

THE HAMILCAST

EPISODE 275 KRYSTAL JOY BROWN PART 3 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] Hey, friends, I'm Gillian. Welcome back to the Hamilcast. We're wrapping up our three part series with Hamilton Broadway's Eliza, Miss Krystal Joy Brown, if you missed the last two episodes, you have missed a lot. Krystal and I have had so much fun talking about life, Broadway, Hamilton, reckoning with the real need for change and how to be part of the solution. Also, sweat lodges and frog poison star signs, dogs. I mean, you name it, we covered it. So let's dive into part three. But real quick, if you feel some deja vu coming up, it's because I'm replaying a little bit of the end of last week's episode. I just think it's important for the full context of what Krystal was talking about. And it's also fascinating. So, yeah, enjoy.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:01:00] I love playing real people because of the fact that I get to be like, oh my gosh, because I really can step into their situation, I can see what was happening at the time of the world while they're trying to work through it, while they're trying to be a black singing woman in it, you know, playing Diana Ross or or being a defiant protesting, you know, renegade in New York City in 1968, or being a person, 19 year old riddled with AIDS whose life has barely begun because it's like that's those are there's a true element to all those stories. They're snapshots of what's going on in our society. And and it just that is really enthralling to me. And when I tell all of my students as well as that, you know, acting is the study of human behavior. It is psychology. You are studying why we do what we do. And we watch it because we're curious to see what we would do. You know, like you put yourself in the shoes of these characters because you're like, who am I? And it helps you kind of do this voyeuristic dance with situations and who you who you are, you know, like it helps you, like, investigate who you are, how you would behave. And, you know, you sit there and go, I wouldn't take that man back. I would have left. I don't care if it's 1702. I would have been out of there, you know what I mean? Like but like some people would be like, oh, I can get it. Or like, you know, or I didn't leave my husband when he cheated or I didn't leave my partner. And I, I identify with that kind of love. And I ended up with that kind of like healing or whatever it is, you know what I mean? You see ourselves in these people. That's why Hamilton works.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:02:37] Yeah. And I think that's why you're such a strong activist. I mean, it feels like you just you empathize

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with so many people, whether you've walked in their shoes or not. And I think that's why you're such a voice.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:02:53] Well, thank you. I'll just receive that, you know, I mean, I'm I'm working on being a better advocate and activist every day. I'm working to learn more and be better and. And it is like we do have an empathy deficiency. In our society right now, and I think that we are starting to open that up a bit, but like that's why the theater is essential, like I don't care what anyone says. Like we all have gotten through this period by watching movies and TV shows and connecting in this way. And the theater is a place where we connect by even elbow to elbow, but also like really a shared experience at one time. That's not a football game or basketball game or like a sporting event. It's like we're telling a story and we're connecting with each other and reminding each other to live and to to connect. So, yeah, I think activism and to be an activist, you have to be empathetic and you also have to be learning and willing to learn and growing and willing to, you know, just to own up to when you've fallen short and taking your own accountability. And everything on my side of the street has to be clean. You know, for me to go and yell at people to vote know, I have to make sure that I'm voting. If I'm asking people to go out and vote, I have to make sure that I'm voting, you know, in in councils and all of these things. I have to make sure that I, too, am doing what I'm saying, because otherwise it's just that's what it is, performative, you know, when you're not actually being that thing. So I always have to check myself.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:04:29] So before we get into the questions from the Patreon Peeps, is there anything else about your activism that you because I know you're like really you're an advocate for mental health, an advocate against sex trafficking and, you know, all of these things. So I'm I want to give you this platform. Because, I am like screaming about it also on true crime obsessed all the time. So, like, let's get into that if you're if you're doing that. And then we'll take some questions from the Patreon Peeps.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:04:53] Oh yeah. I mean, there's so many organizations that I've worked with. There's a foster organization, foster care organization and child wellness organization called CASA. It's all over the country. But I did a benefit with them last year, CASA L.A. I'm doing something right now with an organization called New York Immigrant Council, and they do so much work for immigrants in this country, but I mean, specifically in predominantly in New York, but helping families in need, helping them with legal aid. And that's I'm about to do a gala event with them. That will also be a fundraiser that will be streaming next month. I am working with the Dolphins organization, which is a veterans organization. My

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grandfather is a four time war veteran, fought for this country, and my dad was also a police officer. And so it's there's a lot of, you know, a lot of a lot of stuff going on there. So, you know, so I do always want to support our troops and our veterans, although I think that war is absolutely the most pointless thing that we could ever possibly do since the loss of life is just not it's not OK. So, you know, and also working with writers, working, we're working with until Freedom. And one of my other ultimate favorite organizations that does so much hard and challenging work, the anti sex trafficking organization Unlikely Heroes is incredible. Not only do they take young women and men and boys, girls, children out of these horrible, inhumane situations, sextons and in dungeons in various countries and this country, but they provide housing, they provide school scholarships, college. Some of these children have gone through some horrible things and they've pulled them out of the most egregious situations and and helped and so unlikely heroes. This is an organization that I think is absolutely amazing and it's it's terrifying. And any time I get to do or be a part of any of their events and just hearing what humans do to each other, it hurts. It really hurts. And as much as I love children and as much as I believe in child welfare, and that is an organization that always like really kicks me in the gut because of the horrors that they see, but more so the horrors that the children have have have dealt with and seen. But then on the other side, seeing them grow to be strong, independent people who are, you know, valedictorians and, you know, graduating with honors and becoming their own people and having their own families or living their own lives. There's nothing there's nothing really better than that. And of course, the environment, because, oh, my God, the planet is we're doomed.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:07:59] No, we're killing her.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:08:04] Not slowly not softly, its quickly and abruptly leaving her.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:08:06] We're just throwing grenades at her every time. I'm going to put the all of these links that you're. Well, tell me about your your. Favorite environmental causes, but I'm going to put all of these links in the show notes, and so these will all be available to you, the listeners.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:08:21] There is an organization. I've never worked with them, but I I was lucky enough to go to one of the summits on the environment like a year and a half ago. And there was an organization, I think it was one million reefs. I will find that. And I immediately donated. But they're helping to rebuild the coral reefs and that will just help to fix our ecosystem that we've been destroying of our oceans and our our rivers. And but that's one that

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I think is really, really amazing as far as like we have to take better care of our ocean. I mean, I honestly, I think we have to eat better. We have to farm better. I don't think that it's OK that we can just have whatever we want, whenever we want. I think people need to eat what's in season. I think we all need to cut back on our dependency of meat and dairy and make it it used to be, you know, once in a while kind of thing. Like you get a kill, you get to eat meat every everyone to share with the village

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:24] Yeah.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:09:25] And now we eat it three times, five times a day.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:09:28] And you'd also like the indigenous people would eat the entire buffalo. Yeah, it would you like it would be a very sacred experience where they would use every single bit of the animal to pay respect.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:09:37] Yeah, there was mindfulness and what was going on, what was being put into our bodies, what was being taken from the earth and put back into the earth. So we need to start being more mindful about all of it and what we're putting into our bodies. I mean, we have to look at I've learned so much about cancer from my aunt and about disease and mental health and what we put into our body, the air we breathe, the food we put into our bodies. That has a lot to do with how we react to things. That has a lot to do with our stress levels, our depression levels. Sugar is extraordinarily attractive and I truly, truly love it, which is why I can't be a part of it anymore. So, I mean, we have to look at those things and those reshaping the way that we interact with our food. It will actually really help the way that we are speeding up climate change. But no one's going to do it. If we don't. We have to have a decline in the desire for meat and dairy. So we have to change minds, you know, before and hearts, before we can can can make those big corporate changes. They're not going to do it on their own. Just as us cast members have come together and crew members have come together to make change in our corporation, we're going to we have to do that for our entire society. We all have to wake up and we ought to choose to live differently and be inconvenienced, as someone once said. Just a little bit. Just a little bit. Darn, I can't have a watermelon this time of year. That's OK. It's OK. You'll enjoy it when you get it. And it'll be that much sweeter because you know that you waited and had the patience to have what you what you could have, you know, when the season was right and you got it farmed correctly, you know.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:17] So I just here's something that I do sometimes. I think people think that it's hard to do and how do I

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change things? So here's here's something that I started doing the co-op. This from you, Krystal.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:11:29] No, no, please. I want to know. I want to

Gillian Pensavalle [00:11:30] know. So I got a free kibble dotcom every day and I got an email reminder and I just click above. It's like two or three trivia questions. So something kibble to animals and need to dogs need cats in need. And then I click the the kitty litter little thing and it donates kitty litter. And then they also started something called Free the Ocean. So I just click on the trivia question and again, right or wrong, they take they donate these pieces of kibble or you they take a piece of plastic out of the ocean. So I'm a free kibble plus member, so I pay five dollars a month. So every time I click on something, it's like twenty pieces of kibble that I donate to the cats and the dogs and the the litter and, you know, whatever. But I feel like it's a lot easier than people think it is.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:12:13] It is. I think that yeah I, I love that idea. I mean I think that we are going to get more savvy with how we just just over this last year, I think people have gotten better at figuring out like this is how you can do something. But I think it is overwhelming when people are like, but the world is on fire and I can't do anything in my little thing. My little kibble won't matter. Like, it's like actually it does. Like, it really does. These little tiny incremental things do make the difference. It's like everyone doing changing their habits a little tiny bit will make massive change. I mean, it just will so it matters that we go out and we donate five, ten bucks to this thing when we when we can or that we speak out or we like put on our Instagram story like, hey, I found like this. If you are food insecure, there is this place in my neighborhood that is giving food, you know, so it's just putting it out there, making sure that you're putting it out there, even if your platform is five. People or five hundred people or five million people, the resources so that people can understand how accessible, incremental change is, that is not very inconvenient at all. And you want to make sure they're vetted. You know, you do want to make sure you have to dig in and make sure you know where the money is going. But but that's not that hard to do too, you know, do your research and don't be overwhelmed. And every little bit of good that you give to the universe is helpful no matter how small. This guy is getting rambunctious now.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:43] Oh, yes, Precious's. Oh, my God.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:13:47] Guy's got me right in the mouth.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:48] Well, he's in love with you.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:13:50] Oh, I'm in love with him. Oh, my God. Stop it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:13:54] OK, so, Krystal, if you're ready, I'm ready. Can we take some questions from the Patreon peeps?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:14:01] So let's do it. What you got to say to me, huh?

Gillian Pensavalle [00:14:26] Kirstie is asking, what is the best part about being in Hamilton and working with this amazing team and cast? Also, I love you so much.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:14:40] Oh my god, First of all, I love you so much. Thank you so much for writing in that wonderful question. Oh, my gosh. What's the best part? It's just like I was saying, it's just an exceptional musical, right? So the actual material like gets me hyp, right? You're like like that's why people are like working out to it, spinning to it all this stuff to it, because it's like it's like a hype machine for three hours. But I mean, it is the talented personality is it is the jokes backstage. It's like people messing up on stage and us busting up about it afterwards. It's it's Broadway bowling league that I love so much. It's, you know, it's it's all the things that come with it. But really for me, it's always the audience. And just seeing them moved and change at the end of the show, working with crazy, talented people makes you step up your game. You know, you're like, I want to do better. I want to be better. I want to boss up. You know, I want to show up in a way that feels like I'm I can stand toe to toe with James Monroe Iglehart or any of these wonder Or mandy gonzalez, you know, like any of these people, and send in the shoes of all of these people and also stand in the presence of of Lin's baby. He's always there. He is always at the theater. So, you know, you're always like on it. And I love that like. Challenging myself to be better and show up to this great material and to show up to these great other artists that are on stage and really like really feeling like I'm doing the best work I can do in this moment like that feels great to feel rewarded and feel like, you know, you're you're surrounded by super talented people who you deeply respect and then you enjoy having fun with them. And then you get to do material that doesn't suck, because a lot of times in this in the theater we're like, oh, I got to go polish the turd. That's yeah, that's you know, that's our job is to make things better than what it is. And I don't have to do that with this. I just have to really show up, be vulnerable, be present and really follow the line of the love story,

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:16:42] Valorie is asking how does it feel stepping into such an iconic part? What reigns were you given to make her entirely yours? And what do you feel you brought to Eliza that was new or different?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:16:52] Yeah, I mean, while there's a thank you so much, Val, for that awesome question. Yeah, it's hard stepping into the role. You know, we kind of mentioned it before, but it's really hard stepping into a show that's been going that's beloved, that now is a movie and you know what I mean? Like, everyone has their perceptions. They have Pippa's voice, like, ingrained in their heads, you know what I mean? So it's just like, oh, no, what am I going to do? Am I going to be that? Am I going to disappoint people? And and like I said, like, they were just like we hired you. And in this in this industry, when you never feel like you're good enough, when you never feel like you've done enough, it was really rewarding to hear we hired you to do it like you, you know, and and when I would try to sing it a little bit like like Pippa, they'd be like, you know, actually we like that. You belt it like we like that. You belted a little bit, you know. And I was like because I was like, I want to sound like her and I want to do it like she did

Krystal Joy Brown [00:17:53] it. And they're like, they're just just do you. And I think that one of the main things that I've done differently is the aging... AJ, AJ, OK, he really wants to play in the moment. So, yeah, one of the things that I think that I've done, you know, to add to the character is definitely age her a bit more like have her go through being this young woman to being like a mature woman who's like been through some things, you know. And I yeah. I'm a person who I feel deeply I it all reads on my face. And when I when I'm about to step out on stage, I think of my I think of my job like a pilot, you know, like I'm like I have fourteen hundred souls in my hands today and I'm going to connect my heart to each and every single one of those souls. And I'm going to give them everything that I possibly can in this moment. And hopefully they're they're here to receive, you know. And so that's how I step into giant shoes by just praying to the high heavens

Gillian Pensavalle [00:18:57] you know, as you're talking about it, I'm just I'm think I'm just like transported back to your burn. that growth. But that anger. But living in the present and and. Yeah, you just nailed it.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:19:10] Thank you. Thank you. I think burn is like such a journey and I like playing in that. I love. But it's the psychology. So if you're thinking like her world's just turned upside down and I try to make it as present as possible, like she's just

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realizing and she's just like, this is all this is like right after breakfast, like, she just was like, I'm going, I'm getting all the letters. And it's like, but when I had my heart broken into smithereens, I didn't think that the ground was made of cement. You know what I mean? I, I no longer could trust my intuition, like in my I couldn't trust anything. I thought I was like, is that the moon or is that so like I couldn't trust anything, I, I didn't have my judgment anymore. I couldn't trust myself. So I bring that in for the heartbreak because I'm like that was something that was very me. Like I was like so I was reveling. Like I always kind of revel in the beginning of the of burn because I'm like, oh, everything was I real? And then it's like I was an idiot. I was an idiot to have believed all of this. Like, so it's more of that than it is the anger outside that it is like the anger inside knowing that she burned all of her letters. It changes the narrative for me. And it's not about him in that moment. It's how embarrassing and how embarrassed she is by falling so deeply in love and giving 110 percent of herself to this man, her anger of herself, you know, which is just even worse, you know, to feel like a fool, to feel foolish.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:37] Yeah. It's just like you put it in the paper

Krystal Joy Brown [00:20:40] and didn't tell me first. Like to not have told her first. Like to not have. That means you have no respect for me. That means like everything that I built and thought was going on, which is why I've also fallen in love with take a break. Like I also I try really hard and take a break.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:20:53] I love take a break. And I feel like that's that's I think people see it as kind of a you know, put it like a. Intermission are like, yeah, but I'm just a throw away song. It's not if you really know it, I love. Take a break.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:22:05] And it's it's totally the great set up there. Yeah, and it can be it can be really fiery if you like, you know, and it's just like the that is the setup. And if take a break goes well enough, burn will pay off really well.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:22] Anya has a lot to say to you.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:22:23] Oh, hi Anya. Hey girl. Thanks for listening.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:26] So Anya says I cannot wait to see you as my first Alysa on September 14th. I wondered if you could talk about your writing process. She says I have to do some writing in my profession. Just science. You know, it's not just science.

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:22:41] You're so cool.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:22:44] I have to bring properly phrased sentences on paper and I'm struggling with it. Here are the two things that are the worst. Number one, starting with an empty piece of paper, I somehow get over it by just writing and accepting that the first sentence always sounds terrible and to rewriting, making sense out of my thoughts, phrasing and rephrasing them well and in a way that my readers can understand them. So I think she's asking you as a writer, can you help?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:23:08] Oh, yeah. OK, so I mean, I've always been writing since my mom made us write in journals every single day and it was like something. Yeah, she was like, write about your day every day. And I was like, I hate this. And then I was like, I'm so glad that I wrote every single day. My sister and I both wrote and we would like write her letters about our day. Like today in school I learned this is this. And so that was our thing. And then it became just like something that I always, always did. And yeah, I mean, for me, writing, like, I just I've been commissioned to write a couple of scripts and I just submitted a script and I changed the beginning. I don't even know how many times. And it's never truly going to be perfect and there's never truly going to be the perfect phrase. But I think that intentionality is is everything. You know, if you're writing something where you want people to understand, like sometimes, you know, sometimes it's OK to assume that you're that your audience doesn't know anything and sometimes it's OK to assume that they know more. So it makes them rise to the level of your work, you know, so you can kind of yeah, it's OK sometimes to jump in if you are going to jump into the deep end and come back and and circle back and be like, oh, people maybe felt like they were out of their depth and what I'm talking about. But I've actually explained it as we've gone through. So you you know, I hope that's making a little bit of sense. And then the other thing is like, yeah, you're going to edit and you're going to act like agonize over things, but. Sometimes if you're just writing for yourself, like, how would I best learn this thing or how would I best understand this, you know, you know, you have to sometimes look at it, maybe even use yourself as the audience or use yourself in third person would be like, how would I receive this message if I were sitting here listening to it? So you have to kind of like be the alien outside of your body and and be like reading it out for yourself. And how would I react? Is it does this feel true? Does this feel vulnerable? Does this feel connected? Does this feel factual? It would. I understand it. If someone presented this to me, would I see the vision of someone presented this to me? Because as I'm writing and creating stories, I have to write it so that a director would be able to see the story. Right. So

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I have to think of how the director would see the vision that I'm creating. So put yourself out into the audience of your piece of whatever you're writing and see if you could understand what you were saying, if that's how how you would like to have been taught.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:25:36] Yeah, I think you're telling you to trust yourself.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:25:39] Yeah. Trust yourself. Yeah. Oh, my God. And like, it's such a waste of time especially. It's like, you know, I'm not sure how you identify, but women tend to tend to agonize over detail. Right. Like, we want to get it right and perfect. And so I just I implore you to get it wrong and not perfect and get it out there.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:03] Well, I always ask the peeps for their pronouns. So Anya identifies as she her.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:26:07] OK, great.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:26:08] Got it. Kate is asking I'm wondering how you got into songwriting. What kinds of projects do you prefer working on? Is there a technology that you may or may not use when writing? Do you have any specific future goals when it comes to songwriting?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:26:22] Oh, my gosh, I, I started writing songs when I was very, very little and I loved writing music. It was just like it was everything. It's so crazy to me that I don't write music like I used to because I always thought that was going to be the number one thing that I did. What instruments can you play? I play guitar and piano yeah. So I, I have them right here and I, you know, and what would happen for me is that like a little melody would come like something, a phrase would happen and I'd be like oh what. And it would just start to connect, you know, it just kind of like jump off out of nowhere or off the page or something. And I would just be like, I'd hear it, you know, I just kind of hear it kind of tumbling in. And I'd be like, what chord is that? And I try to find it, find the note and be like, OK. And and I just loved I mean, I love writing about love as if I knew what the hell love was. And I loved just like being emotional. Right. Like I was like, I love Dashboard Confessional and I love

Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:17] like screaming infidelities. Are you kidding?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:27:20] Oh, my God. I just liked being like really in my ANCs, Jenice and and of course, like loving Jill Scott

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and Erykah Badu. But they were like, just so cool. They were like way too cool for me. Like Lauryn Hill was my everything and Fiona Apple and these like women songwriters that were really songwriters

Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:39] One day Lacamoire and I will make that Fiona Apple Appreciation podcast. I mean, it is she is my heart.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:27:44] Oh, I was like musical because I'm obsessed with the yes. I've been obsessed with Fiona Apple forever. And like, all of a sudden people are like, wow, this Fiona Apple is really cool. I was like, you guys are so late. And by the way, that's not her best album.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:27:56] Are you ever talking? We're going to talk about the title. Oh, my God. We're going to read a title cards and like going to Apple and talk about, oh, my God. Yeah. Anyway, you. I love it. Crystal, I'm so sorry, but I hear Fiona Apple and I get very like. I know I yeah. I named my dog after Fiona Apple. Her name was just Fiona and she came home where she was going to be.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:28:14] Yes. Yeah. Well, I love, I love, I love like the women expressing. Yeah. Expressing themselves that way. And I was just like so into it. And I liked writing poetry. And so a lot of my stuff kind of started as poetry and then kind of moved into that realm. And then once I became like an adult, I started working with producers and and I signed with CISAC, which is a publishing company. And then I had like a record deal with three record labels. And I've written so many songs, but I hate the music industry. Sorry if you guys are hearing, like in the background, that's my dog. Oh, he's like really ready to play. He slept as long as he possibly could. Now he's like,.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:28:55] I'm sorry AJ.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:28:56] And so he he's like, I want attention. But yeah. So I was signed with a few record labels. But the the music industry is just especially at that time, was just so brutal. And I was like, I do not want to show up at a at a record studio at eleven or twelve o'clock at night and be the only woman. And it was just like and you know, lots of like drugs and alcohol going on. And it was just

Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:22] were they asking you to show up to studios at eleven o'clock at night?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:29:25] That's what time you record like that's the time of recorded most of my stuff, like I hate it

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:29:30] and it was you and like a bunch of dudes.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:29:32] Yeah That's typically how it is. And so and I was like, I need something stable, like musical theater. I was like at least like that. I know I could. Musical theater was a kind of my fallback plan and a lot of ways, because I was like, I just need that consistency that like it just the music industry just felt so brutal and and hard and so but I lived with a whole bunch of random musicians and then all of a sudden we'd make some song or half of a song and they'd be like, oh, we sold this song to NBC and it's going to be on this TV show.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:30:05] And I'd be like, Oh, awesome.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:30:08] And then I think, oh, T.S.A., put your song on. And I never really had my my own defined sound. I would work with these producers and I'd be like, oh, I'm going to just like someone to be like sing like a 13 year old, like angsty girl. And I'm like, OK, And looking dumb and like really just dumb stuff. And then all of a sudden it'd be like, oh, Titos playing that on his. I'd be like, what, how cool.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:30:34] All right. But were you not getting paid for that.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:30:37] No, I got paid.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:30:38] OK. OK, yeah.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:30:40] No, no, no. Like going through the publishing companies like trying to do it legit but but yeah. So, so it was just like very random. But I, I and I, I kind of just kind of fell out of love with the idea of being a singer songwriter. Not that I don't think I'd come back to it, but like. I don't know my emotions to it have changed, I, I, I like using music and I like writing and I like the things that I write typically have music in it. And my the stuff that I work on heavily has music woven into it. But I just don't I haven't been like sitting down writing songs a lot lately and it's like a muscle. If you don't use the muscle, it just kind of atrophies or it just turns flabby and you're like, I wrote a couple. Forget it

Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:30] like that. I can't fit it. So. Roger. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Yeah.

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:31:39] I remember that to me lately, like picking up an instrument and I'm like, OK, I don't talk about my feelings. Someone give me something to do.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:31:47] Yeah. Kate is also asking I know you're an advocate for mental health and I'm wondering what types of changes you'd like to see in the Broadway theater world in order to better support actors and those who work in the industry. We touch on this a little bit earlier, but anything else you'd like to add to that?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:32:02] I mean, I definitely think that we need to make sure that the resources for, you know, therapy, I think that producers, you know, should give stipends for mental health and wellness, like say like you get a stipend a lot of times for like if you're a dancer and if you want that one hundred dollars, you can get massages or you can get physical therapy. Like we also need to have something where you get one hundred dollars to go have therapy, therapy for mental health to make sure that we're staying in good form to do this. But I really do think that we all need to take a self inventory of what our issues are.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:32:39] Here's a question, though. The insurance that Broadway provides, does that not include mental health services?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:32:45] It does it. It does include mental health. And, you know, you may not get one hundred percent of it paid for, like right now, like my I pay like ninety six dollars for my therapist, but like they actually charge like four hundred, which is astronomical, but it's New York. And so yes. That your insurance can. But I think to like nudge people to, to remind people that there's no stigma in getting some treatment and to look into their own mental health, like to be advocates for mental health, I think would be helpful in all of our industries to be like you should you should have if we provide this care or you get, you know, therapy at a very discounted rate or your parent just died or you're grieving and like here are places that you can get that. I think that that would be really helpful to destigmatize that and to not make it seem like something wrong with you if you're getting help. What we can do is just to make sure that all of our our our cast and crew have the resources, have the tools to go find the people and also not to shame anybody about what they need, the kind of care that they need, mental health care that they need, whatever they're going through. And I think that everyone yeah, being a black woman and going to therapy at twenty three years old was just unheard of. It was like the whitest thing I could possibly do, you know. But now it's like being in the black community. We are everybody's an advocate. Gabrielle Union. And you hear Taraji P. Henson, all these black women are talking about

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their mental health and their mental health care and their self care and how important it is for them and how important it has become for their journey, for their success. So, you know, I'm always advocating for that. And I think that we do have to destigmatize mental health and getting help because it doesn't make you weak just because you're getting the help.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:34:34] I'll say it, my therapy session is Thursday is at one forty five. Hey, I think everyone should be in therapy. Same. And I think it should be when I say that I say I'm saying that to say that it should be accessible to everybody who wants it.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:34:48] I think everyone needs tools to because sometimes I feel like we can also use therapy as a crutch, you know, like I think that we need tools to to deal with our existence.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:35:00] Yeah. You got you got to do the work outside of the way.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:35:03] You got to do the work to you can't just go to the room and and bitch for an hour. You've got to actually go, OK, I don't want to hear myself complain about this thing anymore. What can I do to actually stop these cyclical behaviors and patterns? I also want Broadway to acknowledge the indigenous lands that were on.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:35:21] One hundred percent.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:35:22] I think that that should be I think that is to really be and every single business and everywhere. And I think that it would there should be a true honor of of of of where we are and the people that have become billionaires and millionaires and families that have become ultra wealthy. They should absolutely give up some some some flowers to the indigenous people whose land this was that we've we've stolen or they've stolen or whatever. And lastly, making making Broadway accessible for. More people, Broadway's expensive, a ticket is very pricey, and we have to figure out a way to make sure that other communities have more accessibility. I know that we have lotteries and all that stuff, but a lot of times those lotteries go to people who are super fans and understand how the lotteries work, not kids in poor neighborhoods and underdeveloped neighborhoods, and that don't understand how or don't even maybe have access to the Internet to get in some sort of virtual line or do these types of things. We have to do more outreach as a Broadway community and as an arts community to make sure that we're we're making sure that this art is actually accessible for people that look like us. It's very important to make sure that we get as

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many types of people in the theater as possible so that we can continue to create a new theater with them. Yeah, I think we're learning a lot. And we now that we know better, we have to do better 100 percent.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:36:53] Lance's is asking, when did you realize you wanted to perform for a living?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:36:57] Oh my gosh. I was probably so young. I did ballet really early, like I was such a ham as a kid. I knew making people laugh was like my favorite thing. And even to this day when I hear actors that are like I just like, love to cry and like the emotional like when I'm acting, I'm like, oh my God, I hate that part. I hate like I do. I did not enjoy doing law and order and doing like a rape scene. Like I was not I did not enjoy that at all. At all. I took me a lot of therapy to get over that. I was like, why do people want to see my pain? I don't get it. I just loved making people laugh at a very young age and making my family like my you know, my father was murdered when I was five years old. And so there was just a lot of tragedy in my my in my life and my family. And so making my mom laugh and I would dress up and I would do all these things to make her happy. And and my sister and I, you know, putting on these little shows and presentations for the holidays and stuff was just like, you know, to lift spirits. I just knew that I could do that with the with this like with performing and entertaining and distracting. Right. And then I it turned into something that I found I could actually do, but I was probably like really like seven. And I was like, I could do this.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:38:11] Yeah. Yeah. Krystal, I'm sorry. I didn't know that. So thank you for sharing that with me.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:38:15] No, it's OK. It was a very tough, tough upbringing and I think we all weathered it as best as we possibly could. But it was hard. And I think we found so much joy in those old movies and in musical theater, the light, fluffy stuff that we wanted to just come to, because a lot of it was hard and a lot of it was dark. And those were our touchstones of just pure joy. And those were the things that still make me super happy and like feel light and yeah

Gillian Pensavalle [00:38:44] Lance's is also asking I recently saw an interview where you spoke about the importance of representation. Was there someone in your childhood that was the key representation for you?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:38:55] Yeah, I mean, definitely. Obviously, when when RENT came about, that was a big one, because I saw on the

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like the CD case that she was like brownish. And but I would say everyone compared me to Rudy Huxtable. Always everyone did. Everyone compared to Rudy Huxtable. And I also, like I, I was obsessed with living single like it was like the heyday of black TV Erkel. So Family Matters, living single. All of those shows that were just so like my family would gather around like TGIF and watch them like everybody in the La-Z-Boy, you know, the fresh prince. And you know, just like that, the level of like black content that was out of like family shows that was really like what made me go, oh, but like, honestly, it was the theater that made those people real because those people weren't real to me until I actually got to physically see them. And then I was like, oh, my gosh, because they seem like other creatures. They seem like other mystical beings, you know what I mean? That had powers and sorcery would be on my screen. And they're not they're not made of the same DNA as me. You know what I mean? For some reason, I was like, the people who are singing Ariel are singing The Little Mermaid aren't real people. I just couldn't see it. They were just like it was like a magical thing, you know? And I was like, those aren't people that come from where I come from or do what I do or live how I live. Like those are other types of people, you know, like others, you know. But when I came to the theater and when I went to the ballet, I was like, oh, the ballet. You know, I and I saw Complexions, which is an Alvin Ailey dance piece, and it was all black. And I was like, whoa. And it just took it home for me. I was like, whoa, whoa, whoa. Like. These are black people doing this for real and people are like just like me from where I'm from, you know, so it is that representation that makes you go. I if I see it, I believe it and I can do it. And we have a hard time sometimes just believing we can just do it right. We sometimes need those extra, extra, little boost. And who knows if I had seen more representation of of of scientists or dentist or all kinds of things who know what else? I, I would have been, you know, for me at the time as a young black person, like the things to do or to to know that you could happen to have wealth or success meant you had to be an extraordinary, an extraordinary talent, like extraordinarily gifted in sports or performance, you know. So I think that, you know, the representation matters on every level. We need to see more of everything, more doctors, more lawyers, more of everything represented across the board and every race so that children can really see themselves in this in this world and what they could potentially be.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:41:58] Yeah, he's Lance is also asking, are there any projects that you're involved with that you can share that is exciting to you and the advancement of representation in the arts?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:42:08] Well, I'm on The Equalizer on CBS. And I would say I mean, the role was originally it's based off of the

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movies, The Equalizer, and it's Denzel Washington's performance. And now they've changed it to a middle aged woman who's black and has a daughter. And and and I think that that's cool, you know, to have a black woman being like an action kind of hero and also being like not of course, black women are always the moral compass of everything, but, um. But but, you know, her going around and and, you know, setting setting things balanced, know, it gives us so much agency as black women to look at that and go, oh, my gosh, like, we are so strong and we are so fearless. And, you know, this role was originally and could have easily been a man. And it wasn't. And it's like we need that woman and especially women of a certain age and women who are getting older. We need to remember that just because you're in your 40s or 50s, like you're still very vibrant. Naomi Campbell just had a baby like today.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:43:14] Did she really?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:43:15] She's 50 and she's had a baby. Mm hmm. I don't know if it came out of her body, but she is a mother.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:43:20] That's all that matters. Look, we talked about this right at the top. It doesn't matter. She's alive and we're living longer.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:43:25] And so we need to like, you know, I just saw this, like Adam ruins everything that of like about pregnancy. And it was just so interesting about the myths and the lies that we get about age and all of the stuff. So it's really cool that I think that just watching her work and watching her career and she's in everything, you know, she's a director, producer, writer, rapper, musician, singer. She'll do stage. She'll do screen. She's done everything. And I, I, I when I did my first scene with her afterwards, I just broke down into tears. I was like, I was like I watched you growing up and I just love you and I just appreciate everything you've done. And she's like, well welcome aboard. You know, she's like very nice. She's like, all right. Kelly is going to be a handful.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:44:10] She's emotional. So it's been cool. And I play her I play her husband's new wife and the stepmother to her child and like the hot stepmother. So thank you, Lance.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:44:24] Yeah. Lance, my man Rob is asking you had the fortune of working with Leslie Odom Jr., a leap of faith, which I saw three times. You said no way. He's our any fun remembrances of working with Leslie.

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Krystal Joy Brown [00:44:38] There was a song that got cut from the show and I think it was Daddy son. That sounds like a ragtime song, but it was like he was like a little tiny blip of a song and they cut it and we all were like, we like put up a sign or something. We're like, you bring that shit back. And they did they brought it back. I mean, the show, it didn't save the show. But, you know, that was that was amazing. I mean, his voice was just so silky smooth. And so I was like, wow, I've never seen an act like I'm big and I'm like, I'm loud. And he was like, so contained and so, like, nuanced, you know? And I was like, oh, I need to get some of that, like, coolness that like chill ness, you know. But being in our show, we always like huddled together and like did a prayer of sorts. You know, we do that at Hamilton as well. And I mean, it was just so funny, honestly, being in a flop is the funniest and best thing you can do. I mean, once, you know, the writing is on the wall and it's just kind of like it's a sinking ship, it's it's really quite fun. And then you always bond over that. Whenever you see your your your former colleagues out in the world. You remember the. So we did for two weeks on Broadway that we ended up getting nominated for best musical and performed at the Tonys, even though we didn't have a show. Yeah.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:46:34] I mean, we got the notice, so we done previews for four weeks, then we got our reviews and they weren't great. And then we got then a week later they were like, we're going to close in a week. So we performed for six weeks.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:46:48] Then you were just like, well, let's have fun with this.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:46:50] Yeah then youre just like, well, and it was a lot of improv. It was. If you saw the show, which you did rob three times, then, you know, there was a lot of elements of surprise because we went out to the audience and we had a lot of participation. We had lots of cameras and there was a lot going on in that show. There was a rain. There was. So we all got wet. It was while there was that there was a time in that show where we had a burning cross. And I tell you that that thing lasted one show. Yeah, because because we were like, you have a burning cross on top of a whole bunch of black people. It's not going to work.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:25] It's just not I mean, not only is it the worst look

Krystal Joy Brown [00:47:28] a giant cross lighting up on fire

Krystal Joy Brown [00:47:33] and in front of a group of black people

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:47:37] So listeners at home, go also into this. This is why we need to change when Broadway comes back. You cannot we cannot have burning crosses anymore. I mean, that cannot be a thing. No, that has been.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:47:50] Yeah. As as it being like a miracle from God. I was like, that shouldn't be. So that didn't last. Yeah. So so, you know, we had we had a change of hands. We had it we went from Rob Ashford being our director to Chris Ashley. And so, you know, that went like directions changing a lot. And when all these things are that you're kind of in for a ride. But there were so many good things that came out of it, like the cast was amazing. The Alan Menken did the music. I mean, there was amazing things. It just didn't work out.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:48:20] You know what, Krystal? I think this is a great last question.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:48:22] Great. Let's hear it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:48:23] Deb is asking, what is your favorite type of pasta?

Krystal Joy Brown [00:48:26] Oh, my gosh. Well, I'm getting I'm definitely going to not say red lentil pasta because I literally just made myself red lentil pasta and it was disgusting. Oh, no. Yeah, it was really bad. So actually, this is so funny that you asked me this because I went to Rosemarie's in the West Village the other day for brunch with my friend. My dog is losing it. So I went to brunch with my one of my best friends, Cameron, and I was like, well, you know what? I'm going to have the pasta. It's Rosemarie's in West Village and oh, my God, it was a gluten free linguine pasta. They did a little substitution situation for me because, you know, everything, a cheese and all they want, but they just, like, made it with, like, tomato sauce. And it was so good. But I always I like linguine, linguine, linguine, gluten free linguine. I like that shape. I like the texture of linguine. I like the big or fettuccini. I like that too. I'm also like a big lasagna person. I used to always eat like those microwaveable lasagna's from Amys. Yeah, funny. I just had pasta and I've not been eating any processed foods because I'm crazy. And so my friend was like, wow, I haven't seen you eat pasta in a long time. I was like, well today's the day. I was like and thank God this is good. So it was really good. So Rosemarie's West Village fettuccini or a linguine? I'm here for it.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:49:49] Nice. Krystal, look, I got to tell you, I fell in love with you when we met a year two months ago. It's solidified now. Thank you so much for spending all of this time with me. We've hung out for almost 3 hours. Yeah. Please tell the

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listeners where they can find you all your social media, your website, or like anything you have going on. And we you know, we talked about all of your activism and websites that you are really promoting. They will all be in the show notes. You don't have to repeat them. So this is all about you and your social media on your website.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:50:20] OK, so thank you all so much for listening. And I am at Krystal Joy Browne. That's for the K, Joy Browne on Twitter and Instagram. I'm sorry. I mean, I technically have a tiktok, but I have nothing on there and. And what else you can find all of the things that I'm doing at theKJB.com, which is my website. So the KJB

Gillian Pensavalle [00:50:43] So it's t h e, the KJB.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:50:46] Yeah, the cube. Cool. So @ Krystal Brown or theKJB.com.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:50:52] Well thank you so much. I cannot wait to see you on September 14th. I don't know if we're going to be able to hug then. I've been told there's like a strict no, but there are

Krystal Joy Brown [00:51:00] lots of strict rules, but

Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:03] fine. But maybe I mean, maybe we can have down the

Krystal Joy Brown [00:51:05] street like on Ninth Avenue or, you know,

Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:07] I can't make any plans. You know,

Krystal Joy Brown [00:51:09] we might elbow bump or we might just full on embrace because we're both vaccinated. Women are allowed to.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:15] OK, it's that makes me really excited. OK, I can't wait. I love you. Thank you. So, so, so, so much.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:51:19] I love you too. Thank you for all of this.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:22] Oh my God. Happy to have you. And I'm going to host you soon. You and AJ are going to come over and he's going to be Fiona and they're going to be in love.

Krystal Joy Brown [00:51:30] Yeah, he has plenty to say. He has plenty to say.

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Gillian Pensavalle [00:51:34] All about each. I want that pod right now. Thank you so much for hanging out with me week after week. I love you so much. I will talk to you next week. I am G.Pen

Krystal Joy Brown [00:51:44] and I am KJB.

Gillian Pensavalle [00:52:26] 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