

0.28: LaToya Ferguson, Alanna Bennett, & Ira Madison III on Race in the Buffy & Angelverse

[CHIME]

Jenny: Hey there, Scoobies!

Kristin: Hell-o!

Jenny: Hello! Hey, as we talked about in our episode this past Monday, we are returning to the space here and in Angel On Top with an episode featuring the brilliant, amazing, very powerful—

Kristin: [giggles] Mmhmm.

Jenny: LaToya Ferguson, Alanna Bennett and Ira Madison III.

Kristin: Yes!

Jenny: In an overarching conversation on the treatment of race in the Buffy and Angelverse. This episode is one of our first actions toward a larger plan of reparations here in our community and podcast spaces. It is also...a fucking blast!

Kristin: We know that we have missed and neglected many important moments in our five season journey through Buffy. And this episode is the first in an ongoing series that is going to feature many different black, Indigenous and POC voices. We know that as two white, cis women, we will never have the full scope of understanding and perspective that BIPOC creators do. Which is why our voices are not present in today's episode.

Jenny: We are so pumped to share this conversation with you all, and so incredibly thankful to LaToya for her work as host and producer, and to Alanna and Ira for cohosting. Links to follow them and learn more about their work are in today's show notes.

Kristin: We also wanna take a moment before we get into today's episode to extend a massive thank you to Mackenzie MacDade and Alba Daza, who have been working with us as consultants and facilitators, and to the members of our BIPOC listenership who have also contributed feedback, guidance and consultancy over the past month. You can read more about Mac and Alba's work in today's show notes as well.

Also please listen, before we roll into the episode today. This conversation includes spoilers for the entire series of Buffy and the entire series of Angel, including the comics. So if you haven't watched, if you haven't read, you're gonna need to go do that now so you can get to this episode, because it fucking rules.

Jenny: Turn back all ye who would enter here if there weren't spoilers.

Kristin: [laughs] Alright, let's get into it.

[Buffering intro theme plays]

LaToya: Hello. Welcome to this very special episode of Buffering the Vampire Slayer. I am one of your hosts, LaToya Ferguson. And I am a freelance writer for The AV Club, Paste Magazine, IndieWire, and a bunch of other places.

Alanna: I am Alanna Bennett. I am a culture writer and TV writer. I write for Roswell, New Mexico.

Ira: And I am Ira Madison III. I am a host of the podcast Keep It! and a television writer, most recently of Netflix's Daybreak and Quibi's Nikki Fre\$h.

LaToya: And today, I am talking with these very impressive writers about Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel, and race in the Buffy and Angel verse. We are three black LGBTQ creators who love Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel. Meh, I'm gonna just say that right there. We love them both. Possibly equally, possibly one more than the other, but we don't need to share that right now.

Ira: You know how I feel about Angel. [LaToya laughs] And I love it more.

LaToya: Yeah, exactly—

Alanna: I feel the other direction. Contradict—

LaToya: This is also a—Angel over Buffy situation, so—

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: Deal with it, Alanna. [laughter]

Alanna: [laughs] That's okay. I'm outvoted, that is fine. [laughter]

LaToya: Oh, we've taken over. [Alanna laughs] So I guess, first up, we should probably talk about our Buffy/Angel origin stories. So for me, I started watching

Buffy originally during reruns of Season 5 before Season 6 premiered. Immediately just kinda fell in love with it, and then luckily around that time also, FX started doing the reruns, so that was very good for catching up on Buffy. And then when I started watching Buffy as it entered Season 6, which is a bizarre thing to do when you're watching with your family, your two younger siblings and your mother. Um. Yeah, when we have Buffy and Spike fucking down a house, it's a situation to have with your younger siblings. [laughs] But with that came Angel, which I believe—it would have been Angel Season 3, which was the first season I saw. And TNT of course had those reruns, so I was catching up as I was watching. It was a lot of things. And I just—I fell in love with it. I—literally, I'd like go to Buffy World and I would get quotes and I had a notebook just full of Buffy quotes. Because I'm a nerd and that is the life I live.

Alanna: Yeah. I first started watching Buffy in—it was just completely the chaotic, like, early 2000s way of it being reruns completely out of order. And it took a while of just—Saturday marathons to figure out what was happening and what season I was even in. And I was a young teenager, witnessing that fucking of the house down. Truly a life changing moment, puzzling over how sex works, and not—it not—it doesn't get there. And neither did I. But— [laughter]

LaToya: Did you also find with Doublemeat Palace, the fucking—uh, like, the dumpster—like, is that how it works?

Alanna: [laughs] Yeah, just like, oh. Is that—is that possible? With her skirt...?

Ira: I mean, we've all done that. [laughter]

Alanna: For me, with the house down one, it's like, the way her skirt goes in that. I was—and like, the way he—I was like, is that how anatomy...what is going where? I don't know. [LaToya laughs] But then when I got to college, I actually watched all of it in a row. I was in a student-taught Buffy class, where we just like went through it like a syllabus. And I was—

Ira: Okay.

Alanna: Yeah. It was...nice.

Ira: Academia.

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: Feeling old. [Alanna laughs] Um. I started watching Buffy in Season 2. [laughs] Original, original.

Alanna: [laughs] OG.

LaToya: Old Man Ira over here.

Ira: [laughs] The first season had finished airing on The WB and before Season 2 started, I caught reruns of Season 1 in the summer. So that's how I found Buffy, before Season 2. And followed it all the way through. You know, so that was my show. I used to VCR episodes, 'cause I had after school programs and so I would record it and then come home and watch it immediately. And I would also rewatch the episode several times throughout the week, probably every night until the next Tuesday when I would watch Buffy again. And I did watch it with my grandmother, because on Tuesdays, we watched Buffy and Ally McBeal.

LaToya: Nice. See, Ira, I was clowning on you for being old, but you're not old. The thing is, for me—so I was the weird kid who, like, loved David E. Kelley shows. So I was watching Ally McBeal and The Practice. [Ira laughs] And my mom was like, stop being weird, watch The WB. And I will say, literally the first thing like I really watched on The WB, it was the episode of Dawson's dad's, like, funeral.

Alanna: [laughing] Oh no.

LaToya: And like, Mom. Why do you hate me? [laughter]

Ira: I mostly watched everything, to be honest. When people ask about my—you know, what got me into TV writing, it was whatever net—when it was easier to watch everything that was on, right?

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: I watched all the network TV shows. Which is like, every night, just sort of like, try and watch what I can. And like, would record things if they were airing at the same time as another thing. 'Cause I just wanted to...consume everything. That has lended myself to seeing basically every WB show. [laughs]

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: That's ever aired, and a lot of bad shows that got cancelled—

Alanna: I love the bad shows that got cancelled!

Ira: In the 90s and 2000s. [laughs]

Alanna: I miss Related.

LaToya: We'll do a separate episode just on one-season WB shows.

Alanna: [laughing] Yes.

LaToya: And talk about Young Americans somewhere.

Ira: Glory Days, my fave. [laughter]

LaToya: So—obviously we just said also, our WB origins. Alanna, what was your WB origin?

Alanna: I grew up obsessed with Gilmore Girls and Charmed.

Ira: Mm.

Alanna: Like, those were my two big ones.

Ira: Charmed was that girl.

Alanna: It was! I think it's still underrated.

LaToya: Love Charmed.

Alanna: I still—I think it's—

Ira: Uh, I think—I think it's about rated.

Alanna: That's fair. [laughter] No, it does have problems.

Ira: I turn on Charmed reruns—

Alanna: [simultaneously] I think it did some things that—yeah. I think it did some things that it didn't get credit for—

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: And then it did a lot of things that were...Kaley Cuoco. So.

LaToya: [laughs] Kaley Cuoco and that wig!

Alanna: [laughing] Yeah.

Ira: That is actually one of the shows that I loved so much and I sit down and watch reruns—

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: And I'm like, I can't do it. [laughter]

Alanna: It doesn't hold up for you? [laughter] That's extremely fair.

LaToya: Don't forget the pirate episode "Charrmed" starring Nick Lachey.

Alanna: Oh no.

Ira: Yes.

Alanna: Oh, their themed episodes. They really go there.

LaToya: Welcome to Charmed Cast, you guys.

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: Yes. Charm—Charming, um, podcast. [laughter]

LaToya: Charming the Podcast.

Ira: Yes.

Alanna: Yes. My favorite—I need to talk about Phoebe—at some point, she wears like a halter top that is just the back of—it's just the butt of jeans. That is the only thing covering her—it's like, barely covering her boobs and it's just strapped onto her. That's—

LaToya: We could do an hour long of, like, Phoebe's outfits.

Ira: Yes.

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: I think that's what Kristin and Jenny had in mind, right?

LaToya: Yeah— [crosstalk]

Alanna: Yeah, yeah, that's what they wanted from us.

Ira: They invited us on to talk about—we're actually just gonna talk about Charmed. [laughter]

LaToya: We're gonna talk about Rose McGowan's line deliveries in the last two seasons and how she was clearly over it. [laughs]

Alanna: [laughs] She was just like, I'm here, I'm getting paid and I will be leaving at 5 o'clock. [laughter]

LaToya: So we are discussing, of course, race in Buffy and Angel. Which, like pretty much any WB series, you're like, well, it's all white people, right? It's pretty white kids with problems. Buffy premiered in the spring of 1997. And in that season, the 1996-1997 television season for WB, the only other successful quote-on-quote "white show" that premiered that season was Seventh Heaven. The other successful shows that premiered that season were Smart Guy, The Jamie Fox Show, and The Steve Harvey Show. Because at the time, The WB was still the black channel, really.

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: And so you would think that there would be, you know, more diversity in Buffy, because of the network it was. But the fact that there wasn't is kind of a way to show you what The WB was trying to be and became.

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: So in terms of anything race related—to, like, really start off the show, we have to discuss Season 2's Inca Mummy Girl. [laughs]

Alanna: What a time.

Ira: Yeah. I mean, we're not gonna talk about, um, Aphrodesia in the pilot?

LaToya: Oh, I literally— [laughter] oh, so I wasn't just "black Cordelia" in the reading of it, I was also Aphrodesia. I was like, I will be Aphrodesia as played by Persia White. [laughter] And we will be discussing—

Ira: "Pos! Negly!" [laughs]

LaToya: We will be discussing Persia White on this podcast, of course. [laughter] Girlfriend's Persia White. So yeah. Our first black person, for a long time, is Persia White as Aphrodesia. An iconic character who did not make it past the first episode, which is offensive.

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: [laughs] But after that, we had Ampata in Inca Mummy Girl. We also have the entire cultural insensitivity dance in that episode of television.

Ira: Yeah. Um, that was their first foray into race, really, right?

LaToya: Yeah, race, other cultures in general—

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: And it was a choice that was made.

Ira: But also, very common. You know?

Alanna: Right.

Ira: I think, like, many of us—or maybe some listeners too, like, have probably had college experiences where, um, one of the just like easy dorm parties is like, "around the world?"

Alanna: Mmhmm.

Ira: [laughs] And it's people dressed up as different countries. And it's kinda iffy when you get out of Europe, I guess.

LaToya: Yeah. It's—

Ira: You're not just a-dressing up, in a-Italian. [laughter] And then of course, you know, Ampata is Incan.

Alanna: And she just murders the poor real Ampata who, like, they don't pick up on time even. Like, I just rewatched it this morning and it's like, they're 40 minutes late to pick up this poor boy. Then he immediately gets murdered, because of course, because it's Sunnydale.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: How do you—how do you—how are you—how is Buffy Summers late to pick up a stranger in Sunnydale at night?

LaToya: They really don't care at all that this, like, guy died. [laughs]

Alanna: [laughs] He's just dead.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: They do not care at all. Speaking of not caring, the next dip into cultural anything I noted was Dead Man's Party in Season 3, with the Nigerian mask which my Nigerian mother will always say, of course, it's always Nigerians. [laughter]

Ira: That lends itself to the fact that Joyce was working at a museum. Ostensibly—

LaToya: She's working at the gallery. "The gallery," is what it's called.

Ira: The gallery. Yes, I'm sorry, the gallery—ostensibly throughout the series. And I guess that was just, like, a knock-off job for her to have, right? You know, but like, it could have been a way to tap into some different cultures.

Alanna: Mmhmm.

Ira: Particularly on, like, a sci fi show like this, with vampires and demons and things. You're always going to be borrowing from other cultures and you know, like, magic shows do that a lot too. You know, it's always like, voodoo this, voodoo that. And you know, I think that there were probably a lot more opportunities to celebrate some cultures or, you know, bring some knowledge that just didn't really happen. You know, the *mask* in Dead Man's Party—

Alanna: [laughs] Just a mask.

Ira: Is pretty much just—it's just a mask. [laughs]

Alanna: It could have come from Party City. [laughing] Like, it didn't have to come from Nigeria.

Ira: And it terrorizes these white people.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: Oh god, the whitest of people.

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: Yeah, Pat! [laughs]

LaToya: Pat, the whitest of people. [laughter]

Ira: Pat was a Karen. [laughs]

LaToya: Yeah, the rare times that Buffy specifically wants to hone in on culture, it's always kind of a mess? Which is why I'm gonna bring up Season 4's Pangs right now. Everyone's favorite Thanksgiving episode.

Alanna: Oh, yes.

LaToya: Where woke—'cause Willow's woke now, because she's in college. And what an idiot, right? How dare she care?

Ira: I love that episode, but it is very unfortunate that Willow—you know, she is on the side of the Shumash Indians, that they were persecuted, you know? And like, it's sort of played as a joke.

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: And then at the end, they all have to fight off the Shumash Indians anyway because they're just there to kill everybody. [laughter] So—

LaToya: So obviously—

Alanna: Yeah, like, showing Willow the truth. [crosstalk]

LaToya: The colonizers were right, you guys. Spike said it, and—

Alanna: Yeah. Here it is.

LaToya: And Spike was right. Spike was right for once, you guys. [laughter]

Ira: Yes. Spike's speech at the end, you know, about colonizers, like—you know, like, you always have to kill them, et cetera.

[clip from Pangs plays]

Spike: I just can't take all this mamby-pamby boo-hooing about the bloody Indians.

Willow: Uh, the preferred term is—

Spike: You won. Alright? You came in and you killed them and you took their land. That's what conquering nations do. It's what Caesar did, and he's not going around saying, "I came, I conquered, I felt really bad about it." The history of the world is not people making friends. You had better weapons and you massacred them. End of story.

Ira: I feel like the show was trying to say something about what—but didn't really get there.

LaToya: It's—

Ira: Because the thing is, when you have those conversations, you're surrounded by whiteness, right?

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Alanna: Mmhmm.

Ira: You know? Like, Pangs is right after—just jumping ahead a bit, like the characters—but like, Season 3 was all Mr. Trick. You know, just like—

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: In episodes and he was constantly making jokes, like, about blackness, you know? And it's...that's just always so very weird and performative in a Tina Fey sort of way. [laughter]

LaToya: I was just about to say that, honestly. [laughter] I was just about to bring that up.

Ira: Yeah. When you are the only black character in a show, right, and you're constantly making jokes like, "these white people!" And it's like, well, you know what you could have done, Joss Whedon: added some black people—

Alanna: Any.

Ira: Who weren't Mr. Trick. [laughter]

LaToya: It's like, you're—

Alanna: Coulda not murdered your only—your only ones.

LaToya: Yeah, you're gonna pretend you're a certain way and you represent a certain cause—

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: But then Willow's the butt of the joke in wanting to be like, hey, colonizing is bad!

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Yeah, and she's, like—we're laughing at her for saying that, obviously. Which does not really fall in line with what—like, the kind of person you're saying you are. Which again, is like the Tina Fey of it all, pretty much, with everything.

Alanna: You can really feel, with Mr. Trick, like, all of his jokes are the same ones that white people use against themselves. They're like, "oh, I'm so—that was such a white thing of me to say."

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Ira: Mm.

Alanna: But they just put it in the mouth of a black character and act like they're actually saying something.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: And actually acknowledging something, but they—the environment of the entire show doesn't change at all.

LaToya: Exactly. It's the thing where he's making all these points about race, but like, literally no one ever responds to his points about race. Like, he's just saying them kind of in a void. Even when he's in scenes with other people, there's like, I guess I'll let this black man say this thing but I won't say anything either, like, in favor of it or against it.

Alanna: Right.

Ira: Yeah. What's weird too is that like, that could have been a very interesting way to just sort of discuss race in the vampire world, I guess.

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: Which I feel like we really don't have in many shows, to be honest, you know.

Alanna: Mmhmm.

Ira: Because we talk about the Master, you know, who's like, the oldest vampire, et cetera, right? And he's white. But there would be the idea that, you know, vampires would be from all over the globe.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Ira: And what does it look like for a vampire who has survived for centuries, you know? Who might be black or of a different race, you know? And they had a moment where they could have gotten into that too, in Season 2, if you remember Absalom. The one who was trying to revive the Master.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: Mm.

Ira: But...alas. [laughter]

Alanna: Alas.

LaToya: Yeah, I hate to bring everything back to The Vampire Diaries. Or do I? But I feel like the Originals actually—just like, in the way it's created, it kind of deals with that more. Just because—so you have Marcel who, like—he was a slave as a human. And then Klaus, like, he finds him and he takes him and he brings him into the fold. He brings him as part of his family and they kind of build from that. And like how he would live in this world, a vampire, while also, you know, being a black man in this world in general. And I think they do an interesting thing with that, but Buffy was never interested in doing anything like that at all. We get—

Ira: Now, you know I ain't watching no damn Originals. [laughter]

LaToya: I mean...that's why I'm here, as the one who has watched these things. That's why you need me.

Ira: I definitely stopped watching The Vampire Diaries once Elena got to college.

Alanna: Oh, yeah.

LaToya: Understandable. I'm already—I've already gotten to so many, like, racism and slavery rants on the podcast. My fun, horny podcast, I've gotten into so many rants already. [laughs]

Alanna: I mean, the leading—the leading men were—weren't they Confederate soldiers?

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: Well yes, so David was a Confederate soldier—

Alanna: [laughing] So there's that.

LaToya: But he ran away 'cause he didn't agree with, you know, slavery. [laughs]

Ira: Oh...

LaToya: They never say the "s word" though. That's the thing, they never say it.

Ira: They always do that shit though, you know? Like, True Blood.

Alanna: Right.

Ira: Bill—[laughs]

Alanna: Bill!

Ira: His slave-owning ass.

LaToya: [laughing, simultaneously] Bill's Confederate ass. [laughter]

Alanna: He's in Louisiana. We know your truth. It does feel like—it does feel like Buffy never really dove as far as they could into like what it means to be a vampire who went through these different eras. Like, they do fun episodes where we get to see them in costume and we get to see flashes. But like, especially because they're white people, like, we just never really get to see what that means to them, to like, have moved through the world and like seen all of these different things. And I feel like that—it would be so much cooler to see a black vampire who has been through some shit.

LaToya: Yeah. And I guess part of it is the fact that they don't have souls—

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: So in theory, they don't care enough to be, like, really part of anything.

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: But like, that can—that's a crutch, honestly, that can only explain so much.

Ira: I would also say that, um...unfortunately, it also lends itself to just some sort of, just like, cultural tourism on the show, too.

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: 'Cause not with vampires, with Slayers. Obviously, Slayers all have to die, that's how you get a new one, right?

Alanna: Mmhmm.

Ira: But there's not just Kendra who is extremely competent as a Slayer, more so than Buffy. And somehow dies with this weird, like—

Alanna: [laughs] Yeah.

Ira: Hypnotizing thing that Dru does, which is so dumb. But I could see that through, like, an episode like Fool for Love, where they want to show different cultures and time periods. But it is unfortunate that Spike has killed two Slayers, [laughing] and one of them's a Chinese Slayer—

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: And one of them is Nikki, a black Slayer, in the 70s in New York. [laughs]

Alanna: Yeah. It makes their—'cause it's like, the argument, right, is that Buffy is different because she has family, which like, most Slayers don't. And so it's like—and like, the support system. But because they do that tourism where they just pop you—they use the guest—those guest spots to add people of color to their roster, and then all of those ones die. Then it's like, every Slayer who we—like, most of the Slayers who we see who don't make it are the black and brown ones.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: Are—because that—'cause they're using that tourism. And the ones who stick around are ones like Faith who are white. Like, Kendra doesn't even get—

Ira: Also, Nikki had a son.

Alanna: Yes, yes. Yes, had a son.

Ira: She had a son. And then also, there's the idea too that like...is Buffy the first Slayer to, like, buck tradition like this, ever? I doubt it.

Alanna: Exactly.

Ira: You know?

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: They must have tried. There's so—been so many. Like...somebody did it.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: Well, Nikki having a son, though. That suggests she's the first one, at least.

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: Mmhmm.

LaToya: And they don't get into that at all.

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: Yeah. Which—not talking about the Slayers, other—like, our first real, actual character who is black—besides, of course, Aphrodesia—can't forget about her—

Alanna: [laughs] Icon.

LaToya: Is Bianca Lawson as Kendra the vampire Slayer, in Season 2.

Ira: Mmhmm.

[Clip from "What's My Line (Part 2)" plays]

Kendra: I'm Kendra, the vampire Slayer. You can't stop me. Even if you kill me. Another Slayer will be sent to take my place.

Buffy: Could you stop with the Slayer thing? I'm the damn Slayer!

Kendra: Nonsense. There is but one. And I am she.

LaToya: When I started watching Buffy, I was like, obsessed with her. And like, that first Halloween, I dressed as Kendra, because—

Ira: Yes.

Alanna: I need pictures.

Ira: I mean—yeah. We need photos.

LaToya: I—they're somewhere. They're hidden somewhere, those pictures. But—

Ira: I mean...you dress a little like Kendra now, anyway.

LaToya: I do. [laughter] I do.

Ira: The—first of all, the—I mean, the accent is unfortunate.

Alanna: Oh my god. It really...it sticks. It sticks with you. [laughs]

Ira: Also. Also—

LaToya: It's not her fault.

Ira: Where is she—where is she from?

LaToya: I think we've been saying Jamaica—

Alanna: [simultaneously] Jamaica?

LaToya: Is what we landed on.

Ira: But I think it's just Jamaica because she's like, [heavy, bad Jamaican accent] "that's me shirt, man." But like—

Alanna: [laughs] 'Cause what else are you gonna say?

Ira: Where is she from? [laughter] We never meet—we never find out anything really about her Watcher.

Alanna: No.

Ira: We never find out anything about her culture, you know. And it's like, I would have loved to know, like, what kind of vampires she's slain over there in Jamaica.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: Right. Yeah.

Ira: That sounds like a hot show. [Alanna laughs]

LaToya: [chanting] "Jamaica, we got a Hellmouth team." [laughs]

Ira: Yeah. Yeah.

Alanna: It does sound like a good—

Ira: That sounds like—[laughs] that sounds like a hot show. I would watch that.

Alanna: Yeah. I would watch that too.

LaToya: I would too. I would love a Kendra the Vampire Slayer show, where all of a sudden, the accent, it just go—it goes. [Alanna laughs] 'Cause honestly, like, a Bianca Lawson the Vampire Slayer is actually an awesome show I would watch. [laughs]

Ira: Yeah. Well, I mean, they would probably just recast her, right? With an actual Jamaican?

Alanna: Oh—

LaToya: I don't think they would keep the accent at all.

Ira: Mm. Maybe. I mean, if she's from Jamaica—

LaToya: No one was cast—

Ira: You just cast a Jamaican and have it set there.

LaToya: No one was casting an actual Jamaican in the late 90s. [Alanna laughs]

Ira: No, I mean *now* if you're making the show.

Alanna: Right, right. If we're doing it now?

Ira: Now you would. Of course. I mean and listen, Bianca Lawson played teenagers for decades. [Alanna laughs] But I think she's finally, finally maybe too old now to play a teenager.

Alanna: In like—in her 20s. Yeah, yeah. [Ira laughs]

LaToya: She might go back just for—like, just to prove that she can.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: Also, if we're gonna do it now, Kendra will be played by Ruby Rose. So.

Alanna: Right. Yes.

Ira: Well, who will play her in the second season?

Alanna: Right, right. [laughter]

LaToya: Yeah. So Kendra fucking rocks. Love Kendra. She's competent. And like, obviously the story is that, well, she doesn't have friends, you know, family. So that's like the one hindrance, as opposed to Buffy who rocks it. Regardless, that doesn't mean she should have lost to Drusilla in a weird hypnotism slash, um...nail cut situation?

Alanna: Yeah, just a slice.

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: Which—and the fact that like, Drusilla never uses that hypnotism post, like, the Season 2 finale ever again—

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: Really pissed me off. A nail slash, you guys. She slashed—

Alanna: Just a nail slash.

LaToya: With a nail.

Alanna: Yeah. That death really feels like the moment in X-Men: First Class, is it? Where, like, the one black character, whose power is literally being—adapting to anything, being unkillable, is like, the first one to die in the big battle. It's like, Kendra's so competent and so much—and sometimes more trained than Buffy. Then like, *that's* how she goes out?

Ira: Well, it's unfortunate too because I mean, like, by Kendra's very nature, she's created as someone whose death creates story and emotional weight for a white character. You know?

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Alanna: I do—

Ira: And she's not really her own character in the way that like, Giles or Xander—

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: Or Cordelia, you know, or Willow were.

Alanna: Yeah. And I do have some bitterness—

Ira: Not even Jenny Calendar, you know?

LaToya: Yeah, not even Jenny Calendar.

Alanna: Yes. Even Jenny Calendar! And there's a lot of—yeah. [laughs] We'll get to the Jenny Calendar race issues too. But—[laughter] but yeah—

Ira: I mean, they throw the word "gypsy" around a lot. [laughs]

Alanna: Yeah, the way that Buffy treats Roma—

LaToya: [simultaneously] They love that word.

Alanna: Quote-on-quote "Roma" culture is—

Ira: [simultaneously] Cursed by gypsies. [laughs]

Alanna: Is wild.

LaToya: I will give Vampire Diaries some credit for when they had their season about that. They just really only called them "travelers" and I was [Alanna laughs] surprised that we were not just throwing the g-word around. [laughs]

Alanna: [laughs] Yeah. Yeah.

Ira: Yes. Yes. Sorry, Stevie Nicks. [laughter]

Alanna: Sorry—apologies to Stevie Nicks. Yeah. I am like—I do have some bitterness. I—Faith is one of my favorite characters on that show, like, and maybe ever. But I do have some bitterness that it's like—that Kendra basically died...and made room for Faith to come in.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: And like—and Faith got one of the—in my opinion, one of the coolest arcs.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: She goes from hero to villain, back to hero. Like, that's so fucking cool. And that Kendra never got, like, even a shadow of that type of being her own character. And even—even just like—being one of the friends. Being—

Ira: She's comic relief.

Alanna: Yeah, her own—her own person.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: Like, I wish that she had gotten that. Especially like—I was just saying—I was saying this a little earlier. I didn't learn until yesterday that Bianca Lawson was originally cast as Cordelia and couldn't do it 'cause of a project. And I'm just like, imagine if that—if that had been baked into Buffy from the beginning.

Ira: *Was* she?

Alanna: That's—that's what I hear.

Ira: Oh, that's—that be hot tea.

Alanna: Right? [laughs]

LaToya: Charisma is great. Like, we love Charisma.

Ira: [simultaneously] I mean, I love—I mean, I do love Charisma.

Alanna: I love Charisma.

LaToya: But like, Bianca would have been amazing in the role as well.

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: And like, imagine like—it would just—it would have been a different show. If Cordelia Chase was a black woman.

LaToya: Well, I'm now imagining Angel starring Bianca Lawson and I'm, like, losing my mind. [laughter]

Ira: Ugh, but now I'm imagining Xander making out with Bianca Lawson.

Alanna: Oh, yeah. She doesn't deserve that. [laughter]

Ira: We're gonna—I mean, a pass on that one. [laughs]

LaToya: Well, no. If it's Bianca Lawson, they create a real Buffy/Angel/Cordelia love triangle. That's what happens. They're like, she—

Alanna: Yeah, yeah, yeah. The whole series could have been different 'cause it's—like, this different actor with such a different energy.

LaToya: Yeah. They're like, she's too hot for Xander, we can't allow it. [laughs]

Alanna: Yeah. I'm gonna write a lot of these fanfics and I'll get them to you as soon as I can.

LaToya: Please—please do.

Ira: Fanfics. [Alanna laughs] Child! If I ever scour the internet to find my Buffy fanfic—

Alanna: Yes! [LaToya laughs]

Ira: Do not let the world find it! [laughter]

Alanna: Just tell us one username.

LaToya: We're gonna do a special reading of your fanfic, Ira.

Ira: Ooh. I do not want to find it at all. And then I feel like I spun off my fanfic into, like, an original web series.

Alanna: Yes. You have to.

Ira: Yeah, I did. I did. It was a prose web series that I wrote for ten years.

Alanna: Amazing.

LaToya: [laughing] Oh my god, Ira.

Ira: Yeah, we're not talking about it.

Alanna: This is iconic. [laughter]

LaToya: We are talking about this and you need to find it immediately! [laughter]

Ira: Uh. Also, just a side note on Buffy fanfic, one of the wildest fanfic moments was—I remember someone wrote a Buffy/Giles fanfic.

LaToya: No!

Ira: That was like...

Alanna: [defeatedly] Oh!

Ira: Adult. Um. And my mom definitely found it on my computer and was like, "What is *this*?" [laughter]

LaToya: [laughing] I don't like it!

Alanna: Yeah. You need to erase that.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: So we briefly talked about Mr. Trick. But I do wonder—so when Mr. Trick is introduced, it kind of seemed like he'll be a big player in the season. I don't

remember even though, if like, anyone at the time really believed that he would be a bigger player. Because, like, in theory, if you're watching—like, if this show happened now with Mr. Trick, of course you'd be like, he's gonna be a big player, and possibly he will. At the time, do you think anyone thought it was gonna be the case or are they like, oh, he's just some black guy on the show, he won't be for long.

Ira: Yeah. I mean, here's the thing. People always try to, like, maybe insinuate that he could have been a bigger bad, in the sense that like, they always sort of introduce a lesser bigger bad and then the regular one is revealed. But I never really thought that, like, Buffy was gonna be going up against him in the finale, right?

LaToya: Mm. Like, she would have had to go against, like, racial injustice and systemic oppression if he was actually the big bad. And I don't know if Buffy Summers could have handled that.

Alanna: She wasn't ready.

Ira: No.

Alanna: No.

LaToya: Xander over here saying "blue lives matter." [laughter]

Alanna: Ugh, god.

Ira: Xander would say "blue lives matter."

LaToya: Xander—god.

Ira: TBH.

LaToya: We're not gonna keep this part in, but obviously, Xander said "blue lives matter." [laughs]

Ira: We might!

Alanna: I mean, the world needs to know.

Ira: We might! Okay!

LaToya: I don't—I feel like Buffering has had enough people who are pro-Xander attacking them. I don't wanna—

Alanna: Oh, okay.

LaToya: Add to that. [Alanna laughs] Every Buffy podcast has pro-Xander people getting so upset with them. I don't wanna, like, add to that.

Ira: Listen. If people—if people got a problem with me not liking Xander, they can come find me. [Alanna laughs] Okay? They can come find *me* and *I'll* deal with it.

Alanna: I just feel like everybody—

Ira: Fuck Xander.

Alanna: [simultaneously] All of the women in his life have to spend so much energy— [laughter] teaching him.

Ira: Fuck Xander! [laughter] The best thing Anya did was fuck Spike. Okay?

Alanna: Listen! [laughter] She had to do it. He earned that.

Ira: And that's on period. [laughs]

Alanna: Yeah, that breakup episode—that's one of the—

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: The—most painful breakup episodes.

Ira: He's trash!

LaToya: Xander's 100% trash in that episode, he's just gonna—

Alanna: Oh my god.

Ira: He's trash! Okay?

Alanna: Ugh!

Ira: That's on period! [laughs]

Alanna: It hurts my heart just thinking about it.

Ira: Okay?

Alanna: Xander! [crosstalk]

Ira: Entropy is that—Entropy is—Entropy is that girl of an episode. [Alanna laughs]

LaToya: It is *not* that girl of an episode 'cause it's in Season 6, but. [laughs]

Ira: You know that's my favorite season.

Alanna: I love Season 6.

LaToya: I know and I can't agree with it. [Ira laughs]

Alanna: I love it so much. I'm also a Season 6 stan.

Ira: Yes, it's for the—it's for the *adults*.

Alanna: Exactly!

Ira: LaToya. Okay? [LaToya laughs]

Alanna: Depression! Give me a whole season of depression allegory.

LaToya: [simultaneously] Well! How did we just turn this around on me?

Ira: Okay? Buffy Season 6 is for, um, Zoloft highs. Okay? [laughs]

Alanna: It's for the very sad adults, who are having a bad time.

LaToya: [simultaneously] I love a depression story, Alanna. That's why I love Season 4 of Everwood. Season 6 of Buffy is not that girl. [laughter] Season 3 also has one more black person, which is the guidance counselor, played by Phill Lewis—

Alanna: Oh!

LaToya: In Beauty and the Beasts. And he's immediately murdered by toxic masculinity, so. [laughter] That's what you get for trying to help the white girl, man.

Alanna: [laughs] Can't put yourself in their—in their business. [LaToya laughs]

Ira: Truly the theme of Buffy is like, honestly, stay out of white people's business.

LaToya: Truly!

Alanna: [laughs] Yeah. Just walk away.

Ira: They are—

Alanna: Go home, get in your car, lock the door and drive away.

Ira: Remember that—remember that—like, the black girl who was, um...oh, that's where I know this girl from. Sorry, this black girl—

Alanna: [laughs] Epiphanies.

Ira: Sorry, this black girl who was stanning Jonathan in Superstar and then got beat up?

LaToya: Oh, Karen with a K?

Ira: Yes! [Alanna laughs] She—I've met—I met her in LA and I remember her because she was also in The New Ghostwriter Mysteries. [LaToya and Alanna laugh] I'm finally piecing together that that's also who she played. Anyway, sorry. [laughter]

LaToya: Jesus Christ. [laughter] We've reached, like, full black nerd power. [laughter]

Alanna: Yes. If we got like a red string murder board, connecting the dots.

Ira: The only way I would honestly buy it is if, like, black people just like, did not live in Sunnydale.

LaToya: I mean...it makes sense—

Ira: If they're like, we're getting up out of *here*. But also, like, it sort of maybe doesn't make sense, because like, the property values would probably be lower for, like, Sunnydale because of all the murder and stuff.

Alanna: Right. So much murder.

Ira: And there would probably be more people of color living in Sunnydale.

Alanna: Mmhmm.

LaToya: I mean, yeah.

Alanna: White flight from the vampires!

Ira: Yes. Right? There'd be white flight from Sunnydale. Okay?

Alanna: I think we found our reboot.

Ira: There should really be all black people up in Sunnydale.

Alanna: I think we found our revival.

LaToya: "It's against my civil rights not to be killed by a vampire. So—[laughter] I'm staying here." Whereas black people are like, I'm not gonna live here with fucking vampires.

Alanna: That's true.

LaToya: I'm sure that after Aphrodesia found that, like, dead body in her locker, her parents were like, we're moving. [laughter]

Ira: Right. I mean, listen. Just really—this is just my argument that Buffy should be a black show.

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: Because you're leading me to believe that the police don't care about white people turning up dead every day in Sunnydale? [LaToya laughs]

Alanna: Right.

Ira: Come on. [Alanna laughs] Come on! These white girls going missing, they'd be like, I don't *think* so! [laughter]

Alanna: Yeah like, the FBI would be involved in a week.

Ira: Right? Vampire task force, okay? [laughs]

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: Seriously. FBI got like—it's a media circus, fucking every week.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: Honestly. [laughs]

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: And that's the show.

Ira: Yeah. But if it's black people and other people of color, um—

Alanna: Right.

Ira: Turning up dead all the time, who cares?

LaToya: Mmhmm. Exactly.

Alanna: That's where Buffy comes in. Or Kendra.

Ira: Yes. Yes.

LaToya: Hey Joss, uh, let us fix your show for you. [laughs]

Ira: Yeah. You know who wouldn't care? Xander, 'cause he's—

Alanna: [laughing] Xander would not care.

Ira: 'Cause he thinks all lives matter. I'm kidding. [laughter] I'm gonna stop dragging Xander. [laughter]

LaToya: Let's not—yeah, let's not go too deep in this "All Lives Matter Xander Harris." [Alanna laughs] But then—

Ira: I will say that the way he treated the women in his life—

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: Was probably symptomatic of the abuse that he got from his father, but anyway. Abuse begets abuse.

Alanna: That is true.

LaToya: Yes.

Ira: Continue! [laughter]

LaToya: There are a lot of issues that Xander has that are based on the life that he had, but also a lot of things that are just him being a bad guy. [laughs]

Ira: I also just don't trust anybody—

Alanna: And just all of Joss Whedon's worst instincts. About himself.

Ira: Yes. True. [crosstalk] Joss's worst instincts. I also don't trust any man that sleeps on a water bed.

Alanna: [laughs] Yes.

LaToya: I mean, honestly—

Alanna: Unstable. Like, no one's back can handle that.

LaToya: When I was a kid, my parents had a water bed and my dad ain't shit so there you go. [laughter]

Ira: Right.

LaToya: It's correct. [laughs]

Alanna: Proof!

Ira: A water bed, we know his and Anya's sex was bad. Anyway, continue.

Alanna: [laughs] Yes. [Ira laughs] She tried her best.

LaToya: So! We've—we've lost Mr. Trick. We've lost Kendra.

Alanna: RIP.

LaToya: We have extras who are black sometimes, maybe. They have bad hair, who knows what's going on. Then Season 4 gives us Leonard Roberts' Forrest, who is very much an antagonist. And we have the First Slayer, who does not even have a name, and we learn it later, basically, which is Sineya.

Ira: Mm.

LaToya: And then we have also Olivia—

Ira: I loved her in—

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: Love & Basketball. [laughter] Sanaa Lathan. [laughter]

LaToya: I loved her when she bit Beyonce. Loved her when she bit Beyonce. [laughter] And then we also have Olivia, Giles' fuck buddy.

Ira: Mm!

Alanna: Olivia's my favorite of that bunch.

LaToya: Olivia fucking rocks.

Ira: She is so cool.

Alanna: She's a hot lady. I want that spinoff.

Ira: She's so cool, so sexy. I was like, is she a black playwright? British, I don't know—

Alanna: Right.

Ira: But she—we deserved more Olivia.

Alanna: We deserved so much more Olivia and Giles makes sense as the only one in that show who, like, would properly fuck a black person. [laughs]

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: That sensual man.

Ira: Ones on Buffy, I guess.

Alanna: Sing to her. [LaToya laughs]

Ira: Oh wait, does Buffy ever sleep with—Woodside?

LaToya: I don't think she—she does not sleep with Woodside—

Ira: Faith does.

LaToya: Faith does, 'cause—

Alanna: Faith does. Faith would also.

LaToya: Faith, by Season 7—Faith—when they move her back to Buffy, they're like, "what does she talk like? I don't know. A black person?" And that's how they write her. [laughter]

Ira: Okay, yeah, I mean.

Alanna: [laughs] Yes. A read.

Ira: When Faith came back, she was jive-talking. [laughter]

Alanna: Yes! She's like, "I went to prison—"

LaToya: "She got mad skills, yo!"

Alanna: "Here I am."

Ira: [laughing] Yes!

LaToya: I talk about that all the time.

Alanna: [laughing] Oh my god.

LaToya: Being like, it's insane what's happening. [laughter]

Alanna: What direction did she get? I need to know.

LaToya: "Black it up." That was the direction. [laughs]

Ira: Yeah. Black it up. She was hood. She was from—I mean, she was from—was she from Boston or Baltimore?

Alanna: Boston.

LaToya: Like South Boston, yeah, yeah.

Ira: South Bos—yeah. Southie.

LaToya: She's Southie, but like—

Ira: Southie.

LaToya: They literally—they're like, "I guess we won't watch what's happening on Angel Season 4. So how's she talking now? Black."

Ira: Yeah. [laughter] Um. But speaking of these other Season 4 characters aside from Olivia, I actually sort of get it. I know that we're supposed to hate Forrest, and he is annoying 'cause he's an antagonist. But also, like...Buffy is uppity. [laughter] You know?

Alanna: You have to call it out. Someone has to say it.

LaToya: We can say it. We can say it.

Ira: She is constantly—she is—she is rude. [laughter] And that's why she gets called out in Season 7 by her friends. Like, she is *rude*!

Alanna: And she's getting in the way!

Ira: And if I were Forrest, I would not like her either.

LaToya: Yeah. In Buffy's mind, she's the center of the universe and all of her friends enable that, which is—that's just the truth. And Forrest is like, no thank you. Which—also, I think that like, a thing people never talk about is, whether you like Forrest or not, Leonard Roberts' performance as Forrest is fucking great. Also.

Ira: He's great.

Alanna: He's solid.

LaToya: He's really good in this role. No one ever talks about that.

Alanna: Arguably better than what Riley was doing.

LaToya: Oh, 100% better than what Riley was doing.

Ira: Child! If he was Riley—

LaToya: And Marc Blucas would agree with you.

Alanna: Oh, if he was Riley!

LaToya: Oh my god.

Alanna: Imagine.

LaToya: Leonard Roberts as Riley, uh, I'd be very much into Riley. [laughs]

Ira: But you know—

Alanna: Just swap that casting.

Ira: Girl. The WB in 2000 was not having Buffy—

Alanna: They were not ready.

Ira: Fucking no black man like that. Can you imagine Where the Wild Things Are—

Alanna: Oh my god, that entire episode.

Ira: If Riley was black? [laughter]

Alanna: That would have started a little bit of a race skirmish. [laughter]

LaToya: Yeah. The fandom was already trashed about Riley, but imagine fandom as—like, being trashed about Leonard Roberts as Riley.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: Jesus. Oof.

Alanna: Ooh.

LaToya: Oof.

Ira: But yeah, he—I mean, he was sort of right. You know?

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: Buffy was—was rude and like, self-involved. [laughs]

LaToya: And in the way.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: Like, he's a military man and that's what they all are. And even programmed a certain way.

Ira: Also, his death is inappropriate. I hate his death.

LaToya: It's one of those things where, again, the black person is—who, by all accounts, is very competent. Like, they die in the most stupid possible way. Just like...no. It—'cause it's hubris. Which of course, Forrest has hubris, but like, he's not an idiot. He—he knows—he's qualified. And I guess that's also why Kendra dies too, in a way. Which is—come on.

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: They know what they're doing. Like, at least make it cool.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: Like, come on. Like, make it bad ass if you're gonna do it.

Alanna: It feels so much the trope of like...the uber-confident black person who was always throw—it feels like it's connected in some way to even just, like, the trend of like, black therapists of white characters.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: And like, even—I mean, we had a black—we had multiple black principals and guidance counselors and stuff like that in the show. And very much the—yeah, we're gonna say that they're good at things and in a position of technical power. But not actually give them anything character-wise that gives them power in our story.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: It's like—it's just the—it's just pretending to give them a place of power and authority, without actually having to give them anything.

LaToya: Mm.

Ira: And no shade. Like, the very competent black people who end up getting killed, right? You know, it's like, we—the show constantly rewards the sloppy white people!

Alanna: [laughing] Right.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Ira: I mean. The—we—I've said before that like, Checkpoint's like my favorite episode. But also, like...was the Watcher's Council wrong?

Alanna: Right.

Ira: [laughs] About Buffy patrolling with these civilians? [laughter]

LaToya: They really, really weren't.

Ira: And just generally being messy. [laughs]

Alanna: Right. It's like, maybe like, the white dudes are not the best? But like, somebody—it's like—it goes back to the Marvel Civil War debate of like, does somebody need to be checking these people? Does someone need to be held accountable?

Ira: Yeah. Like the police, you know? Like checks and balances.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Alanna: Yeah. Somebody. You can just...hurt people. You can just kill people.

Ira: Yeah. Who watches the Watchers? Slayer.

LaToya: Shut up, Zack Snyder. [laughter]

Alanna: [laughing] Get outta here. [laughter]

LaToya: So let's talk about the First Slayer real quick, before we get into all the racism—

Ira: Hate her.

LaToya: That came with Buffy and Robin Wood. [laughs]

Ira: Hate her. Hate her. Hate her. Um. Hate even more that—um, what, Season 7, they're just like, "oh. She's magically raped into being the Slayer."

Alanna: Oh god. There's—there's too much—there's too much rape in the last two seasons of Buffy. I'm just gonna throw that out there. [laughter]

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: Unnecessary.

LaToya: We keep saying we want, like, more things. Like, maybe we don't need more black people on this show. [laughs]

Alanna: 'Cause then it's like—

LaToya: Don't need more sex, at all. [laughter] Maybe like, don't let them allow that to ever happen.

Alanna: Right.

Ira: Yeah. So basically, she's like—I think there's a lot of talk about how, like, the Slayer is subjugated by these men. And it's basically, like, upholding the patriarchy, like, the line of Slayers, you know. But there's not a lot of talk about, like, the first person they do that to is like... a black woman. You know?

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: I mean, our introduction is basically—to this character, in Restless, is—you know, it's primal. We know that.

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: And we know that shampoo commercial Sarah Michelle Gellar is, uh, basically calling her hair nappy. So we have that.

Ira: Yes!

Alanna: Oh my god, I forgot that.

LaToya: Yup. [inaudible] Yup.

Ira: Yes. So. Whew! When they gonna pull that episode? [laughter]

LaToya: I mean, we could go on about pulling episodes, 'cause Jesus Christ, it's so fucking stupid.

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: [laughs] Pull The Killer in Me. Just 'cause it sucks. [laughter]

LaToya: Please! [laughter]

Alanna: It does feel like there's, like—there is a trend with the way that the show deals with specific—like, black and brown women with the—like, the chosen Slayer powers. Like, doesn't Angel also do an episode where, like, the woman wakes up after...I think also sexual assault? And is super—

LaToya: It's what—yeah, what's-her-name from The OC.

Alanna: Oh, yeah.

LaToya: Theresa from The OC.

Alanna: Oh, yeah.

Ira: Mm! Yes.

Alanna: But yeah, it's like—and then she also has—goes like, kind of...quote-on-quote "primitive" with her, like—with the way that she responds to having this power. And why is it that that's how the First Slayer is, that's how this woman is.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: That's how, I think, multiple others—even just in terms of not the Slayer powers, but in general, powered women like Ampata. And any of the murderous women of color who go for Xander throughout the show, which is many. Like, why is it—

Ira: Ashanti.

Alanna: Yeah, Ashanti. [laughter] Ashanti, exactly.

LaToya: [sings] Oh baby!

Alanna: Like, why is it that that's how women of color are—react to power in this show, is by going quote-on-quote—

Ira: Which is also funny, thinking of Ashanti, by the way.

Alanna: [laughing] Yeah.

Ira: 'Cause like, Ashanti is clearly, like, a UPN casting thing, right? And it's like—

LaToya: Oh, 100%.

Ira: And it's like, it's just funny that like, you talk about that The WB wanted to be very white at the time. And like, of course they weren't, like, putting any diverse people onto like, Buffy. You know?

LaToya: Yeah, like, Bianca was like the black person they put on shows.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: She was recurring on Dawson's Creek as well.

Alanna: Yeah, Dawson's Creek. Yeah.

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: Yes. Yes, yes. A large part of this too is just...something we can speak to as writers. There are none. [laughs] Of—there are no black writers and no writers of color—

Alanna: Right. None!

Ira: On Buffy, except for Diego Gutierrez who writes Normal Again. And he was Joss's assistant—

LaToya: And he was—yeah.

Ira: Who was given a script and...I think we can all guess how much of that episode was actually written [laughing] by him in the final cut.

LaToya: Right.

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: He was given a script that, because of what it was, he gets probably a lot of hate. Despite the fact that he probably did not—in the final cut—

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: Probably a lot of not him. [laughs]

Alanna: Yeah, that's not fair.

Ira: I like Normal Again!

LaToya: I like it. People—

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: *Hate* Normal Again. I'm like—'cause people get so upset with it—

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: And the implications of what it means at the end. And people get *furious* with it and it's like, come on. [Alanna laughs] It's just like any other, like, "we're in a mental hospital" episode. Like, Charmed did it! Charmed did an episode, it's fine.

Alanna: Yeah! Classic. Charmed also did it. Charmed had animated butterflies in theirs. [laughs]

Ira: It's also just unfortunate too because, you know, like, you would think someone like that, who was in the Buffy camp, you know, would continue to be maybe on some, like, Joss shows or would blow up the way some of the other people were able to.

Alanna: Right. Promoted.

Ira: And Diego, you know, went from that to...well, he had a good career. You know, he went to Dawson's Creek for two episodes.

Alanna: Mmhmm.

Ira: Um, Kingpin. Do we all remember Kingpin? 2003?

LaToya: [laughs] Yes.

Ira: That series? He was on Judging Amy, The Shield, Without a Trace, V, and then created the series Monarca last year.

Alanna: Okay. He went on. But also, yeah, it's like, why not promote him, Joss?

LaToya: [simultaneously] The showrunner from like, the—From Dusk Till Dawn TV show.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: Yeah, he's like, working a lot on El Rey and he's working with, like, Rodriguez and everything. That's what he's doing now.

Ira: Yeah. You know, but it was like, you had a writer of color in your camp. And you know, like—

Alanna: Mmhmm. Yeah—

Ira: It's just—yeah, it's just wild that he didn't go on to continue with any Mutant Enemy stuff.

Alanna: Yeah. It really remind—

LaToya: It says a lot.

Alanna: It makes me think about how—I think a lot of—I think white people, especially historically, have very much painted whiteness as the default, as like, automatic, as like—it's the easy thing to do and everything else is like hard, to find people. But it's like, it is—it is so active. It is like—I hear that no people of color were in the writer's room for Buffy ever. For a show that lasted seven seasons. And like, that's impressive to me in a terrible way, of like, that actually takes effort to not know anybody or consider anybody—

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: To join your ranks. It, like—you are actively gatekeeping if that is the case.

LaToya: Mmhmm. It's crazy. Like, I know all three of us—we could probably write a Buffy episode in our sleep, honestly. [laughter]

Alanna: We probably have! [laughter]

LaToya: Right? Exactly. We know Ira has his fanfic, so.

Alanna: Right, exactly. We will find it.

Ira: Allegedly.

Alanna: [laughing] Allegedly. [laughter] All of those seasons?

LaToya: Yeah. All of them, and also for Angel, as well. I checked.

Alanna: Two shows! With two different showrunners.

LaToya: I made sure to check both the shows. I did—

Ira: Well, do we remember Angel's race episode?

LaToya: [laughing] Which one?

Ira: Are You Now or Have You Ever Been?

LaToya: Oh, I—'cause there's also the Gunn-focused episodes too, so. [laughs]

Ira: Oh, well yes. The first one with the—the black woman who passes white? [laughs]

LaToya: Well, that would be the second one 'cause the first one—the first one would have been the first Gunn episode, so that would have been the second one.

Ira: Oh, that's right. He was in Season 1, right?

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: The less said about that episode too, the better, you know? I mean, just getting over to Angel, it's like, Gunn's introduction is *completely* a mess. Like, this hood vampire Slayer from like, LA.

LaToya: Which—in theory, like, it makes sense. Like, it's a good character to have. 'Cause we even discuss like how—

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: Sunnydale should be, like, predominantly people of color and like, the cops won't care at all. And that's a good story to have.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: But again, you have only exclusively white people creating this story for this character.

Ira: I talked about, um, Gunn's introductory episode actually when I guested on Angel on Top.

Alanna: Ooh.

Ira: And I had a lot to say, yes, about the depiction of, you know, black people, brown people, in Los Angeles. And how it seemed like a way to introduce them and then just sort of—forgot that they existed in Los Angeles after that episode.
[laughter]

Alanna: They're only in that episode.

Ira: You know?

Alanna: They all went into—they all went home.

Ira: And it was—

LaToya: Yeah. Gunn had his white friends, and every so often, his black friends would be like, "You have your white friends now. We don't like that." And Gunn wouldn't care. [laughs]

Ira: Yeah. That Old Gang of Mine, Season 3, when they come back. [laughs]

LaToya: Yeah. They're like, "we have guns now."

Ira: Yeah. And then he becomes "corporate black person" in Season 5, right?

Alanna: Right.

Ira: And—

Alanna: Everything gets fucked up.

LaToya: And then J. August Richards played, like, lawyers exclusively for like, the next five years. [laughs]

Ira: Well, that's also another weird thing too, right? And like, the power that, like, Gunn gets in Season 5 is like...really smart.

Alanna: Right. You have to be gifted—yeah.

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: You have to be gifted knowledge.

Ira: Yeah. I don't know, child.

LaToya: Season 5 has a lot of just, uh, self-loathing Gunn.

Alanna: [laughs] Mess.

LaToya: Which I guess it was technically always there with the character. But, uh...I mean, I think—

Alanna: Yeah. But specifically around, like, being educated.

LaToya: Yeah. I feel like, in a way, Gunn was well serve—especially compared to everyone we're talking about. And like, J. August Richards got to do a lot of great stuff as Gunn. But like, my issues with Gunn are just like, kind of—a lot of it is with the way that the fandom talks about the character.

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: I was like—I mentioned, like, in our outline, basically how like, I have a bunch of Buffy/Angel books, just essays on this. And like literally, the Angel book has an essay for every character, even Lindsey, but not Gunn.

Alanna: Oh!

Ira: Oh.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: Trash.

Ira: My whole thing about Gunn was just basically, you know, the same thing of what I said about Sunnydale. You know, it's like, we learn in the Gunn episode that vampires are preying on communities of color and like poor people in Los Angeles, you know. And it's just weird that like, we never see them again, really—

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Ira: In the series, 'cause that's where vampires would be feeding and demons would be feeding off people, you know? The people in society that the media and, like, the police communities wouldn't care about.

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: And what's the point of having your show set in Los Angeles? It's the same thing as like, all the shows set in New York that are just white people. Like, what is the point—

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Alanna: If you're not gonna show...

Ira: Did Angel have only white writers too?

LaToya: Yes. They both only had white writers.

Ira: Yes. Yeah, like—

LaToya: Yeah, literally of the two shows—

Ira: A black cast member—

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: And you have no one—

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: Writing for them.

LaToya: Literally of the two shows, Diego was the only person of color, and he wrote Normal Again and that's it.

Alanna: Oh my god.

Ira: That is shameful.

Alanna: [laughing] Jesus Christ.

LaToya: It is, yeah.

Ira: Shameful.

LaToya: In general, with the fandom especially, it always drove me crazy, like, the way people would talk about Gunn and Fred. Like, even if you don't ship Gunn and Fred, it was always—they talked about how—

Ira: I don't. [laughter]

LaToya: It's okay. It's okay.

Alanna: Who does?

Ira: [laughs] I shipped Gunn and Cordelia.

Alanna: Ooh.

LaToya: I like that, actually. I can get down with that. But the issue was always that—with Gunn and Fred—is like, how they didn't make sense but how, you know, Fred and Wesley, of course, made sense. And like, I couldn't—I could never see the way they made sense other than the fact that, you know, Wesley wanted her quote-on-quote "first." [laughs] But it was—there was always, like, a coded discussion, it seemed, when it was talking about how Gunn and Fred didn't seem to work. Which like, I feel like they kinda get each other. And like, the reasons he liked her made sense to me, but—

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: You know, Wesley wanted her so obviously Gunn's wrong.

Alanna: Yeah. I've definitely witnessed those types of coded fandom conversations—

LaToya: Oh yeah.

Alanna: Around one black person in a love triangle. And somehow that person's always the most hated one in the love triangle.

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: No matter what they do, just because they're the obstacle.

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: Again, with Buffy, the Robin Wood of it all, basically. [laughs]

Alanna: Yes.

LaToya: Robin Wood had very much reason—[inaudible] to hate Spike—

Alanna: Yeah!

LaToya: But he was the bad guy, somehow.

Alanna: Robin Wood was right and he should say it! [laughter]

LaToya: Yes. Little D.B. Woodside was right!

Ira: I'm a huge—

Alanna: He murdered people for hundreds of years! [laughs] Maybe some—

Ira: I'm a huge Buffy and Spike fan.

Alanna: Me too.

Ira: But I will say that, um, the show fumbles it then because—

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: Like, the relationship was irrevocably changed after Seeing Red.

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: And unfortunately, the show doesn't follow through on that!

Alanna: It does not!

LaToya: That's my problem with it.

Ira: If it followed through on that, like...if she killed him in Season 6?

Alanna: Right. It's an incredible end.

Ira: It's perfect. You know?

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: But I also just think the rape never should have happened.

LaToya: But yeah, this is also part of why—

Ira: If they weren't gonna deal with it. At all.

Alanna: Yeah. Exactly. Exactly.

Ira: The attempted rape would never happen if they weren't gonna deal with it.

LaToya: This is part of why I can't stand Season 5 of Angel as much—like, people love Season 5 of Angel. But I'm just like, this motherfucker's crackin' jokes. He should be like, in agony over attempting to rape Buffy.

Alanna: Right.

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: Yeah, that is a storyline that, like, they never—

LaToya: He's cracking jokes about how much Buffy loves him. Like, shut the fuck up.

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: And the misdirect too, at the end of Season 6, with "gonna get that bitch what she deserves." Like, and it's the soul?

Alanna: Yes.

LaToya: Ugh. I hate that so much. I hate that.

Ira: Like, it's just—it's so dumb. It's do dumb. And then you create Robin Wood. [laughs] Who is just basically another person for the fandom to be upset with, right?

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: You know, because he is, um...the interloper.

LaToya: Right.

Ira: In Buffy and Spike's romance. And looking back, I think a lot of the episodes—some of the episodes and him were like unfairly maligned, to be honest. Like, I don't think Lies My Parents Told Me are as bad as people wanna try and pretend it is.

Alanna: No.

Ira: You know? I think that—

Alanna: Right.

Ira: It highlights him a lot. And I think he did well with the—

Alanna: Yeah. His performance was solid.

Ira: Character.

Alanna: And also it's like—I feel like, especially after Fool For Love, like, the Nikki Wood fight scene on the subway. It ends badly, but it's like—that's one of the coolest fight sequences, in my opinion. Like, the costumes, the look, like, everything. Nikki Wood is such an interesting character and it feels like we—like, Buffy owed us...some sort of payoff to it. And like, I like that they brought him in as a character. Like, remnants of a past Slayer in a real emotional way, because so often we don't get that with this show.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: We just reference them once. But there's no real repercussions. And I think it was so important for Spike's character and for Buffy's character and

everybody to see the emotional repercussions of that. And I wish that the show and the fandom had been more receptive to the good points that that has—

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: Of, you know, maybe he doesn't deserve to keep going.

LaToya: Yeah. The Nikki Wood/Robin Wood stuff, it's very—contemporary storytelling. Like, the kind of thing we would see, like, now in a show. Which I guess is probably why I prefer Angel. And just like—a lot of Angel, I feel like is what we would see in television now, as opposed to like—just the storytelling devices they do for Buffy are kinda dated. But like, setting that up and deciding hey, we should bring in, you know, Nikki Wood's son as a character, I think that's something you would see today.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: And he's hot!

LaToya: He is. D.B. Woodside is a very attractive man.

Ira: Hoo! A man! Okay?

Alanna: [laughs] Yes!

LaToya: Stream Lucifer on Netflix, guys.

Ira: Is he?

LaToya: He's on Lucifer, yeah. He's Lucifer's brother.

Ira: Oh, I ain't got time for that. Um. [laughter]

LaToya: You got time for it. You got time for it. [laughs]

Ira: I ain't got time to watch no—I ain't got time to watch no Lucifer. [laughter]

LaToya: Watch some Lucifer, Ira. You—what are you watching right now, by the way, Ira? [laughs]

Ira: Riverdale and Dynasty. [LaToya bursts out laughing]

Alanna: You know. Can't fault it.

LaToya: You—you're gonna give Lucifer shit? [laughs]

Ira: White teens. [laughter]

Alanna: I'm watching The OC, so. [laughs]

LaToya: Well good, yeah. The good white teens.

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: So let's see. Season 7.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: We're talking Season 7 more. It brought us the Potentials, you guys. And they were all diverse with their terrible accents.

Ira: Girl. [Alanna laughs] This is—this is maybe the—one of the series' worst offenses. 'Cause not only are the Potentials some of the worst characters who've ever been on the show—Kennedy. [LaToya laughs] But the—like, the black character—whose name I don't even fucking remember.

LaToya: You talking about Rona?

Ira: Yes, Rona. I don't even remember her name, [laughter] all I know is that she constantly wore overalls. [laughter]

LaToya: She did.

Ira: And the Asian Slayer who was—

LaToya: Oh—

Ira: It was just basically a joke that she didn't speak English.

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: The one that as a kid, I knew was very offensive. [laughs]

Ira: Yes!

LaToya: It was not funny.

Ira: Like, come on!

Alanna: Right, like, there's the racism that in 2003, maybe we didn't see as racism as much. And then there's the racism where you're always like, uh? Like, all the magic stuff with the—with the—Angel's curse and like, Roma stuff. I didn't know in the 90s that that was a problem.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: [laughing] But I know that the person who can't speak English and is just a joke is a problem.

LaToya: Yeah. Very much, you're like, um, this doesn't seem right but they keep doing it.

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: And I don't know why.

Alanna: Also, Miranda from Lizzie McGuire. [inaudible] She was on there.

LaToya: Lalaine? Talking about Lalaine?

Alanna: Lalaine.

Ira: Oh, she—she is a Potential.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: She is. Thankfully not doing a fake British accent, unlike Courtnee Draper of The Jersey fame. [laughter]

Ira: And who's that, like, tall Anne of Green Gables?

Alanna: Is that Felicia Day? No?

Ira: Huh?

LaToya: The one from Freaks and Geeks?

Ira: Yeah, that really tall girl.

Alanna: Oh, yes! Her! [laughter] Yes.

Ira: Face it—

Alanna: Anne of Green Gables, she really is. [laughter]

Ira: Face it. You're the tall girl. [laughter]

Alanna: Yes!

Ira: Yeah, but that's just an assortment, right, of like—

Alanna: Yeah. [crosstalk] of Slayers.

Ira: Obviously, they were like, we can do diverse casting because, like, it's a bunch of new characters. But then, like...there's—they're all from different cultures and there's no way that you dive into any of them whatsoever.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: No.

LaToya: None of them are real characters and it—

Ira: Did Rona even have a convo with Principal Wood? Like, ever? Like, did these two black characters ever talk?

LaToya: [simultaneously] Who was having conversations with Principal Wood?
[laughs]

Alanna: No, they—do they ever talk?

Ira: Do these two black characters ever talk?

LaToya: I mean, Faith talked to Principal Wood, so that's *like* two black characters talking. [laughter]

Alanna: [laughs] Oh, no.

LaToya: [laughs] But like, Jesus Christ. The stereotypes. They're like, we can do diversity, we're on UPN now. And this is what we get. Which of course leads to the

worst scene in the history of this entire show, which is Xander's sex dream about the Potentials in Dirty Girls, with Rachel Bilson before she saved herself and went to The OC. And Dania Ramírez doing another accent because they love giving Dania Ramírez an accent in basically everything she's in. So. [laughs]

Alanna: Yeah. Maybe it's—

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: Maybe it was foreshadowing for—for Xander and Dawn in the comics. They were just getting ready.

LaToya: Oh! [laughing] No!

Alanna: Preparing us.

LaToya: [laughing] "Getting ready," I don't like that at all.

Ira: No.

Alanna: [laughs] Yeah. I disapprove. I would like to veto it, retroactively, but.

Ira: No ma'am.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: It is like a—sometimes he just needs to not—he just needs to—just scale it back. Xander, as a person, just needs to maybe—

Ira: I—I reclaim my time from that, from thinking about Xander and Dawn, at all. [LaToya laughs] That's why I didn't read them comics.

Alanna: [laughs] Yeah.

LaToya: [laughs] That was why. But yeah, it's just—literally—the Potentials are just all badly drawn characters in general. But when you want to—

Ira: It's very lazy.

LaToya: When you want to show them as others, they're especially...just bad. So Rona, Miss Overalls herself. She—I think she narrowly avoids being the angry black woman. I feel like—but that's just 'cause she's so boring and inconsequential, that

she's...useless. And she's not having scenes with Robin Wood, unfortunately, like Ira wants, so.

Ira: I just want two black people to talk, okay?

Alanna: Just once.

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: Okay? The black—the Black'chdel Test. [Alanna laughs]

LaToya: The Black'chdel Test. In the notes I wrote, she's like—she's a perpetually pessimistic Potential. That's literally all she is.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: She's just—

Ira: That's why Buffy had to teach her a lesson in Bring On the Night. And Showtime. She was like, "here endeth the lesson. [sound of hands being dusted off] I killed the ubervamp."

LaToya: Special guest star Ashanti.

Alanna: Yes! [laughter] My—that's my favorite one because it's like, the entire episode, I can't—every time she's on screen, all I think is, that's Ashanti. [laughter] Just over and over, there she is, there's Ashanti. [laughs]

Ira: And that's the whole trailer for the episode too.

LaToya: It really is.

Ira: "Special guest star, Ashanti!"

LaToya: It really is. UPN guy was so excited that day when he was like, oh, I get to say "special guest star, Ashanti"? [Alanna laughs] And he did. Is it a hate crime that we get Ashanti and Buffy and it's a Xander episode?

Ira: Yes.

Alanna: Oh god, and she's one of the ones going after Xander.

LaToya: Yeah. That is a hate crime. Yes.

Ira: Imagine. Ashanti woulda gone after Giles.

LaToya: I can see that.

Alanna: Right. Yes.

Ira: Yes. A *man*.

Alanna: Yes, a man. He knows how to handle it.

Ira: Yeah. Oh, baby.

LaToya: Yes, he does. Oh, baby. [Ira laughs] Olivia proved it, he knows how handle it. [laughs]

Alanna: Olivia can attest.

Ira: Where did she go, by the way?

LaToya: She just went home.

Alanna: She goes back to London. [laughs]

Ira: She—what's her last episode again?

LaToya: Fucking Restless! This girl—

Ira: Oh yeah, she's just—she's in the dream, right?

Alanna: Oh, yeah.

LaToya: Yeah, she's in The Freshman, Hush and Restless and yet she's not a bigger character. She's in huge episodes.

Alanna: Right.

Ira: I wanna know, like, was it an actress thing? Like, was it scheduling or something?

LaToya: I doubt it.

Ira: Because like, it was just weird to like, throw her in there.

Alanna: I would love to know just the writer's room conversations around that character. Like okay, we're gonna give Giles a girlfriend.

Ira: And then never see her again.

Alanna: I think she should be black so that we have a black person. But also she will speak—I'm assuming very few lines. I don't even remember words that come out of her mouth. I just know that I love her regardless.

Ira: [simultaneously] We never see her again.

LaToya: She speaks—not to the other characters, just to Giles.

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: She speaks to Buffy. 'Cause Buffy shows up and finds her in Giles'...shirt.

Alanna: Oh yes. Oh yeah, in the shirt?

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: Very sexy scenes. They really pack a punch, because...I love Olivia.
[laughs]

Ira: Yes. I hope she's okay.

Alanna: Yeah, I hope that she's having a good time.

LaToya: The actress is still doing well, by the way. I was just looking it up. Let's see, yeah. 1999-2000, Buffy the Vampire Slayer. She did a couple episodes of Diagnosis Murder. [laughs]

Alanna: Nice.

LaToya: She's been on Nip/Tuck. Ah, let's see, she was in—like, she's basically gone back to, like, England to do like, British shows. So she's good. She's fine.

Alanna: Good. Good for her.

Ira: Oh. Is she on [British accent] I Made [inaudible]?

Alanna: Ugh, I hope so.

Ira: I'm kidding.

Alanna: We deserve it.

LaToya: I—never do that accent again, Ira. [laughter]

Alanna: I know.

Ira: [British accent] She went back to London and worked for BBC, huh?

Alanna: [laughing] Oh, god. [laughter] I love it so much, please never stop.
[laughter] I want an oral history about they got—about how Ashanti ended up on this show.

LaToya: UPN, that's it.

Alanna: That's just—it's just UPN.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: And also, I want every show to have a cameo of that same exact type, where it is just a pop star, music person who you don't expect and are just...pulled back by—this is not the same. But it does remind me of Beanie Feldstein guest-starring on this season of Grey's Anatomy? [LaToya laughs] Because what was she doing there? [laughs]

LaToya: It's like, what—

Ira: Well, she'd always been a fan!

Alanna: Yeah, 'cause she'd always been a fan. I'm like, was Ashanti a Buffy fan?

LaToya: [simultaneously] Yeah, like Riley Keough on Riverdale.

Ira: Um, Ashanti was a special guest star on Dynasty this season.

Alanna: Ooh!

Ira: [laughing] On The CW.

Alanna: Ashanti's still doing this.

Ira: She played herself. [laughs]

Alanna: [simultaneously] I want to write a show that Ashanti wants to be on. Oh, she played herself? [laughs]

Ira: She played herself.

Alanna: [laughing] That's the greatest thing ever.

LaToya: I've only watched one season of the Lifetime series Army Wives, and it was the final season because Ashanti was one of the stars.

Ira: [simultaneously] Oh, Ashanti was on that too. Yes.

Alanna: Ooh!

LaToya: It was so good. [laughs]

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: She's out here. I miss her.

LaToya: It was so good.

Alanna: I love her.

LaToya: Also, The CW—when like, they had wrestling on, when they had WWE, they—like, so Smallville would have guest stars from WWE on because they were on The CW.

Ira: Yes they did! [laughs]

LaToya: So like, Batista's in an episode—Batista's in an episode of Smallville, Kane's in an episode of Smallville. [laughs] Unrelated to WWE, Bowwow was in an episode of Smallville. It's the same episode as the Batista episode.

Ira: Is—I feel like that's also a problematic rewatch.

Alanna: Smallville?

LaToya: I mean—

Ira: I mean, one of the characters was a—ran a sex cult. So.

LaToya: Yes.

Alanna: [laughing] Yes. That part does not [crosstalk]

Ira: One of the main reasons I can't rewatch Glee. [laughter]

[crosstalk]

Alanna: Oh yes, the most cursed show—

LaToya: Nexium used to be my ice breaker, and then she finally got caught for Nexium. So I guess, like, now I have to like, talk about Andrew Keegan's cult.

Alanna: Yeah, yeah.

LaToya: 'Cause I guess he's back in action.

Ira: But there were other shows like Smallville, you know, that like, were sort of around the Buffy time, like toward the end of it, right?

Alanna: Mmhmm.

Ira: That were at least more efforts for diversity on other...WB shows.

Alanna: Right.

Ira: You know? Around the time?

Alanna: Everwood brought on Justin Baldoni for diversity, which is hilarious because he is a white man. [laughter]

Ira: Yes. He is very Italian.

Alanna: Yes.

LaToya: They had their spicy white man and that's diversity.

Alanna: He is the spiciest...white man. [laughs]

Ira: Child. I mean. That's for Latinx people to reckon with—with—

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: They already have.

Ira: With—with Italians constantly being cast as—

Alanna: Yeah, we're getting into—[laughter] where the lines are. We're getting into the fact that at the end of the day, it's very important but all made up. So. [laughs]

LaToya: Yeah, they already had—

Ira: Was he—was he...did he play Mexican on Jane the Virgin?

LaToya: No, he did not.

Ira: He was Italian.

[crosstalk]

Alanna: Yeah, my theory is that he was intended to and then they figured out that he is actually a white man and pivoted.

Ira: Yes...

LaToya: Yeah, yeah, yeah. 100%. 100%.

Ira: But side note on that. [sighs] I mean, he's finally leaving Days of Our Lives, but Galen Gering. If you all remember Passions—

LaToya: Mmhmm.

Ira: Theresa Lopez-Fitzgerald's brother, Luis. The one who was with Sheridan? Fully an Irishman. [laughter] Played, um, Luis on all of Passions and then has played Rafe Hernandez, a Mexican, on Days of Our Lives. [laughs]

LaToya: And he is—he is *Irish*.

Ira: Yes. Fully Irish. Just dark-skinned.

LaToya: Oh boy.

Ira: Jenny Slay wouldn't be happy with *that*. [laughter]

Alanna: Oh. It's been a week for this. [laughter] Everyone's having realizations in this year of 2020.

Ira: I know. I hope people are having good realizations while listening to us, you know? Like, I hope—I hope y'all are listening and not going, they hate the show.

Alanna: Right.

Ira: 'Cause obviously we love the show, but—

Alanna: We love the show more than anything.

Ira: But listen up. [laughter]

LaToya: Listen up, Lalaine!

Ira: Okay, pump up the volume.

Alanna: Yes. [Ira laughs]

LaToya: Obviously, we love the show. We are pulling out so many random things that no one talks about at all.

Alanna: Right. Unless you've watched it a thousand times. Which we all have.

LaToya: Exactly. But in all of Buffy, none of the Big Bads were ever people of color. And in—like, there's really no reason for that. 'Cause like, I looked through it, really. Like, in theory, there's no reason for the Master to be white, because again, we could have probably tackled racism if he wasn't. But the show's not gonna do that. Obviously, Angelus, Drusilla, Spike, whatever. The Mayor possibly has to be white, based on the world in which they are in. He's getting elected mayor all the time.

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: But Adam is literally cobbled together of body parts. He doesn't have to be white.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Glory—Clare Kramer's great.

Ira: Coulda been a sista.

LaToya: Yeah. Another role for Bianca Lawson, by the way.

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: Glory being black woulda been wild.

LaToya: Yeah. [laughs]

Alanna: [laughs] Yes. That entire character?

Ira: Truly wild. Truly—you know what? Also, in that season, Dracula should've been Blackula.

Alanna: Yes!

LaToya: [chanting] Blackula! Blackula! [laughter] The First could literally just be any dead person, but since there were no dead people of color on the show. There you go. [laughs]

Alanna: Yeah, couldn't get Bianca.

Ira: Yeah, she shoulda came back as the—The First shoulda came back as Kendra.

Alanna: Yeah, that would've been sad.

LaToya: Honestly, they couldn't afford Bianca. Bianca had moved on. [laughs]

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: She was—I'm sure she—what was she on, like, Pretty Little Liars at that point?

LaToya: Uh, that was...Pretty Little Liars was later.

Ira: Okay.

LaToya: Seriously, my girl was playing teenagers literally in the fucking pilot of American Horror Story. The pilot of American Horror Story, Bianca Lawson plays a teenage girl in high school. [laughter]

Alanna: From what, like, '98 to...[laughter] Incredible.

Ira: The period from when Buffy ends and, like, shows like Pretty Little Liars were started in like, 2006, 2007 or whatever—or when did it start?

LaToya: 2009, 2010.

Ira: 2009? Yeah, like, 2003 to 2009 are just like a blur for me. [laughter]

LaToya: It was literally—Teen Wolf, the show, where Bianca played, like, a guidance counselor or something and it's like—

Ira: Yes!

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: Teen Wolf!

LaToya: It's like, are you not secretly a teen? [laughter] It's not like she's like a mystical creature.

Alanna: Undercover teen.

LaToya: It's like she's secretly a teen. [laughs]

Ira: Yes.

Alanna: Yeah. I think my favorite episodic villain who was black was in Once More, With Feeling.

LaToya: Oh, yes. Sweet—

Alanna: Yeah. Sweet.

LaToya: Which is a name we don't learn from actually watching the show.

Ira: Sweet!

Alanna: Sweet.

[Clip from Once More, With Feeling plays]

Sweet: [singing and dancing to music] Why'd you run away? Don't you like my style? Ah! Why don't you come and play? I guarantee a great big smile! I come from the imagination and I'm here strictly by your invocation. So what do you say? Why don't we dance awhile?

Ira: Sweet. He was—

Alanna: He could dance!

Ira: I mean.

Alanna: That honey voice.

Ira: He was sort of...minstrel-y. [laughs]

Alanna: Yeah. [laughter] That's very fair.

Ira: I'm kidding. I'm kidding.

LaToya: But are you?

Ira: No, he was actually well played.

Alanna: He got that zoot suit. [LaToya laughs]

Ira: No. Yeah, he was sort of a little like, zoot suit, like—

Alanna: Like, walks the line.

Ira: Yeah, like, [exaggerated accent] "come on. Come on, Dawn. Come on, Dawn!"

Alanna: Yeah, like, what—he's trying to sex traffic Dawn.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: I mean, yeah, he's trying to seduce a teenage girl. [laughter] And corrupt her, just so you know.

Alanna: He has the good sense to turn down Xander though.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: [laughing] Unlike Ashanti.

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: "I'm 15 so this queen thing's *illegal*."

Alanna: [laughing] Yes.

LaToya: She said it. She said it.

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: And he didn't care.

Ira: Chris D'Elia turned down that role. He turned down Sweet. [laughs] Um. Yeah, you know. Sweet was a fun character. I do really like him in Once More, With Feeling. But yes, he does feel sort of like...

Alanna: Walks the line.

Ira: Yeah, he walks—he—

Alanna: Tap dances all across the line.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: He literally tap dances, he's shucking and jiving.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: We don't know his name from watching the episode of television.

Alanna: No. You have to do research.

Ira: He's literally Jim Crow.

Alanna: Ugh. [laughter] And also, like, the way that his face? Yeah. [laughter]

LaToya: Kristin and Jenny are gonna, like, ban this episode. Like, oh no.

Alanna: No! We cannot get Once More, With Feeling taken down, you guys. We can't be responsible for this.

Ira: When it gets pulled down, they'll be like, "Ira Madison III referenced Sweet as Jim Crow." [laughter]

Alanna: Hence, we immediately took it down. We're listening now [crosstalk]

LaToya: Alanna Bennett and LaToya Ferguson were also there, so remember to "@" them.

Ira: Yes. Just jokes, just jokes, leave it up on whatever streaming service Buffy's on at the moment.

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: So, there weren't just black people on these shows. Mostly, when there were any people of color, they were black people. But on Angel, we had Daniel Dae Kim as Gavin, who was Lilah's post-Lindsey foil at Wolfram & Hart. And from the little we had of him, he was incompetent. And it really was one of those things where...we need to make Lilah kinda part of the gang, but not.

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: So we'll have Gavin be, like, the opposition, so she'll help the gang. So a terrible person like Lilah gets redemption. And this new Asian guy can fuck off. I believe he—is he killed by the Beast? I think he is.

Ira: I think he is. The Beast in Season 4.

LaToya: Like in that massacre, right? Yeah, yeah.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: Another of the pattern of Daniel Dae Kim, like, just not being respected and suffering.

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: Right. You have to use him correctly.

LaToya: Yeah.

Ira: By the way, since I've already come out as a Season 6 stan of Buffy.

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: I'm gonna come out as a Season 4 stan of Angel. Okay?

Alanna: Ooh.

LaToya: [claps] As am I!

Ira: Okay? Jasmine...*did* that.

LaToya: Jasmine did that—

Ira: And I'm sorry people don't like the mechanics of it, but she was a great villain and that was a great arc.

LaToya: And also, the mechanics of it make—

Ira: And it gave Fred something to do. To be honest.

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: The mechanics of it make sense, even though I never wanna see the scene that should not be mentioned ever. We don't have to say it, people know what we're talking about.

Ira: Yes.

LaToya: Don't say it, ever.

Alanna: [laughs] Do not speak its name.

LaToya: Yeah. You know what it is, it's been burned in your brain ever since you saw the episode. You don't need to—[laughs] to bring it up. But like, the story makes sense. It's solid. I've never understood—even at the time, I didn't understand people didn't like the Jasmine arc. I mean, I understand not liking the season, especially watching it as it aired. It's a show that—the season works better as a binge season of television, 100%.

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: So I understand, like, being upset with it. But I always felt like—

Ira: I loved it. I thought the cliffhangers were great, week to week. Okay?

LaToya: I mean, I agree, but that's not the point. [laughs]

Ira: Season 4 was—Season 4 was *it*.

LaToya: Season 4 was it and I will agree with you on that. 100%.

Ira: That's right.

LaToya: But people hated Jasmine and I just never got it. I thought Gina Torres was perfect as this. And then one thing I would always see in criticism for it, which—huge red flag—was people comparing Jasmine to Oprah?

Alanna: Oh!

Ira: Mmm. [Alanna laughs]

LaToya: And they really jumped through some hoops to do, like, a zealotry thing with Oprah. And I'm just like, no, this is like a literal religion thing, antichrist—

Alanna: Right.

LaToya: Jesus Christ situation. It's not a race-related thing ever but like, you guys really wanna bring up Oprah? Um. Like, all the other [inaudible] people I knew in my life thought I should go as Oprah for Halloween.

Ira: I did. Went as Oprah. [laughter]

LaToya: I mean, you are the Oprah of this podcast, Ira.

Ira: Oh. Stop.

Alanna: It's true.

Ira: I don't even have a Gayle. [Alanna laughs]

LaToya: Get a Gayle, Ira.

Ira: Actually, I do have a Gayle. I have a Gayle.

Alanna: Yeah, you do. [laughs]

Ira: I do have a Gayle. Uh, I don't have a Stedman.

Alanna: Right. [LaToya laughs] Yet.

Ira: [laughs] Yeah, I love Jasmine. Gina Torres was great.

Alanna: Gina Torres is perfect always.

Ira: Afro-Cuban!

Alanna: Yes.

LaToya: Yes.

Ira: We stan.

LaToya: We do.

Alanna: Always.

Ira: Yeah. We stan Ms. Pearson. Jessica Pearson.

LaToya: We stan Ms. Anna Espinosa.

Ira: Yes! Okay?

Alanna: Yes! Yes. Ugh.

Ira: Yes. [LaToya laughs]

Alanna: Now I'm having Alias feelings, I'm sorry. You just immediately threw me to another show that now I'm in a rabbit hole. [laughs]

Ira: Okay?

LaToya: [laughs] You are welcome. You are welcome.

Ira: We stan *Nebula*. [laughter] From Hercules: The Legendary Journey. [laughter] Cleopatra! From Xena. [laughs]

LaToya: But yeah. Race and Jasmine. Never made sense to me, but I saw it a lot, from white men criticizing the show.

Alanna: It's always them.

LaToya: Always them.

Ira: It is always them. You need to look inside *yourself* if you don't like the Jasmine story. [Alanna laughs] And ask why.

LaToya: Look inside Cleopatra!

Ira: It's coming at ya. [laughter]

LaToya: So I think we've talked a lot about all this. We've even talked about like, WB's past with race and UPN.

Alanna: Mmhmm.

LaToya: So do you guys wanna wrap this up? Any final parting, like, shots on Buffy? Yeah, like, we're taking you down, Buffy. [laughter] We're taking *you* down. At least Angel had one black character.

Alanna: I just—now I'm just picturing this alternate universe where Bianca Lawson was Cordelia Chase.

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: [laughs] That is really the big takeaway, right?

Alanna: All of the different butterfly effects it would have had on the entire series.

LaToya: I—again, I truly imagine a world where she does not get with Xander 'cause they won't allow it, because he's not good enough for her. [laughs]

Alanna: Right. I mean, so many things could have happened. It could have been...maybe that show wasn't ready for a black lead, or like, a black ensemble member and that character would have been a completely different character and wouldn't have been on Angel and would have been mistreated.

Ira: They would have—

Alanna: Maybe it would have been amazing.

Ira: They would have created, like, a black boyfriend for her—just randomly had, was in scenes sometimes.

Alanna: Right, exactly. Like—yeah.

LaToya: You would've got Gunn and Cordelia then, Ira.

Ira: Yeah.

Alanna: Yeah. So maybe this wasn't meant to be. Bianca was meant to not be on that super, super—in that super, super white environment forever. And go on to do her own things and be a Knowles sister. Not a Knowles sister, but be a Beyonce sister. [laughter] Knowles is not involved anymore, but. She was meant for other things.

Ira: [simultaneously] Yeah. A sister-in-law to Beyonce.

Alanna: Sister-in-law. Yes.

Ira: And you know what? That's history, love.

Alanna: That's history. But I will now always wonder what might have been.

Ira: Mmhmm.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: But clearly they weren't ready.

Ira: They weren't.

Alanna: Considering they had no people of color. That's also what I'm gonna be thinking about, the fact that all of those seasons of both of those shows, they managed to have no people of color.

LaToya: It is a choice.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: An active choice, at that point.

Ira: Mmhmm.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: And with that—

Ira: [simultaneously] And we've had it. And we've had it!

Alanna: We have had it.

Ira: And they had better have—

LaToya: Enough is enough.

Ira: They had better have black writers next season.

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: Oh wait. [laughter]

Alanna: That's why they actually—they need to give the revival to us. That is the reparations that we ask for.

LaToya: [laughs] Yes.

Ira: Is that still happening?

LaToya: Is it being developed? I guess, so who knows.

Ira: I doubt it.

Alanna: I don't know—yeah, I don't know if it's—

Ira: It's not happening.

Alanna: I don't think it's happening. But that means there's room to pitch more.
[laughs]

Ira: Yeah.

LaToya: Give us our Kendra the Vampire Slayer show, where it's an alt world where she doesn't get killed from a fucking papercut. And also, she doesn't have a stupid accent. And that's our show.

Alanna: [laughs] Get her some dialect coaches. Or an actual Jamaican person.

LaToya: The dialect coach is the reason why that was allowed! [laughs] The dialect coach said that was okay.

Alanna: A better dialect coach and/or a real Jamaican person.

Ira: Uh, [British accent] let me write Olivia. Let me write Olivia, the series.

Alanna: Yes! The Olivia revival. The spinoff.

LaToya: People always—yeah, people always write about, like, a Giles spinoff. No. An Olivia spinoff.

Alanna: That Giles shows up in.

LaToya: Giles can show up, maybe.

Alanna: Yeah.

LaToya: Maybe.

Ira: This was fun.

LaToya: Olivia! This was.

Ira: I'm glad we were given this space.

Alanna: Yes.

Ira: Yeah, by our white friends.

Alanna: Thank you, white friends.

LaToya: We brought up Jim Crow. That's exactly what they wanted to hear.
[laughter]

Ira: Got spicy.

LaToya: We got super spicy, just like Justin Baldoni. [laughter]

Ira: He is so hot.

LaToya: Yeah.

Alanna: Yeah, we did it.

LaToya: Where can everyone find you guys on the internet?

Alanna: You can find me @AlannaBennett, lots of double consonants, on Twitter. And Instagram, but mainly Twitter. And on Roswell, New Mexico, whenever that airs places. It's on Netflix.

Ira: Don't find me.

Alanna: [laughs] Just don't look for him.

Ira: Don't find me.

LaToya: Yeah, Ira doesn't need any more fans, honestly.

Ira: [laughs] But watch Q-Force, the last show I wrote on—

Alanna: Yeah!

Ira: Next year, in June. Sometime. On Netflix.

LaToya: And you can find me—

Ira: You're not gonna remember by—no one's gonna remember that by the time it comes out. [laughs]

LaToya: Everyone is saving this episode because of their white guilt, so they'll remember.

Ira: Yes. Sure, they'll relisten every day.

LaToya: They'll remember.

Alanna: They'll listen to it next February, so. [laughter]

LaToya: This is now a Juneteenth podcast, actually. [laughs]

Ira: Yes.

Alanna: Yeah, it'll be Juneteenth. That's when they'll listen to it, so. Just in time.

LaToya: [laughs] Listen to this on Juneteenth, otherwise...dot-dot-dot. And you can find me @lafergs on Twitter, L-A-F-E-R-G-S. I don't have an Instagram, I'm sorry. I don't take pictures. [laughs] And from there, you can find my writing, 'cause I—you know, I plug myself. Everything.

Ira: You know...oh my god, it's 'cause your name's LaToya. [Alanna laughs] *La* Fergs.

Alanna: [laughing] Yeah.

LaToya: [laughing] Jesus Christ.

Ira: I thought it was—I thought it was L.A. Fergs.

Alanna: Yeah!

LaToya: It also works.

Ira: Like, you live in LA. [laughter] I'm dumb.

LaToya: It works both ways. It works both ways.

Alanna: Yeah.

Ira: I'm dumb.

LaToya: Aw.

Ira: Why'd they listen to me for two hours? [laughter]

LaToya: And of course, thanks to Kristin and Jenny for allowing us to hijack their podcast and talk about Jim Crow, Ashanti, characters named Robin Wood, which is just—again, that's a hate crime, to name a character Robin Wood. Black or any color, honestly.

Ira: I'm never *not* talking about Jim Crow and Ashanti.

LaToya: [laughs] Oh, baby.

Alanna: Right, I mean, you have to. It'll come up eventually.

Ira: Be safe out there.

Alanna: Be safe out there. What if we just don't give the podcast back?

LaToya: Uh, yeah. This is our show now. [laughs]

Alanna: It's just ours.

Ira: I'm—I'm busy.

Alanna: That's very fair. [laughter] It sounds like a lot of work. [laughter]

[CHIME]