerts and reminders. It's crazy.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:03:28] That's my whole life. Setting alerts and reminders, alarms and. Yeah. Do you have people in your life reminding you that it is very smart and healthy to take breaks? Because people are reminding me constantly and I'm like. About that, but I know they're right.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:03:42] The best the best reminder I got was a lovely handwritten card from my grandmother that was like now that Hamilton's coming back, you need to take a month off in do something with that month. And she was like very specific about it being a month. I don't know on what universe I could take a month off, but I that sounded so that sounds idyllic, you know. But yeah. So I do have people around me who are like, you know, it's OK to, like, breathe and chill and not be doing 100 things. Like you're you're you're doing enough. But I'm always been like the overachiever.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:17] Yeah. Well, let me give the people a little bit more of your resume. Oh, OK. But I have to rewind. Rewind. Thank you for doing that. Thank you for coming along on that ride with the.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:04:28] But you sang it. I did. And I just said the word you sang.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:30] Well, you don't sing it.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:04:31] You're Alysa. I don't sing it right. We're on it. Yeah. Sing everything else in the show.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:40] OK, Hair on Broadway, original Broadway company of Leap of Faith with Leslie Odom Jr. and Tyria Campbell and Betsy Struck. All Hamilton people. Original company of big fish, Diana Ross and Motown. You were also in rent. We're going to get into your whole rent story too, Im obsessed you are now. Oh, my God. You play the Tosa. It's the Tosa. Right, because you tossin that that was your whole thing.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:05:02] That Tosa. Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:05] In She-Ra and the princesses of power, which is like so important for so many reasons. It is not just a kid's show. It is not like the perfect kid's show in so many ways to

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hashtag ham for progress. That task force that Hamilton is is has launched. You are at the forefront of that.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:05:23] I'm so super proud of that.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:05:24] Now, to talk to you about that, we're going to get into all of it. You did a podcast called How We Do This Podcast.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:05:31] Yeah I loved that so much. It was, you know, something that that was birthed out of the frustration of the 2016 election and the Metoo movement. And it was a feminist political podcast where we mainly had women come on and talk about how incredible women with incredible stories and talk about how they overcame, you know, how they suffered or went through their battles and how they they're getting through the day to the other side. So it was like really inspirational for me at a time that I really needed to hear from really strong people and predominantly women. So I loved it

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:02] And it's still it's still available.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:06:04] It's still available. But we haven't been making anything because she had a baby. I moved to New York, you know, so it's just been a lot. But we would love at some point, I think we we we will revamp it because, like, we've learned a lot and we have an even wider net of amazing women to bring onto the show. So it would be great to redo.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:23] Well, let me know if you ever bring back be ready to support it and post about it.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:06:27] You would be a guest.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:28] Oh, stop it.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:06:30] You would be a guest.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:31] Why? I'd be honored. I'd be honored. You also your because here's the thing. You're in everything year. You're like a screenwriter. You're a columnist. You're a novelist. You're a songwriter. You're a director. You directed a short film called Ready Records. Yeah. You're all over the place, Krystal.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:06:47] Yeah, I am. And I like to be all over the place, you know, I want to be even more all over the place.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:52] Yeah. I said that as a compliment

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:06:54] Thank you. I took it as a compliment.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:06:56] Good, good, good, good, good.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:06:57] No, I like it. It feels good. It feels like an accurate description of who I am.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:07:01] Yeah. A multi hyphenates. Yeah.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:07:05] I mean especially you know, I grew up and I really was specific about what I wanted to be. And I really thought that having any thoughts and ideas and dreams of doing anything outside of the things that I originally said was like musical theater singer was like a betrayal of my my wishes. And then as I've gotten older and as I've given myself more permission, my dreams just keep getting bigger and more vast and different. And I don't ever feel like I'm betraying something. I feel like I'm just feeding the storyteller in me. Like I used to call myself an actor. Then I was like, I'm an artist. And I'm like, no, I'm a storyteller. However, I can tell a story and be a part of stories that change people or make people feel connected, then that's what I do. So I'm a part of that's I'm a storyteller. I'm a part of stories.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:07:54] I think that's so important. I talk about this all the time, not just on the Hamilcast, but, you know, True Crime Obsessed, my other podcast, too, like it's OK to fall in love with something. And then if it's not feeding you in a certain way or feel like maybe I don't want to be that kind of actor anymore or that kind of creator anymore, to like to move past that is not the same as giving up. You know what I mean? It's all part of your evolution.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:08:18] Yeah. I think that, you know, especially in this this society that we live in, this capitalistic society, five years old, they're saying, what do you want to be? What do you want to do? And you feel like you have to make that choice so early on. And then you're also like, well, I have to choose a college and what I want to be. And that's going to be, you know, two hundred thousand dollars potentially in debt. I better know exactly what. It is and when you come out of that and you're like, OK, woops, I don't really actually this doesn't actually do it for me, you feel like you go into that, you know. Twenty five year old crisis, right. Or you're just like, whoa, quarterlife crisis because you realize that you were basing everything off of a five year old dream or a 17 year old dream and everything about you was kind of changed as you've gotten to grow. And we're not really allowed the the ability to kind of make those mistakes because we are, you know, rooted into an indicted

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system. So you as soon as you make a decision, you're like, well, this could be a really expensive decision and I could potentially ruin my entire life. So we're so tied to those outcomes. And, you know, I just paid off my student loan last year.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:24] Congrats.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:09:25] Thank you so much. Thank you very much. But like and you know, and I was like my family helped a little bit, but it was mainly on me and and and I don't know, like if I hadn't pursued musical theater after having a musical theater degree, I would probably be really like, I don't know what I would do, like knowing that I just spent all that money on that. But at the same time, like my happiness, my my well-being is way more important. And any time that I have deviated, like when I dabble in writing or anything else, I always have like imposter syndrome. But because I'm like I need a degree and all of that. And it's like it's such crap. It's such a lie. You don't you just need experience and you need confidence and you need to be open and curious and surround yourself with people who know what the hell they're doing.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:12] Yeah. Or just like Google it.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:10:15] Yeah. Oh trust me, google is a director's best friend. I was like, how do I even speak to these people? Yes, OK. And I learned some like it as an actor direct like. Right. You know, it helps your acting and it helps your your writing so much because you're now looking at the text as a writer. You're you're like, why did that person put a common set of a period? Because when you're writing you're like, this is different. Why is there an exclamation point here? And there's this here and what does the dash mean? And you know what I mean. Just look at the text so much differently. As an actor, sometimes you're just like, oh, I feel this. And like when you're looking as a technician, you can kind of dig in there a little bit more

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:52] in love with all of this.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:10:53] I know we've like jumped a whole bunch of things, but we know this.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:10:57] And I know you drove into the deepest that's like where I live, just diving into the deepest end of the pool and being like, well, I'm here now. This is going to be fun.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:11:05] Something, I think, I like something that Americans, my friends that are from other countries are always like. The thing that Americans can do the best is small talk. And I

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have to say, I think that we can't small talk anymore. I think the pandemic has ruined small talk.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:20] Yes....

Krystal Joy Brown [00:11:21] People are going so deep, so fast. I'm telling you, like people like, hi, this is the new medication I'm on and it's it's Wednesday and I'm struggling, but I'm OK. And it's so good to see you. And I'm like, great. So we'll start the zoom meeting now.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:36] Yeah

Krystal Joy Brown [00:11:37] There's no small talk because we've all gone through so much

Krystal Joy Brown [00:11:41] it just goes straight into the deep end. Like, I want to know who you are, what I'm dealing with immediately before I start even dealing with like the like the little stuff, I need to know who I'm talking to.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:51] And that's one of the things like like, oh, wow, we've been here. So this is May 18th. Right. So we've been here for so long

Krystal Joy Brown [00:11:59] it is? OK.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:12:02] I couldn't.... It doesn't feel OK. Continue. No, I believe you. I looked at the calendar. It said that.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:12:07] Yeah, you're thinking like or I'm thinking what are some of the things that are going to stay like after the pandemic? Like what can you know, all of these people are it's like, oh, these people like with disabilities really could work from home this whole time. And you guys are just being dicks about it. We're like, let's cut the small talk bullshit. I'm like, I'm not going to hug you if I don't want to, like, you know, little things like that where it's like, let's just get down to it. Who am I talking to? Exactly like you said, what's going on with you? Not like I had kind of a week. And so like I told you immediately and you were like, yeah, yeah. I think that is a is one of the many things that can stay like how we interact with one another.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:12:45] I that you know, I think that because we all globally have been a part of something crazy and catastrophic. Right. Yeah. And and we've all weathered it in varying degrees. Some people have lost people, some people lost work. Some people just were kind of watching it all happen. You know, everybody kind of had to

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deal with it in some way. But we all were in it. There was this wasn't something where we could be like, oh, that's happening over there. That's so unfortunate. Everybody got touched by this thing. So no matter what like no matter what class or no matter what race or no matter what what your situation is, we all had to adapt to a new lifestyle collectively. So I think that that's changed the consciousness of us. I think it's changed the culture in a major way. And I definitely think that, you know, we're going to be doing psychological studies for a very long time as to what this has done to people and good ways and bad ways. You know, I feel like people are are definitely going to be coming out of this period with massive anxieties about returning to the real world, which I think we're seeing I think we're seeing a lot of that just in our in posts and all these things that people are very nervous to get back to coming together. And there's going to be a lot of social anxiety. And there's also just a lot of mistrust now. I mean, we've had a a year, many, many years of back and forth of political mistrust, and now we don't believe scientists. Now we don't believe doctors now we don't believe anything. And we don't have like a common unified source of information. So it's a lot of like, OK, if I'm going to put myself back in the world, I need to know what I'm dealing with. And we come in a little harder and stronger and a little bit more awkward as opposed to like or just, you know, really quiet and observant. I think that that's what I've noticed in, like the two social situations I've been in

Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:34] Like I mean, I'm so curious because I'm I'm feeling very, like, nervous. I I love science. I trust science. I love it. But it's also a little uncertain. Like, what if something comes out next week that is a little different than what we knew because they're studying it. So I'm curious about the idea of like everyone feels like everything. They should feel really excited that everyone's coming back. But this idea of like I I have tickets to Hamilton on September 14th. I will see you there. I will be there. But it is kind of like, OK, so it's May 18th. I have all these weeks to get ready to sort of walk into a crowded room. I don't know what it's going to look like. I don't know what it's going to feel like.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:15:17] Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:15:17] And I feel like people are scared to say I'm psyched, but I'm like nervous about it. I feel like there's a lot of pressure on, you know, everyone, social media life to just be like full, full stop psyched. So, yeah. What is your experience with being, like, excited to go back to Broadway, but also your, like, personal feelings about being in a room of people?

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:15:39] Yeah, I mean, it's a complicated one because I, I love people. I'm like an extroverted introvert, you know, like I love being out. But then I also love my time, my me time, my bath tub time. But but like, you know, I think it's going to be I think it's going to be extraordinarily awkward. And and I think that they're going to be the two versions of people that are doing way too much. And there's going to be the people that are like a little too like obnoxiously hesitant. We were like, OK, you're double vacc. Like you're good, right? Like, it's fine. Take the mask off. You're OK. We're outside, you know what I mean? There's going to be those people as well. I think at the theater it's going to be complicated because we're going to be conscious of no matter the fact that we all have to be vaccinated as a cast, as a crew, every single person in the theater is going to have to be vaccinated. So that's pretty complicated because it is telling people they have to be vaccinated to to work is is a really challenging thing. And then on top of it and, you know, there's immuno compromised systems. There's all kinds of things that are going to make that challenging for people. And then on top of it, it's like we're not the theater world doesn't know if one person gets covid who's who's vaccinated and they test positive. They don't know if we'll have to shut down, if everything will, you know, crumble or if we'll be able to just continue on. Because, like, even though they test positive now, they'll probably just be like a little sick and it's not a big deal. So it's going to be what it's going to be is a learning curve for all of us. And we're all going to have to have grace and patience with the fact that it's going to be new and different and it's going to be painful and awkward. You know, when you're when a birth happens, like, that's messy. It's crazy. The baby is learning how to walk. They're falling down. And I think that that's what we're in. We're in a rebirth of our cultural society. We're in a rebirth of of just our society at large. And so it's going to be awkward and clumsy. But one of the things that I've learned the most out of this pandemic and one of the things that I've gained the most, which I wish more people in my life were like this and more people that I was I was meeting were embracing this. But I have never, ever wanted to live more than I do now. And as much as I have hesitancy about getting on a plane or doing these certain things or even like going to the grocery store because someone you know, but it's like I did what I'm supposed to do by protecting myself and my family members are all vaccinated. We're all that's up to us. That was the choice that we decided to make. And now I want to go live. I want to go travel and see all my friends. I want to go hug everybody. I want to do all of the things I haven't been able to do. So I'm I'm like I think that I'm finally getting to the like the last couple of weeks I've been like, oh, I am. I'm using this privilege of having had my vaccine and I'm going to start actually living my life and meeting people and I'm going to walk my dog without the mask on because I can. But when I get into my

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building, I'm going to put my mask back on out of respect for everybody. But, you know, it's going to be we're going to have losses. Life is short and you have no idea if it's going to take you out or if you know it's an airplane or if it's cancer or you have no idea. And we've a lot of us have felt like we've lost a year. So go gain a year by go living. To the fullest, you know, like that's what I want to do. I've already made plans to hop on a plane in the next month, so that's I just encourage all of us, as much as we're hesitant and as much as it's going to be awkward and as much as we're going to walk into situations and be like go to bars and hang out and then leave and go, everyone probably thinks I'm stupid. Everyone. I shouldn't have said that or I didn't even speaking up, who cares? Like, allow your anxieties to do what they're going to do. It's going to be fine. It's going to be awkward. You're going to be awkward. Someone's going be like, wow, she was real awkward. And it doesn't matter because they're also going to walk home and go, man, I think everyone hates me and I'm awkward. But the point is, go love on your friends, go love on your people, go love on your puppies. Like get out into the world. Like if you've been vaccinated, get out there. Like, what are we waiting for. Life is there talking about aliens. They're talking about unidentified, whatever. Like something is going to strike us all down. You are going to die at some point, you know, like it's going to happen. And that's one of the things that I've always kept close is my relationship with death. Knowing that I am going to die reminds me to live. And if this is someone's reminder to live and to live a little bit more fully and to not waste any more time, I think that this is what better gift could we all collectively have been given. Like time is short. We need to be protecting the things we need to protect. We need to be saying the things now. We need to be doing things now. And we don't need to be putting anything off, because when you put things off like that, we're all like awkward, you know, so we need to be doing this. But I think it's you know, the pandemic has been hard, but I think it also has been really helpful. As messed up as that sounds, maybe we needed a swift kick in the ass. You know, we needed that. Like we needed a reset. And we and we have to come back better. Like we have to come back a stronger people individually from the micro level to the macro level, like we can't come back the way we were. That's why Broadway can't come back the way it was. Nothing can come back the way that it was.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:48] Yeah. So let's you know, I want to get into the Krystal Joy Brown story, but this is what I love to like sag/caps just like, yeah. Dove in. And now they're saying that they'll go into the GMA announcement.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:20:59] Oh yeah.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:59] This is a perfect thingy. So you went on Good Morning America with L. Steven Taylor from The Lion King and Alexandria Billings from Wicked, right? It was two black actors. And then as as Alexandra describes herself, a mixed race transwoman. Yeah. You were on Good Morning America talking about how Broadway has to come back better.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:24:23] That was so important for so many reasons.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:24:28] Yeah, I mean, it was it was crazy because I think we thought first we were going to like a 15 minute segment and then it was like, oh, maybe a seven. And then it turned into a five minute segment. And we had had pre interviews and then like one pre interview right before we walked out. And they were like, basically you're all going to get one question. And I was like, oh, crap. And I was like, OK, I have to make sure that I talk about because everyone in every industry let me just start off by saying every industry in America across the entire country and across the entire globe has to do a reckoning of where of their racism, their anti-racism practices, where they have functioned in this oppressive, racist society. And they have to check their books like every single person where they've been sexist, where they have where they have been, transphobia where they have been anti Asian or whatever the place is. Every single industry is going to have to do that. And Broadway is no different. Just because we're a group of artists doesn't make us the most liberal and the most generous of ones of the bunch. In fact, Broadway is the commercialization of art. You know, it is of this art form. It is the capitalistic amalgamation of theater. And so we have to remember that as well. And when we are in a show that is as richly diverse as as Hamilton. And the music is hip hop, and you have made your billions off of the culture of black people, and to have not have ever had a a mention of Black History Month is a bit of a slap in the face and the recognition, the recognition of that. And I had only been in the show for three months. So but when Black History Month came along, it was three. The whole the whole Hamilton family was black for the first time on Broadway. So we were like I was so excited and I wanted to do something. And I mentioned it to our people and and I was like, what could we do? Like a photo? And like, maybe we could do like Broadway black, like maybe we could do something with them, you know, and and I just just couldn't really get a response. And and so I cobbled together a picture of three of us as the Hamilton family, Daniel Yearwood, Jimmy Jetter and myself, and was like, look at us black people, you know, celebrating Black History Month. And there was also, like all black sisters one day during Black History Month. And and so I was like posts that I send it to them and then they, like, put it in their stories or something. And I was just like, OK, so

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then later on when after the reckoning. Yeah. After things after me and what I call the trifecta, you know, Ammad Marberry, Brianna Taylor and George Floyd, it was just like everyone was like, you know what, enough like enough of the microaggression is enough of being ignored, enough of just feeling like we don't matter, like we don't exist. Like our pain isn't real. Like like you're not capitalizing off of our culture every single day. So that grew into movements. So many movements, you know, protest organizations, so many organizations popped up and and it led to us and a lot of people writing a letter to Jeffrey Seller and saying, hey, yo, like this has been going on. And I'm not sure if you know it or not, but like this is it took you seven, eight days to say anything about George Floyd's murder, that's not appropriate. Like when you have this level of amount and amount of black people in your in your... my dog is literally kicking me in the side.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:28:13] AJ we're going to get to you. Sweetheart, I love you.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:28:15] But he's like kicking me in the side. A.J., I'm sorry, but.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:28:19] No, he's just agreeing. He's like more more.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:28:21] Amen, sister. So, you know, we had this moment of like, you don't send sending out information to our producers and being like, look, this is unacceptable. And this is this is not fair to me to know that, like even that like Nike is saying something before us. And and Hamilton is a massive brand that affects a lot of people. And and also we just didn't feel seen in that moment. And and what happened from that was accountability. You know, like Jeffrey Seller coming to the table with, like, not hat in hand like that feels a little like dowdy, but it was like, hey, you know what? Like, I'm listening. And I actually do want to be better and I do want to do this better. And and we were like, oh, yeah, prove it, you know? And we created the Hamilton Racial Justice Task Force and and what that task force really was and what also happened outside of the task force, because we had this have this man named Jay and I can't think of his last name, but he he's like a basically a negotiator. And and he comes in and he he helps us with having conversations with our production company that are that are really hard. And then he also helped us hire a third party, black female, H.R. person. So we do have a third party are now.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:40] So his role is so Jay's role is to be almost like a mediator.

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:29:46] Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:47] Wow.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:29:47] It's been raw.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:48] That makes it such a safer space I would think. Yeah.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:29:50] And well it's also like it's also getting the tools of how to communicate because we've never communicated with our producers like this. Normally you say hi, thank you so much for coming. Hope you're enjoying my gig like bye. You know, you don't really communicate with your producers. You're in fear of them. They aren't real people. They're just the people that decides your fate. You know, they're not humans. They're just the machine. Right. And we are probably to them also the the players, the machine pieces. Right. So we aren't humanized and we haven't sat down and zooms for hours like talking about our feelings. And now we have. So in July we got we they voted two people per company into the Ham for progress group. We became him for progress like a little later, but we were Hamilton Racial Justice Task Force. It just didn't really roll off the tongue as well. The acronym is way too long and we really just started by having conversations. And because it was July, August, we were like, what can we do? What organizations can we partner with for voting rights? What can we do for all these different things? And we were looking kind of outside. We're like, how can we use this massive brand to shine light on certain things and then what we actually ended up doing as we started to shift towards the conversation of, you know, vaccines and coming back, we were like, OK, so now we have a reckoning. We have people protesting Broadway. We have people protesting the theater industry, protesting the people, the Scott Rudin's and all of that. We are about to ask them to join the fold and to come back into work. And people aren't feeling safe. And no matter if they're not feeling safe with the systems and making sure that their air is clean. Right. And the mold in the buildings are being taken care of. Right. But we also have to make sure that we have a place where people know that they have the resources for their mental health, that they have training, true and real training that is consistent with for anti-racism and anti harassment and discrimination. Because I think that, you know, you get at maybe one time and then like if you missed it, like, say you joined the cast too late, then you missed it. And they're like, well, here's the packet of harassment, you know. Oh, yeah. Because like you, they'll get they'll do one a year. So now we're going to have ongoing trainings and we have created something called the Anti Racism Pledge, which is something that we can't really put into a contract. But we can say these are the tenants in which, like when

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you walk into this building, what we represent and what you plan to uphold as a cast and crew musician of this company. And you sign it saying, like, I agree with these pledges of anti-racism and then we want it to be really transparent about inclusion. So when I got on Good Morning America, how was I supposed to say that in 30 seconds

Gillian Pensavalle [00:32:33] With one question? I was just like and Alexandra and

Krystal Joy Brown [00:32:38] I got to say was basically that, you know, Broadway is going to come back and we have sat and we have figured out how to make it more of a safe space, not only for our audiences, but for our cast and crew, because that is extremely important. And we are here and we are a beautiful representation of our inclusion. We are a beautiful representation of of body images, of color and skin tones, of of of gender identities. Because we have non binary. We have everything in we have trans, we have everything in our companies. And we do exist here. And I found out that I could be on Broadway because the show that I got like that I saw where I saw myself, I saw rent and I saw people of color talking about things that mattered to them. And so that's how I know that this this can change someone's life by seeing themselves and reflected back at them, doing something excellent, doing something great and doing something powerful that's changing hearts and minds.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:31] So I just have so many questions. So coming up, like, I think we just booked it today. So next Monday, I'm recording with Jared Dixon and Ashley de la Rosa

Krystal Joy Brown [00:33:41] Yes, I know

Gillian Pensavalle [00:33:43] both of them have been on the pod before. Now they have their own like several episodes. And now we're going to talk so much about what it's like to talk about the task force and what it's like to come back to Broadway. And just I want to hear everyone's like perspective on that.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:33:57] They are two of the most well spoken on the matter of all things, Broadway and the the political side, you know, Ashley for president of America, the United States and also equity. I mean, she's incredible. And Jared is just full of ideas. It's been really great to sit with them all and just have ideas of how we can how we can do good in the world. Like, it's a really cool thing. It's a really big perk of this, of Hamilton and also of being on Broadway right now during the shutdown to be able to figure out how we can get money to people, get scholarships to people, get voting IDs to people like that's been extraordinary for me, for my mental health during this process.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:39] Totally. And so I'm curious because I'm going to ask them to. But I want to hear your perspective on this. Like, I think there are a lot of people who feel maybe a little guilty about feeling excited to go back to Broadway because they feel like, well, maybe I should protest that because they we want change. Right. And we want, like, proof that when we are sitting at the Rogers on September 14th, maybe perhaps asking for a friend like it was like, do can we feel good about it?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:35:10] I mean, trust me, I trust me. I felt the exact same way. Yeah. Even when I got GMA, I was like, yeah. And then I was like, oh my gosh, I'm going to be the sacrificial lamb. I'm going to be I'm going to be the the traitor of the theater community, you know, because I'm going on this thing and saying, yes, Broadway is back. Hurray. But, you know, I, I think it's time for us all as artists to hold people accountable. Like I think the word for 2021 is accountability. And things are not going to change overnight. Not all of a sudden are we going to see these massive changes. But we are seeing and I've seen it in my career like I started my first Broadway show is two thousand nine. I have seen dramatic change in this industry and in the last 12 years or so. And I'm I'm. I'm sure that there will be even more now that people are waking up and recognizing that like other people of color weren't just sitting there complaining or using the idea of racism to, you know, hide behind something or whatever to be, it's even like I don't think that people were really listening. I don't think people are really believing us. And now things are just changed and they're different and they're going to be changing. And we also need to be creators. You know, my my trans siblings write your stories. You know, my non binary friends write your stories like we have the power. You know, it's our time to to create the world that we want to see. It's not just about we got to go in and change the establishment and or we got to burn it down. But it's like, no, we have to build and expand. And I what I think and what I always tell anyone who's thinking about this is like, how does the system work or whatever. I'm like, we can't live in a limited lack and limited world like we are not. We're all going to be fighting for stuff. We're all going to be fighting for the same scraps if we are doing that. So if we can think in a more expansive way where we are building more, where we are creating space and we are asking while this is like if we have something like the blacklist, which is a place where really amazing scripts go, it's a website and really amazing scripts will go. And and if we see these scripts, you know, and go, well, why isn't this script made by a trans person not being made? We can start pushing that forward. You know, it's going to take us, the actors, the the the stagehands, the crew, the dressers, to hold everybody accountable. And also it all

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all of this making a healthy work environment starts with you. You need to be making sure you are not toxic

Gillian Pensavalle [00:37:54] Wow yeah

Krystal Joy Brown [00:37:57] You need to make sure you are coming in ready for this, you know, and you are ready to have those conversations. And so by making sure by having something that's as new as a hr person, as new as, you know, just talking about having anti-racism conversations on the regular having and being a part of a brand that is pushing forward positive social change. I mean, those are all pluses. Those are all additional things that corporate America doesn't normally offer you but should. And I think that, like, there is apprehension to coming back to a job in general just because we're anxiety filled and whatever, and everyone knows the old adage, the worst thing you can do for an actor is give them a job. So like, of course, as soon as you everyone's like, we're going to go back to work and how dare you give us a job? You know, there is that. But then at the same time, it's like, no, this is a beautiful art form that is amazing. And people need to see it and we deserve to be a part of it. And they get the children and young people and old people need to see a brown Eliza singing about her vulnerable emotions, about being hurt and her heart being broken and see that people need to see Eddie Lee Hamilton and all of his beautiful AAPI glory,

Gillian Pensavalle [00:39:16] you know, Marc Delacruz

Krystal Joy Brown [00:39:19] Like to see an Asian Hamilton like is probably really amazing for some people, you know, like I know I was amazed and just like like in awe of just the representation, like these types of things need to exist and we need to continue to push forward more of these narratives. And we know we know that they're marketable. We know that the more the more diverse you have a cast, the more money you're going to get. We know that this is what the economy like as a as a future producer as well as director. I know that having a diverse cast brings more people in and people want to see themselves reflected. And we're all seeing it everywhere on Netflix and everything else. And so I hope that my my fellow artist friends can be patient but persevere and be accountable to their own, their own level of wellness and well-being to create the space and be in the space that we are creating art. The theater is a sacred space. To me. It is. You know, it is a temple where people come to be changed. But we also have to make sure that our own mental health is is together. And which is why another thing that we're going to do at Hamilton is, is give people resources for their mental health and make sure that they have we're not going to recommend a particular therapist. But just as there is a call board that says, oh, here are

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the the EnT's in our area, here are also the and here's the hospital. Here's also, you know, some therapist type of organizations where you could potentially find someone to work on whatever you're going through. So it's about health and mental health from the inside. To the outside, from the inside of the just the artist to the corporation, and this is the first time we're having these types of conversations and things are going to work and things aren't. And they're going to surprise us and be like amazing. And sometimes they're going to super fail. But the lines of communication are open and they're open in a way that have never been before. And this is my fifth Broadway show, and I've never seen my general managers cry out of having an awakening or an experience or a connection or or take on the level of responsibility and say, you know what, I don't think I've done the work to find a black this or a Latino this. You know, I don't think I've done that. And I need to check where my racism is and maybe get more people in corporate, maybe get more people in this and that. And so it's been really amazing to watch hearts and minds be changed. And that's what it is. And it's slow, grueling work. Sometimes it's like I'm not racist, I'm not racist. And someone's like, well, if you think that's maybe maybe you're a little racist. And like, we're all all races, we're all a little trans phobic. We're all a little homophobic. We're all we're all dealing with a lot of newness. We're all like, what is non binary? That is a new concept. You know, we're all dealing with our own stuff of what we think this construct of the world is. But I think if we can look at life and look at this universe is something that is more more diverse, more intricate than we can possibly understand. And our human desire of labeling everything and putting everything into a box is just not realistic. The better off will be and the freer will be.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:42:28] Here's a question for you. Me, this white woman who is not in the industry,.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:42:35] You're white.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:42:37] What did you hear that a white woman who this cis white woman who is not in it but loves it and does want it to come back in a better way? Who supports everything you're saying? Like, what do I do? I'm sitting here. What do I do?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:42:51] You you spend money on shows that you feel are doing the work and you and people, I believe will be putting their information out there. It should be loud and proud if they are doing this type of work. I mean, Hamilton's nervous because we don't want to look like while we are doing this and and we're trying to get our producers to understand that people want to see what we're doing so that, yeah, they were like, well, you understand, people think that Hamilton have the money and resources do everything we like. We

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do all this for free. Like this is all free that we're doing. I mean, obviously, hiring more people is not a free thing, but us coming together and being able to talk as human beings to our management and leadership. You know, that's not that doesn't make any money. So and reaching out to organizations and being like, hey, we'll do a benefit for you if you want and will promote you on our channel, that's free, you know, so things like that, I'm like we should be able it's OK to be the the leader sometimes, you know, and and someday you won't be and someone will lead you and will be learning from each other

Gillian Pensavalle [00:43:53] If you can you should. Yeah.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:43:54] I mean, I try now to really invest my money into things that I think are not ruining planet Earth. Right. Sure. Or my spirit or you know what I mean. Like yeah. So it would be that like doing the research of of of Broadway shows and, you know, companies and company members, even if it's even if the company say the company sucks or the theater owners suck, OK, but maybe there is someone in there that you really love that is doing some really amazing, transformative work. Go support that artist, go support them, you know, because, you know, we can't throw the whole thing out. The whole thing isn't tainted just because we have some bad people, in fact, that there's a lot of goodness there and there's a lot of people who are doing work outside of the Broadway community and have a big Broadway title. And you can support their charities and organizations like When I got into Broadway, Gavin Creel had Broadway impact and we did so much cool stuff with his organization. And that was the first time that I really saw a Broadway artist in this way, like using their their platform while doing a show to this level. And he was really doing so much for marriage equality. So it's time for us to really look at where our money is going, whether that be to Broadway shows or to certain grocers or farms or whatever, and and follow that.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:12] Cool. Yeah, yeah.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:45:14] That's my thought on that.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:16] I just realized it's been like forty minutes. You there's a potion here. Oh like a cocktail. There's a potion.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:45:21] I'm going to, I have to stir my potion because it's been sitting here for a while.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:24] Oh my God. This is so witchy and amazing.

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:45:26] So Im very witchy by tarot

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:28] I was going to say I would read your cards. You I mean.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:45:31] Oh my God. Yeah. Oh my God. I read that in a lot. I was actually going to to pull my own cards because I just I need I need answers now. But I decided I was like, you know, I

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:41] mean, we could have a whole little witchy moment after we.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:45:45] Yeah, yeah. Let's do that. Let's have a yeah. I'm going to set my concoctions.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:45:48] So would you call it like a summer detox potion. I think you called it.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:45:52] Yeah. I'm not going to lie to you. I mean, if you don't know me, I don't drink, I don't drink alcohol. I'm almost by. Five years sober, which is wonderful, I do believe in magic mushrooms and marijuana. So just sidebar from the ah yeah. Of the of the gods. So therefore it's OK. And I think that psilocybin is like a cure for many of anything. Anyway, that's a whole other podcast.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:46:13] Let's make that podcast.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:46:14] Yesterday, I bring to you the most wonderful detox. My mom actually got me doing this, which is hot water in the morning, but I'm drinking it. I drink it all day. It's hot water and fresh squeezed lemon juice, like fresh squeezed, won't be spraying and that lemon, whatever from that fake lemon, fresh squeezed lemon juice, turmeric powder, I don't measure anything. So when it looks like enough and then a just a splash of Cayenne to get that metabolism going and, you know, just taking it all, taking it down right now, OK. Oh my gosh. It's like it has a little kick. Oh also. And Ginger and Ginger.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:46:56] Yes. There's ginger there. It's OK. I don't normally love, I'd love to hear certain doses certain. And also you were just like I love that. I don't really measure things either. It's just like a bartender.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:47:09] And it's like I just think that it's doing everything. It's like it's healing my skin. It's fixing my gut. It's making my blood circulate my metabolism. Yeah. Like during covid I definitely gained about nineteen covid pounds and then I was like

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oh I got to get it together. And I started working out and I started, I cut out sugar and whoof which is hard. I have, I do maple syrup and I'm plant based vegan but I swear I'm so fun guys I swear

Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:39] When did you become vegan.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:47:41] I was a vegetarian since I was ten years old. Oh cool. OK, yeah. So I, I always I became vegan. My, my aunt had cancer and the best diet for a vegan, for a cancer patient is being vegan and also not no sugar because cancer feeds on sugar. So I in solidarity I was doing it with her and then she passed away unfortunately. And and I just kind of I kind of kept with it. I've been a bad vegan, you know, sometimes I'm like, I'm going to eat that beignet if I'm in New Orleans.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:48:13] The thing about New Orleans beignets it's very hard to say no

Krystal Joy Brown [00:48:17] Let's talk about it. Yeah, no, it was like there are moments. You know what? There's some moments where I, I slip.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:48:23] OK, we were just talking about you got to live your life, right. Yeah.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:48:26] And I'm like, I'm not going to like it's OK. You know, I'm not just because I had a cookie is not it's not going to be like, well what's going to happen. Nothing. I'm going to be like I had a cookie and I'm really fine about it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:48:37] You don't you check in with yourself and only yourself. You're not you don't have to report to anybody, period.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:48:42] No, no, I do not. Not maybe to AJ that's it now. So it's. Yeah. So I mean, I love being vegan so and I love like living a healthy lifestyle. I feel like I'm just honoring myself, my ancestors. Like I feel like I'm showing up to my fullest potential because heaven knows I was not like that my whole life, definitely not my body. I was a hot mess. And I, I enjoy I regret nothing. I'm so glad I was wild and and dancing on every single. I still dance on every single bar that I possibly can. But, you know, I'm glad that I was like a wild child and that I got to like, you know, so my wild oats and and now I'm like kind of like a lady It's in my early thirties, but I feel like I'm a hundred. Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:49:32] Old soul.

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:49:33] Just been around the block. You know

Gillian Pensavalle [00:49:35] No, I think that's character and experience. I don't think there's any kind of, you know, old, young.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:49:39] But I say to all of my young students and stuff, I'm always like, do everything, like do everything that you possibly can, you know, get out there. I'm not saying every drug. I mean, please, I'm not that's not what I'm saying. I'm just like saying do do everything. Go skydiving, go go to Africa, which I have done skydiving, haven't been to Africa. My dad was about was going to go last year, but

Gillian Pensavalle [00:50:04] I'd much rather go to Africa than go skydiving. I would love to go to Africa like that is like on my list of places to visit. But skydiving, I just, I get it.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:50:13] It's not, there's no point. I will quickly. I skydove skydive. I skydive. And then I got on a plane like a couple of days later and I was, I cried. I was from Los Angeles to New York. I cried the whole time and the woman next to me had to hold my hand the entire ride because I was like I just saw myself plummeting to the center of the earth and now I can't get it out of my head. And I know exactly what it would look like. Crash under.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:50:40] That is I see I have that on planes without having to go skydiving.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:50:46] It really made it real for me like

Gillian Pensavalle [00:50:48] This fear. Oh, my God. There was a I haven't mentioned him in a long time, but there was a listener who wrote me this, like, incredible email that I printed out and also. Shot because I was so terrified of flying what I was going, I still sort of am, but he helped me. He was like, I'm a pilot, let me walk you through it. Like, let me tell you the science of, like, why you're OK. You can ask me the questions about, like, what is your biggest fear? I was like, I just don't get how it stays up, how I just don't get how it started. I just don't understand. It's just sorcery, which I'm totally down for. Yeah. Just like show me the potion. Show me the cauldron. Like, I just I don't understand. And so he wrote me this whole like he basically said and this is like a like a because I'm, I have ADHD too. So like I'm a very capable person. So if I can see it helps that he was like, picture a boat. It's on rough water, the boat sink in the water. Right. And I'm like, no. And he's like, the air is the water. It's the air that is helping the plane. It's been like, it didn't help me. I didn't know it honestly.

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:51:49] Air and water feel very different to me.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:51] I mean, as a fire sign, I don't really get to do that, but I'm just. Right, exactly. I don't get it. But OK,

Krystal Joy Brown [00:51:59] I plan on getting on an airplane as soon as possible to get somewhere like somewhere else. Can't wait.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:04] And the thing is, my all my my list is like Africa and Japan and Australia. It's like how interesting the places you want to go. Have you stuck on a plane for twenty hours. Oh yeah. That's the fun of being me.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:52:16] Look, I've flown New York to China.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:18] Oh yeah. How long is that flight.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:52:20] That one was seventeen hours. Yeah. It's, it's wild. You have, you watch a lot of movies and try to sleep but it's very uncomfortable so. Yeah.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:35] Isn't Krystal the best? Oh, I love her. Well, look, we are just getting started. Join us next week when Krystal talks more about our Hamilton story, how she first encountered the show, how she fell in love with musical theater. And there's more bonding over allowing yourself to get into some truly wild experiences in life. Seriously. Get ready. But until then, stay safe. Stay healthy. I love you. Thanks so much for listening. I've G. Pen.

[00:53:34] The Hamilcast is brought to you by my love of the thing TM and my complete lack of chill, please join me in raising all the glasses to Sir Alex Lacamoire for generously making my intro music and this custom Yorktown arrangement that I will never, ever get over. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. To become a patreon peep and join the best, kindest and most welcoming corner of the Internet, go to Patreon dot com, slash the Hamilcast. You can submit questions to guests, join Zoom Hangouts, get behind the scenes access and of course, my unending gratitude. I'm at the Hamilcast on all social media and you can listen wherever you get your podcasts. Visit the Hamilcast dot com for transcripts, episodes and more. You can see what's going on with Mike. You know Mike at Michael Paul Smith dot net. True Crime Obsessed is my true crime comedy podcast with my podcast soul mate Patrick Hinds of Theater People and Broadway BackStory fame. Thank you so much for listening. It means the world to me, to the revolution



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