**Interview with Kyra Banks**

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Interviewer: Hopefully, it picks everything up. Um…So I guess, First and foremost, I just want to remind you that if there is anything I ask that you’re not comfortable answering all you have to do is tell me and we’ll move on.

Kyra Banks: Okay.

Interviewer: No big deal. Okay. So, first question. Um…When did you hear about drag and what was your initial reaction?

Kyra Banks: Um I think my first experience with drag would be in college. I was actually seeing a drag queen. I went to a really conservative Christian school in Oklahoma. And I had some friends that went to a less conservative Oklahoma school. And there was this underage club that everyone went to and they dragged me there and I was terrified. That was when I first saw a drag queen and I had probably seen it before, in like a movie or something, like traditional Hollywood stuff. But I didn’t realize “Oh this is a thing.”

Interviewer: That “yeah people do this?”

Kyra Banks: Yeah

Interviewer: What was the college? Can I ask?

Kyra Banks: Southern Nazarene University.

Interviewer: Nice. Okay. Alright. So, your reaction was really positive?

Kyra Banks: Yeah. I mean, it was…I was very entertained. And I did a lot of musical theater and stuff in college and in high school so, I thought of it like that. That was my initial kind of thought process.

Interviewer: Cool. So, when did you start performing?

Kyra Banks: I can’t remember the year, but it’s been almost 10 years ago.

Interviewer: Jeez.

Kyra Banks: Yeah, so I’ve been doing it for like 10 years. Yeah. I started…it was during the holiday season, like December. Most people start on Halloween because it’s like “Oh.”

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kyra Banks: I remember December is when I first did it. And that was just sporadically for a little bit. Then it really started amping up.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, what pushed you to start doing it? Like what made that connection for you?

Kyra Banks: I had a lot—I made a lot of friends that did drag. And I also worked with a lot of drag queens…at Olive Garden. [chuckles]

Interviewer: [laughs] At “The Garden”?

Kyra Banks: Yeah. And so, I was just like “I want to try.” And…yeah, started from there.

Interviewer: What was the first experience like for you? How did you feel doing it the first time?

Kyra Banks: It felt really good. I’d been on a stage before. Like that part wasn’t that crazy. I remember I had a—I remember the first song I did was L-O-V-E by Ashlee Simpson.

Interviewer: [chuckles] Nice.

Kyra Banks: That was the first song I ever did. It was kind of nerve-wracking because you have like the heels and…I was taught really well. Like, I had a friend of mine--I went to her house. It was during PRIDE and they were like “Okay, this is how you walk in heels.” And like, we put on heels, and I remember walking back and forth in the house I lived at. [laughs] They were like “No, that’s not right, that’s not right.”

Interviewer: [laughs] Like a little training session?

Kyra Banks: Yeah. And then like, the trick is to vacuum your house in heels.

Interviewer: Really?

Kyra Banks: Yeah. That’s how they teach you because you walk back and forth.

Interviewer: Yeah, I guess that makes sense. Good to know. Um, so how did like your family, friends, and people close to you react when you told them, “hey, I’m doing drag now.” Like what was that like?

Kyra Banks: Um, my…some of my family knows and some of my family doesn’t.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kyra Banks: Um…my brother and sister, which are my only two siblings, they’ve both been to a drag show before, of mine. My parents don’t know, as far as I know. They probably have an idea, because they’ve been to my house and it’s like “Oh, that room is for storage!” [chuckles] because there’s, you know, drag everywhere.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm

Kyra Banks: Um…and I have some cousins down in New Orleans that have been to a show. So, there are some that know and some that don’t. Friends, like everybody knows. Like, people call me Kyra all the time. And I’ll answer to that sometimes before I answer to Andy. Like what? Who?

Interviewer: Okay, so mixed kind of reactions?

Kyra Banks: Yeah, mixed. But all very positive. Like, never like, my brother’s a musical theater major and he’s actually had roles where he had to dress in drag and, you know.

Interviewer: Did he come to you? Like please teach me?

Kyra Banks: No, he didn’t. Because it’s very different. Their make-up and stuff is very different. They’re not trying to look real, you know?

Interviewer: That’s fair. So where did your drag name come from? How did you get there?

Kyra Banks: Okay so…the first drag name I had was Kyra Carmichael because the first person to ever put me in drag, their last name was Carmichael.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kyra Banks: And I liked the alliteration of it. But then, I started to kind of out-grow that. And I was like I kind of what my own identity. So, I—it was one of the first pageants I ever competed in, I changed my name to Kyra Banks because I liked America’s Next Top Model, Tyra Banks. I was like, well I’ll be Kyra Banks. So that’s how that came about.

Interviewer: Cool. Um…this is going to be a long question. So, there are a lot of terms for like different types and styles of drag. So, like what—do you use any labels or are there any labels that you feel like really apply to the type of drag that you do?

Kyra Banks: Are you talking about more like pronouns or descripting…?

Interviewer: Like description. Like there are camp queens, fish queens, and things like that.

Kyra Banks: Okay. I kind of feel—I mean I love doing comedy. I talk a lot on the microphone. I really enjoy that part of it. And people have always been like, “Oh, you should do stand-up comedy.” And I have a show here (Four Strings—a bar in Soulard, MO) on Thursdays that a do a lot talking-wise. Just to engage the audience. But I’ve done a lot of pageants. I don’t mind being funny. I think it’s good to be well-rounded. Especially now, because you have so much drag. Really, it’s kind of, like, crazy. When I first started and what I was aware of to now, where we have so many different aspects of it. Which is a really good thing, I think. But—I also don’t feel like—you shouldn’t ever, for me, personally, I don’t ever want to fit into like one. I’ll try anything! I’m not scared to be ugly. Like, the last show I had here, I did “white trash” with like crazy make-up and just had fun with it. So, I think that’s, for me, I just want to be able to have with it. And apply certain things when you need to. Like if you’re going to be in a pageant, you need to look a certain way and do that stuff. But day-to-day stuff I’m not scared to take a risk and do something different.

Interviewer: So, do you think that like versatility, do you think that helps you as a drag artist?

Kyra Banks: That’s huge! I mean, I was always taught—and I grew up around older drag queens in Oklahoma, and they’ve had careers of like 20 plus years—and their biggest thing is that you always have to—don’t be afraid to change. Because if you can’t change, they’ll leave you behind. You might get out every once in a while, and people’ll go, “That’s old school drag, I love that.” But if you can’t keep up with other stuff, then your career’s not going to last as long. Because everything is always changing, so you can’t be stagnant.

Interviewer: Absolutely. So, um…you kind of talked about your musical theater background, but who or what do you think has influenced your drag the most?

Kyra Banks: I think the most has been other queens around me. [long pause] Excuse me; If you’re talking about pop culture, I would say I kind of model after like Christina Aguilera. I always call my drag like a cross Real Housewives and like a pop star kind of thing. Like an Erika Jayne kind of character.

Interviewer: Okay.

Kyra Banks: Sometimes. It can be different. But to me, that’s the look I like, as far as like, aesthetically, to me. How I put stuff together. Like glitzy, glamour but also like I can just wear regular clothes.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you consider your drag to be political in any way?

Kyra Banks: Have I said political things? Yes. But do I consider my drag political? No.

Interviewer: Okay

Kyra Banks: Like I could say something on the microphone like—I had an ongoing bit before Trump got elected about, you know, making fun about that, and all that kind of stuff. And still, that slips in, but…as far as being a political activist—and I was a political science major in college, so I understand all of it. I just don’t think what I do and where I perform, you don’t go there to see a show for that. I’m all for that, if that’s what—I’m not opposed to it. I just don’t think my drag is political.

Interviewer: Gotcha. Do you think drag itself is sort of political?

Kyra Banks: Yes! Because it’s kind of—it bends the norm a little bit. And I think, a lot of times, you get audiences in here, and different venues especially in St. Louis, and further south that get exposed to it, especially now that they’re watching it on television “Oh, there’s a drag show here.” When you put it in someone’s face and it’s like, “these are real people, too.” I think, inherently, it is political for some people and, of course, you have the Stonewall Riots and stuff that were started by drag queens. It is, in some ways, very political.

Interviewer: Can you talk about what your life is like as a drag artist? Like, are you part of a drag family or a collective of sorts?

Kyra Banks: I never really had like a drag family. I never—I’ve had people that have helped me along the way and people that I consider friends. I still have that now, like I have people I’m very close to. Like if we need to get stuff together, we can do that. But I’ve never had a drag family, where I share like a last name. I tried to have a drag kid. I’m not good at it. They’re too needy! I’m like, no, I can’t. Figure it out! So, a lot of it was like a trial and error for me. I did date another drag queen for a period of time.

Interviewer: How was that?

Kyra Banks: That was…interesting. You know—it was good, in a sense, where you could kind of bounce off each other. It wasn’t a great relationship, but I learned a lot.

Interviewer: It was good for your drag performance

Kyra Banks: Right. What was the other part? Day-to-day?

Interviewer: Yeah, so. How often do you perform?

Kyra Banks: I perform at least once every weekend. I perform every Saturday. So, my day on that day is, I work—I work from home, which is good, so—but I work until 7 and I get off the phone, and I shower and start putting make-up on. So, it’s like from 10--9:30 that morning ‘til about 12:30 at night. I—always people are like “Oh, I’m so tired,” and I’m like “Oh, please. Do not tell me about being tired.” But then, there could be weeks when I’m doing drag Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday. Like 5 days in a row. So, it varies, but at least once a week. Most of the time, 2 days a week—Friday and Saturday. It’s just go, go, go. Like there’s never a, um, there are days off, but it’s like on that day you’re like “Oh my god, I just want to sit and do nothing.”

Interviewer: So, what goes in to getting ready for a performance? Like take me through that process.

Kyra Banks: Well, first you have to shave. Or, I do. And then, it takes me about an hour to an hour and a half to do my make-up—or to be completely ready: make-up, lashes, body—there’s a body suit with like, fake hips, fake tits, cinchers. Everybody’s like “your body is so amazing” and I’m like “it’s all fake.” All of it’s fake. You, too, could look just like this! Um, and then, so a typical process is like two hours for a complete, ready to go on stage. Girls are always like, “Oh, your make-up is so pretty” and it’s a lot of make-up. Trust.

Interviewer: What’s the hardest part of that routine do you think?

Kyra Banks: Oh, putting pads on. I hate it. It’s the worst part. I hate it! If I didn’t have to do it, I would love to not have to do it. I wear like 5 pairs of tights, so you’re cinched up and then you put other stuff, and then you have to shove these [pads] down your tights and then you put more tights on.

Interviewer: Yikes. Okay. Is there anything unique to St. Louis drag compared to like other cities, if you’ve ever done drag anywhere else? Do you think it’s really different here or do you think it’s pretty similar?

Kyra Banks: I think the drag community in St. Louis is very diverse. From where I've worked at before, and I think that's also kind of the trend elsewhere as well. But when I first moved here about 5 years ago, it was already more kind of progressive in that diversity. We have a lot of different types of performers. Like I grew up in Texas. So, the drag that I saw there and in Oklahoma is what I would say old-school drag: big hair, jewelry, all that kind of stuff. Which I love! And still love to watch. If it's really good. And so, I think St. Louis is unique in that aspect that you have as much diversity--you have a very wide spectrum, you can see pretty much anything you want. If you want to see like club kid, we have that. If you wanna see like gender-bender or whatever, we have that. We have a lot of diversity. So, I mean, that's important. That's kind of unique for here.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. Um...so how do you identify in terms of your sex, your gender identity, or any other way you wish you could identify?

Kyra Banks: I identify as a cis male. I--you know. I've never once. People ask me this a lot, "do you want to be a girl?" and I'm like "I never had any desire to do that." Do I have friends that have transitioned? Yes. And if that's what makes them happy then that's great. I never had that kind of feeling. I like to feel like a woman when I'm in drag. I like to take it all off to and feel like Andy You know?

Interviewer: Yeah. Ok. So, do your pronouns change in and out of drag? You mentioned that you respond--

Kyra Banks: No! I don't really care. And I don't know...I know some people do and that's important for them. And I respect that, but for me, you could call me Kyra, or you could call me Andy, you could call me whatever you want. My group of friends will call each other girl all the time, and you know, stuff like that. It's never really been a part of something that I really have been concerned about. So, it's always pretty fluid for me. Just, whatever you want to call me.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you think drag has like influenced your perception of sex and gender? Or did you sort of always see it the way you see it now?

Kyra Banks: I think it's made me more exposed to it. As far as knowing a lot of people that have either like transitioned or they have used different pronouns. I've been exposed to that a lot more doing drag than I think you would be if you didn't do drag. So, I think that aspect of it, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Um...let's see. I have to make sure I get all our mandatory questions. [laughter] So how has drag like impacted you, like in your personal development?

Kyra Banks: For me, I think it's affected my life in a really positive way. Like I've had a lot of exposure as far as...being able to experience a lot of things that I would not have been able to experience if I had not done drag. Like, I've, you know, been a part of 2 music videos, like not anything crazy. They're on YouTube, but like...it's not...I got to experience something like that. Just been exposed to a lot more things and had opportunities that I wouldn’t have had if I had not done drag. And also, the friendships that I've gained, like artistically. It provided an outlet for something that I had gotten while doing musical theater. It allowed me by doing drag to kind of get that back on stage feeling, which I didn't have those opportunities at the time when I started doing drag. It's also made me poor sometimes. [laughter] Just the opportunities that I've gained, the friendships that I've gained, the skills that I've developed. Like you develop a lot of skills. Like I can make clothes now, and I wouldn't have ever started to sew if I didn't do drag. You know, so now I have a different skill set that I wouldn't have had before.

Interviewer: Okay. Um...So do you think drag has like impacted your confidence when you're outside of drag? Like has it made you more confident?

Kyra Banks: No, I think...I think I'm pretty much the same. Excuse me [clears throat]. Pretty much the same. I've always been...they called our family in church the loud family. So, we've always been very out-there, life of the party people anyways. So I don't think I've had a big personality shift between Andy and Kyra, the only difference I think is...for instance if I'm not having such a great day and I have a show that night, I know I have to turn it on.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kyra Banks: Like you don't get the option of “Okay, I get to be the same person.” You do have to kind of switch. So, I do do that sometimes. But as far as...do I think it changes who I am, my persona? No. I don't...yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. So... if you could go back in time to your younger self as Kyra, like in full drag, what do you would tell small [name redacted]? What advice would you give small [name redacted]?

Kyra Banks: Like, how small? Like little kid?

Interviewer: As young as you want to be.

Kyra Banks: I don't know. I would say...always listen to your heart, first of all. I did a lot of things because I thought that's what you were supposed to do or because people told me to do this or to do that. And... I would also say that--surround yourself with positive people that are going to support you. Because that's really important and you're going to need those kinds of people in your life at some point. That's what I would say.

Interviewer: Okay. Good advice.

Kyra Banks: And don't wear black lip liner! [laughter] That's never a good thing.

Interviewer: All good tips. All good tips. So... I'm kind of interested how your other social identities have impacted drag. Like the intersections between race and class and sexual orientation. So, what do you think about that? Do you think that you being white and being male, do you think that that has impacted your acceptance in drag or the way you do drag? Or anything like that?

Kyra Banks: I don't--I don't know. Growing up as a white, gay male in Texas is pretty like...I know it's different for everybody. We all different experiences and hardships. I've definitely learned a lot about other people's struggles. You know, like coming-out for me was not a pleasant experience. It's a lot better now, but that took a lot of time for that to be more accepted from my family and my parents. I think as far as...what do you mean as far as...

Interviewer: I mean--so in our class we've talked a lot about like the perceptions of like black queens and Hispanic queens as compared to like White and Asian queens...do you think that makes a difference in terms of St. Louis drag or any other drag shows? Do you see more tips coming in for any of the white artists as compared to people of color?

Kyra Banks: For me, I think it depends on your audience really. We have a pretty... growing up in Texas and Oklahoma, especially in Texas, some of the most talented queens there are the black and the Hispanic queens. And they will tear the house the down. They are lovely, gorgeous, and amazing not that there aren't talented white performers there, too, because there are. Here... I think it depends on your audience. For me, I'm typical white girl in drag, really, I am. I’ll ask, "what song do you want to hear?" and people will be like "Beyoncé!" and I'm like "No, I can't do that." I know one Beyoncé song...well I know more, but I can perform one.

Interviewer: What's the one?

Kyra Banks: Love on Top. That's about it. Or a ballad. Slow it down. So, I think it depends on your audience here because it's all about what they enjoy. So as far as the money that you make from the audience, you have to think about your demographics. Is this a younger crowd or is this an older crowd? What kind of music do they like? And you kind of cater to that. And each bar kind of is different, too, depending on the crowd they get there. For me, I don't think race has a lot to do with how successful you are. I think what you put into it determines how successful you're going to be. Not saying that's the case everywhere because there probably are some hurdles like...I know like I've seen stuff here. Some people are worried about...because it's the all-white cast. I see how that looks. And it's not because, as far as the shows I've been a part of that are the all-white cast, not because we have anything against a black performer or a Hispanic performer but because there's not that many of them here. And if they're booked elsewhere...you know. It does play into it some, but I don't think a lot of it's intentional. I think it’s more about, your success comes from how much you put into it.

Interviewer: So, do you think class would have anything to do with that? You mentioned earlier that at times drag has been really expensive, it can drain you.

Kyra Banks: I think it can. I mean, there are certain, like, shows that have certain standards of what they want to put on-stage because they're paying you. I mean it is a business, you are a lot of times providing...it's a business because you are working for a bar and then they're trying to make money like you're trying to make money. There does come...like a certain aesthetic to it. And trust, like drag can be done on a budget. It can be. I do think that...it can play into it because some people may not be able to afford this X, Y, and Z to look just like that. But there are things that can be done and people that will help you...yeah, that could play into it, I think, if you don't have certain things because you can't afford it. I don't think that should, by any means, discourage you from doing what you want to do. But it can affect the ability to make it more like a career rather than just a hobby.

Interviewer: Do you view, like you doing drag, as more of a career or do you feel like it’s more of a hobby? Or like a part-time job I guess would be the...

Kyra Banks: It's like a part-time job, because I have like a full-time job. But there have been times where drag was a full-time job. That was how I was making money. Times where I didn't have a job and I was doing drag to pay bills. So, it can be a full-time job and I know people that it is their full-time job. So, it can be...for me, it's more of like a part-time job. And it does feel like a job sometimes, definitely not a hobby sometimes. Because you're like "I don't want to do this, like this is not what I want to do."

Interviewer: How would you define drag? Just as a concept or an activity.

Kyra Banks: I think... I think first of all it's kind of an illusion. You're creating something that's not your norm. I definitely think it's art. I always kind of describe drag as like an artist that's going to paint on a canvas. It all starts as blank and then what you put on it makes it what it is. So, I do think it's an art form for sure.  But...in most cases, it's an illusion. You're presenting something on stage that in some way is not reality...most of the time. It could make a play on reality, but it's not real. It's a character for me. That could take shape in many different forms. I don’t think it has to be a certain...there's not a certain thing where it's like "This is what drag is." Because I've seen a lot of different types of it. So, I don't think...for me it's an illusion. It's something you create.

Interviewer: Um, what do you think is the purpose of drag?

Kyra Banks: For me, it's an artistic release. I think it can be different for everybody. For me, it's an artistic release. It's like...a chance to become in sense like a celebrity in your own way. Some people use it for different reasons. But for me it's that kind of escape from reality. It's fun. It kinda becomes like...there are several people that have seen me out of drag and not realized who I was and then when it clicks, they're like "Oh my god!" And that's always an exciting moment for me because that means I did my job because you had no idea who I was. But now you put the pieces together.

Interviewer: Yeah. Absolutely. Um...do you think drag is sexual in nature?

Kyra Banks: For me, no.

Interviewer: For you, no?

Kyra Banks: But it can be for some people. I've heard stories.

Interviewer: We have talked a lot in class about how there are some shows where drag queens will pull an audience member on stage and then it sort of becomes like, a lap dance. I think a lot of people in our class think that's...

Kyra Banks: The norm?

Interviewer: Yeah, like that's drag.

Kyra Banks: No. I think you do a lot of flirt--like I do a lot flirting in drag. I've definitely like sat on a man's lap before for a dollar but...[laughter]. Uh...it's mostly like straight men that are super creeped out and you just want to be like "It's okay. We're not going to hurt you." Like...calm down. It's usually encouraged by everyone around them. For me, no. It's not ever been sexual in nature. It's really a....the underpinnings of it all is not a comfortable situation. You know? It's like everything is bound up and tucked away so it's not...something that's pleasing...in that physical sense, you know.

Interviewer: How do you feel about RuPaul's Drag Race?

Kyra Banks: I, personally, love it. I watch it. I've known a lot of queens that have been on there.

Interviewer: Can I ask who? Which queens do you know?

Kyra Banks: Alyssa Edwards, I know her really well, from Texas. I've met quite a few of them. Like Jujubee, I love her. Asia O'Hara. She's a former Miss Gay America, so when I was competing here, we met her, and I knew her from Texas as well. She used to date one of my friends, so that...I knew her when she was working in a fabric store, not on RuPaul's Drag Race. Who else have I...? [long pause] Those would probably be the main ones that I know more than meeting them or working with them.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kyra Banks: But I love it! I think it's great that there is exposure to the drag community. I think people tend to forget that it's still a television show. So, it's not...it's not really what happens. And I think sometimes people get a misconception about what drag is sometimes. And I feel like...I would love to be on the show. I've never auditioned. I always say I'm going to but I always...I know I'll be the villain. Because I'll be the one going "I don't like that. Horrible" [laughter]. And then they'll love it on the runway, and I'll be like "That's retarded." That'd be me. I'd be that queen.

Interviewer: You'd be that one?

Kyra Banks: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, we're watching Season 9, right now in class.

Kyra Banks: Oh, you are?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kyra Banks: That's fun.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's a really fun time. Um...and we've talked a lot about how RuPaul has come out to say that there aren't any drag kings on the show and that there will never be any drag kings on the show. Do you think that there should be drag kings or do you think it should stay just drag queens because that's what RuPaul does?

Kyra Banks: I think--and I know a lot of really good drag kings. I... they used to have like the national drag king pageant in Oklahoma City, so I used to go every year. So, I've been exposed to it and I've seen a lot of really good drag kings. But I do feel like RuPaul's Drag Race should stay just drag queens. I think what they do is similar but it’s still different. And I think, in a competition like that, I just don't know how the dynamics of it all would work out. Would I be opposed to them having their own show? I think that'd be great. And it could be even a spin-off in that sense. I just don't know that...what RuPaul is trying to create in that universe of hers and that show...not that...I just don't think it would work. Not anything against drag kings of course, but I just don't think it would work. The dynamics would be off. Uh... so that's personally, yeah. Because you get like challenges and how would that translate for them? How would judge that? So, without being unfair to one group or the other. I think you would just change the whole dynamic of the show.

Interviewer: So, like...uh...

Kyra Banks: What do you think?

Interviewer: Um... you know, I... similar things. We've talked a lot about how the challenges would have to be altered if we're going to have them on the same show. Because you need to have things where they can be judged similarly. Because it is very difficult for you to look at a drag king and drag queen and go "Oh yeah, they were both really good on the same scale."

Kyra Banks: Right?

Interviewer: Especially with like Michelle Visage. She's very obsessed with padding and a silhouette.

Kyra Banks: Shape.

Interviewer: Yeah. I mean, how are you going to judge how a drag queen pads versus how a drag king pads?

Kyra Banks: And then like, are you going to ask a drag king to be a female character in the acting challenges. It, therefore, requires less effort for them. Or like when they have to put drag make-up on in 10 minutes, like...do they have an advantage there? It would just change everything.

Interviewer: Yeah. It would definitely be a very different challenge set that they would have to do. So, if you could change one thing about drag, the drag scene, drag community, what would it be and why? Like if you could change anything about it?

Kyra Banks: I think, overall, I think if we could all be a little more accepting of what other people do. I may not like it, I may think it's horrible, but if that's what you want to do if that's your persona--your character—your whatever you want to call it and it works for you. Then great. And I think we also--on the flip side of that--if you want it to be a business, you have to realize that you're not going to be liked by everyone. And I think, sometimes, people get a little butt-hurt by that. And you have to just realize that not everyone is going to like me, and I'm okay with that. So, I think, two side to that. Be more accepting but also realize not everyone is going to accept you. Like we get caught up in that a lot, like "blah."

Interviewer: So, be more accepting and have a thicker skin?

Kyra Banks: Yeah. Because it's not easy like you're exposed. You're on-stage. You're going to hear people talk about you and you have to be able to be like "Okay, that's fine."

Interviewer: What do you think are some misconceptions people have about drag? What have you heard that you're like "absolutely not"?

Kyra Banks: Uh...that we all want to be like females all the time. That's not true. Or flip, that they [drag kings] all want to be males. Um...what else? Oh, we all do like death drops and splits all the time. Like, I don't know how to do that. I've never attempted it, probably never will. Not every drag queen is a dancing queen. Because you get a lot of that here. That's not what we always do. We do have that, but that's not everything. Uh, just because you're a pageant queen doesn't mean you're not versatile. And you can't do different things. Pageant queen is not a bad term. That's always the drag response, "Oh, you're a *pageant*queen." Yes! I am! That just means I'm polished and my clothes look nice.

Interviewer: So then, similarly, if you could choose one thing for people to know or learn about drag, like what do you think that would be? It doesn't have to be just like one point, it could be like an entire area of drag that you think people should learn about.

Kyra Banks: I think people forget that we're still human beings afterward. That we also have lives outside of this. I know, you know, drag performers with kids and a family. We are still people behind the make-up of it all or whatever you're presenting on stage. We all have lives outside of that that we deal with. Whether it be a job, or family members, or whatever. It's not...what we present on stage, there's so much more behind it, that goes into it that you don't realize. Yeah.

Interviewer: So, I know I have demographic information to ask you.

Kyra Banks: Okay.

Interviewer: Just so we can categorize it. How old are you?

Kyra Banks: 33.

Interviewer: 33. Uh...what would you categorize your race and ethnicity to be?

Kyra Banks: White.

Interviewer: And then sexual orientation? If you would like to share it.

Kyra Banks: Gay. Gold Star Gay.

Interviewer: Very, very important to know. [laughter] Okay.