

## Curious Now with Jonathan Van Ness & Alicia Roth Weigel

JVN // Oh my God. I'm actually so excited. So, ok, because this is supposed to be newsy. [NEWS MUSIC] That's supposed to be like the Today Show or like the Tonight Show, whatever, like the nightly news. Welcome to Curious Now, I'm Jonathan Van Ness. And every other week I sit down with a brilliant expert to go beyond the headlines. For our premiere episode, we're catching up with one of our most beloved Getting Curious guests, someone who I absolutely adore and someone who I'm honored to call a friend, Alicia Roth Weigel. Alicia Roth Weigel is a writer, activist and fellow Texan. When she was on Getting Curious back in 2021, she shared what it's like to live as a person with intersex traits and how she's putting the I in LGBTQIA+. This summer, she was featured in the documentary, Every Body alongside fellow Intersex activists River Gallo and Sean Saifa Wall. And this month—ahhhh, drumroll—we're celebrating the release of her new memoir, Inverse Cowgirl. So can you just remind us? Well, first of all, how the fuck are you? Are you good?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // I'm good. You know, this new moon in Pisces or whatever it is is throwing me a little bit but beyond that, everything's great. I'm super excited for the book and the movie and to be sitting with you today.

JVN // Obsessed. Diving in. Going for it. Can you remind us what it means to have intersex traits? What is the "I" in LGBTQIA+?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Yeah. So honestly, I think people get confused about it. They're like, "Is that a fancy way to say nonbinary or something?" But it's pretty simple. If you break down the word "inter-sex," it means between the sexes. And I think we as a society understand now that sexuality is not a binary, you're not just gay or straight. There's this whole beautiful spectrum in between. I think people are starting to understand now that gender is also not a binary. There's: you can be a man, you can be a woman and then this whole beautiful spectrum as well in between. What people are just coming to terms with is that sex is also not a binary. So the physical traits that we are born with, everything from chromosomes to hormones and external genitalia, internal reproductive anatomy. All of our physical sex traits that we're born with also are not binary. So you're not only a male or a female, but there's this whole beautiful spectrum of intersex traits in between. And one thing that I like to point out for people is that that's not only applicable for intersex people. It's also applicable to everyone who's listening to this podcast.

So some people who are born with breasts are born with big boobs. Some people don't grow boobs really at all, are pretty flat chested. Some cis men can grow a full beard and some barely get peach fuzz, right? So all of us, our sex traits exist on a spectrum. And with intersex people, we just happen to be a little bit closer to the center of that spectrum. So for me, I was born with xy chromosomes which most people associate with the unquote unquote "male." And so I was born with testes rather than a uterus and ovaries. Although my internal testes were born inside of me, they were internal. Except on the outside, I was born looking quote unquote "female" or presenting very femme in the world. So I also have a vagina and if you were to look at me on the street, I think you would never really know that I was born different than any other cisgender woman. So, yeah, being intersex basically means exactly what the word says. We're born "inter-sex," between the sexes. We have physical traits that don't fit neatly in those male and female categories on a birth certificate.

JVN // Obsessed. Anne Fausto Sterling was the person who said, like, the whole 1.7 people have intersex traits, right? But then TERFs would say that 1.7 is way too high. But what do we think about that?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Yeah. Well, so I think it all kind of depends on how you define intersex as well. So the 1.7% for example, doesn't include people with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, PCOS, which those people who are generally considered women are not counted in that 1.7% intersex number. However, these are women that grow facial hair. So why would that not be considered intersex? I mean, yes, you can also identify as a woman but to have women that grow full beards, I would consider that to be intersex. You have traits that don't fit neatly in this male-female binary. So I think it kind of depends on who's counting and what they're counting, you know? And the number again of 1.7, who knows that that even includes people like me because it says "female" on my birth certificate, there is no option on birth certificates in most countries. There are some exceptions, but on most birth certificates, there isn't an option for intersex, there's just male or female. So as far as I know, I might not be counted in those intersex numbers that people are citing because it says "female" on my birth certificate, I never went through any sort of, you know, gender transition where I had to update documents or anything like that.

So, you know, the 1.7 number, I think if anything, it's just an argument for: we need more data collection on this community. And we are the first people, intersex people are the first people to say that because there's so little data on how our bodies function and what our bodies need to be healthy. And that's part of what we've been working on with the Biden administration, back in Pride Month of 2022. So in June of 2022, President Biden made an executive order that did a bunch of different things. It was an omnibus Pride Month executive order. So it did everything from committing to ending conversion therapy across the country to mandating a yearlong report on the health inequities faced by intersex individuals. So for the past year, the federal government has been working with intersex activists like me across the country and we've been compiling more research on the intersex community—on the discrimination we face on the barriers to access to health care that we face on all of the different areas that need more research. So it's kind of, it's gonna be a year-long report that's gonna be released at some point later this year in 2023. That is basically gonna be the framework for saying, "This is some research that shows that we need more research." And so hopefully that'll be, you know, given that it's the first ever federal policy governing intersex Americans in the history of the United States. I hope that'll be the impetus for collecting more data so that we can have better informed arguments with TERFs—among other reasons.

JVN // Abso-fucking-lutely. But also first and foremost, so that we can have more information on the health needs of intersex people. And that's kind of what I think; it's, like, whether or not it's 1.7 or, like, 0.2%, which is a shit load of people and their families, even if it's on the lowest end. And I also think that another thing that we talked about in our episode of Getting Curious from 2021 was that, like, it's not like we test all babies for their chromosomes. So we don't even know.

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Totally, there are intersex people who find out they're intersex much, much, much later in life. They'll go to the hospital for some completely unrelated issue. Doctors will run some tests. They'll be, like, "Hey, like we got some weird hormone levels here," or "Hey, we were looking through your medical records and we see that there was, like, a surgery done when you were a baby." And then later in life, that person finds out that they're intersex. So yeah, there, there are people who are intersex that don't know their intersex. So I would say no matter what, there's an undercount, whether we're quoting 2% or 0.2%, whatever it is, it's an undercount. And until more of us start coming out of the closet, until there is more research available on our community and how intersex bodies function, we're not gonna have accurate numbers.

JVN // So then why are intersex rights in the news right now? And also, like, not to be a duality girl, but why are they *not*? Because I feel like we need even more. So, like, what are some of the headlines and what are they missing?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // It's true! Yeah. So I think intersex rights are in the news for a few reasons. First, we have the first ever movie major motion picture that has come out about our community ever, that happens to be directed by Julie Cohen, who did the Ruth Bader Ginsburg doc. She did one about former congresswoman Gabby Giffords. So I think having not just a major motion picture—which is called *Every Body* by the way—and it's streaming for free on Peacock, you can pay to stream it on any streaming service you would like, but it's also streaming for free on Peacock. So everybody came out and, and this whole podcast is called *Curious Now*, right? Part of being curious is wanting to learn about new issues. But I think in our society, if we haven't heard about something, there's this general tendency that we have to be, like, "Oh, I haven't heard of it. So it must not be a big deal." Or, like, "Oh, I've never heard of that. So it must not be real." Like, you know, it, it needs to be legitimized to a certain extent.

And the intersex movement, we haven't had any really, really, really famous people come out as intersex yet, which I think it's just a matter of time. And we haven't had this kind of, like, credibility of people that everyone's like, "Oh, I know that person," being, like, "Oh, that person's intersex," or we haven't had, you know, until now the federal government being, like, "This is an issue that we need to address." And so I think for a variety of reasons, 2022 was the year that we started to be legitimized as a movement. It's, like, we have Julie Cohen saying, "Yeah," you know, "I love Ruth Bader Ginsburg. I also love these intersex activists." You have President Biden being, like, "We need to focus on conversion therapy and we need to focus on intersex health care." And so finally, it's starting to be legitimized and I think the timing could not be more perfect because we are in this broader societal reckoning about the gender binary and what it means to be trans and what it means—what gender means in a, in a broader sense. And as you mentioned, intersex sheds a whole new light on that.

So all of these TERFs who are saying, like, "Well, we need to protect children." Ok. So you're saying we can't give hormones and surgeries to trans kids who want them. But you're saying you can still force hormones and surgeries on intersex kids who never asked for them? And that's what all of these anti-trans bills are saying. All of these same pieces of legislation that are passing or nearly passing, state by state, across the country. They are saying, "Deny gender affirming care to trans kids," but they all have these specific legal carve outs that say, "You can continue to force the same exact surgery and the same exact hormones on intersex kids who never asked for them." And so part of it is, like, "Well, that doesn't make any sense, just logically, it doesn't make any sense. But part of it is, it also just shows the utter hypocrisy of these legislators and of these TERFs that are saying, "We are out here to protect children," but you're not, you're out here to "normalize" children, you're out here saying, "We don't think trans kids are normal. So we need to prevent them from their trans-ness. And we don't think intersex kids are normal. So we need to force them into one of the categories that society is more comfortable with, whether that be male or female."

And so it's, none of it's about the health of the individuals. In question. It's all about the comfortability of the people who need to interact with and look at these children. And respectability politics is some major BS. Like, we're seeing huge strides in, you know, legislation that says, "Natural hair for Black Americans, they should be able to have natural hair in the workplace. That's how their hair grows out of their head. Why should they need to flat iron that or chemically alter that. If they want to, great, fine. But why should they have to, to be considered 'professional' or to be considered, like, worthy of our time and our

energy." And it's the same thing with trans and intersex people. It's, like, who cares what we look like to other people? This should be about what's best for our bodies. This should be about our desires, our needs, our pleasure, what makes us feel affirmed and happy. And so, you know, I think there's this larger societal reckoning that's happening about what is normal and how do we go back on what we've been taught since biology in elementary school, which is that there are only these two categories.

And you see it on all these signs on, on public restrooms and whatever and we're being forced to rethink what we've been taught and what we've been told that usually is a really uncomfortable place for people. And that's why, you know, I just love that you have this whole podcast that's all about being curious because I think we've lost a little bit of that in society. The ability to be, like, "Wow, like I could reexamine my own dogma and my own way of thinking." I think if we reframe it in our minds as rather than new things or something we need to be afraid of to something that we could be excited about. Like, "Wow, this is, like, a new opportunity for me to, like, expand my mental repertoire and, like, be able to learn about new cool things in the world that I didn't know about." Like, for me, that, that's a really cool thing.

JVN // So one, I feel like in your activism because I mean, there is, like, an incredible video of you, like, testifying at the state Senate. I, I would imagine that you've been in lots of conversations with people who are, like, very opposed to LGBTQIA+ issues. And so if you find yourself in one of those positions, how do you do your best to stay grounded and not kind of, like, become really flustered or, like, how do you deal with that, one? And then two, sports inclusion affects intersex people! Because if you're, like, on hormones or, like—or does that just do the laws, like, carve out intersex people from those? Like, what do you think about the sports inclusion!

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Sports inclusion, we just saw in Idaho, there was an injunction at the federal appeals court level in Idaho earlier this month that blocked Idaho's anti-transgender sports law and says that they can't enforce the anti-trans sports law that was passed in Idaho back in 2020. It was the first state in the US to enact a law like that, but it has now been blocked by the courts *specifically* citing arguments about intersex bodies. And they're, like, "How do we simplify something as sports to something as simple as there are only two categories when that's not what exists in biology." My question for these people that are anti-, you know, proponents of these sports laws, right? Would they rather have me—and look at me, I would urge you to go to my Instagram. It's @xoxy\_alicia. Look at me, look at the modeling campaigns that I've done. Look at my thirst traps that I post and tell me, would you like me in the men's room? Is that what you would prefer? Would you like me playing on the soccer field with your male children? Because I happen to have been born with balls and because I have xy chromosomes. And I think, like, it just points out the utter ridiculousness of it.

JVN // And so I think that is an example of, like, how intersex rights affect everyone, but you're on a mission to put the "I" in LGBTQIA+. So intersex, we're talking about it. Wake up. If you're driving, honey, you gotta get it together. How and why is the "I" often left out of LGBTQIA+?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Oooh! This is gonna be the doozy because it causes us to examine some shortcomings even within our own community, even within the broader LGBTQIA+ community. And I have to say more broadly, the queer community is, has honestly been very, very supportive of intersex people. It's just the institutions, it's the main non-profits and institutions that control queer advocacy and queer funding that have not caught up yet. It comes from something bigger, that I think applies to most of us in the world, which is a scarcity mindset, and it's something I've been working on with my

therapist. Like, a lot of my friends are getting married and having kids right now. I'm in my early thirties. It's just that time of life where it happens. Right. And sometimes I get so fixated on this fact that, like, "Oh, I'm not married. I don't have kids. Like, what am I doing wrong?" Like, I get focused on this scarcity in my life, right?

And then it's, like, but I can reframe that. It's, like, "Well, actually I had a movie just come out about me and now I have a book coming out," and, like, what a scarcity mindset means more generally is, like, our focus on lack rather than abundance. And this isn't to gaslight people who, like, they have a roof over their head but they can't pay their bills and they don't have money for food that, that should be focused on the fact that they have a roof over their head. Like, no, this isn't meant to, like, gaslight people that need and deserve more in life. What it is to say, it's that I think we all come with scarcity mindsets in certain ways. And I think within the non-profit community, I think that certain people, even within the queer community are, like, "Oh, if there's this new letter we have to talk about, or there's this new community that's gonna be getting the news airwaves or is gonna be getting some of the funding." When, let me reiterate that intersex activists receive less than 1% of all LGBTQIA+ funding available currently. "That's money that I'm not getting."

Jonathan, you and I were at the Texas State Capitol, and there was this rally that you and I both spoke at, and it was for these bills that were banning health care for trans kids. Meanwhile, drafted into the same bills was this language that says you can keep forcing surgeries on intersex kids who haven't asked for them and don't necessarily want surgeries. And I was there at this rally, I've spoken at so many hearings, I've spoken at so many rallies and I was asking them, I was, like, "Hey, like, would you mind if I spoke on the agenda? Because this bill is about my body, too. It's about my rights, too. And I'm not hearing this in the news conversation about these bills." And you were out here and you were such a good ally even within the queer community. You were, like, you got the microphone and you're like, "Hey, I'm Jonathan Van Ness. I'm here to support trans people like me, non-binary people like me, here to support everybody. And now it's time to listen to Alicia, because she has something that she needs to say, and that y'all need to hear."

And if I'm being honest, the queer community is really traumatized and rightfully so, like, we have the elders in the queer community that are coming, having lived through the AIDS crisis. And I mean, of course, we still have issues with HIV transmission rates, but thank God that's improved a lot. And we have, you know, trans people who are being targeted and they're, like, worried about not getting murdered in the streets of their own hometown. And so, of course, we have, like, really heavily traumatized individuals, but I think trauma causes us sometimes to do things and act in certain ways that, like, aren't in alignment with our highest selves. And a lot of my book is fighting for abortion rights when I don't even have a uterus, I couldn't get pregnant if I tried. So, you know, a lot of us are out here showing up for other people. And I honestly think the best activists that understand that better than any other community I know are Black activists, like, they are out here fighting for everybody. They have been the most inclusive of intersex people.

Like, I'm out here often speaking at rallies led by the Black community for the black community. And then I'm this, like, a random white girl on stage because they're, like, "This is an issue that needs space and the queer community is not giving it space." And a big part of my book—yes, my book's about being intersex, but it's, like, way bigger than that. It's really about. It's really about—I mean, it's about body autonomy more broadly. So I talk about how the fight for trans rights is the same as the fight for intersex rights is the same fight as we're fighting for abortion rights is the same fight as we're focused on for sexual assault survivors. It's all our ability to own our bodies and make decisions for ourselves about our own bodies and, like, the more that we can show up for one another, the faster we are going to win. You know, marriage equality is not a done deal. Once they chip away

at the trans rights and the intersex rights, they're going to start coming back for the gay rights, too.

JVN // And, I mean, they're already trying to target, like, HIV PrEP access, we already had a fucking outbreak of monkeypox fucking last year and it was very slow to respond.

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Totally!

JVN // So, but you know, I do think it's interesting on, like, why is there a reticence from queer folks to not support intersex and trans rights or just be scared to approach them in general? Do you know what my working theory is? Not that it's an excuse because it's not, that's my working theory. There's a trans misogyny, like, within gay men in and of themselves. Then, also with, I think with women and queer women, like, there's been, I mean, women have been one of the most oppressed and marginalized, you know, people across all, like—I just think that there's like, I think a lot of the foundational trauma in a lot of gay people, queer people has something to do with gender or there is something around gender that's within them. That's, like, it, it's different for everybody. But that's my working theory on, like, why...

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // When I used to work with Wendy Davis, who's a good friend of both of ours. And I know we, we love Wendy and we're, like, "Wendy, please run for something again." And when I used to go to the Capitol with her to advocate for gender equity more broadly, this is before I even came out as intersex. And I used to be, like, more of a sexual assault and human trafficking advocate. And I, one day, I went to the Capitol and I remember and, and you know, this is in my book and Wendy, we love you dearly and we're all learning, and we're all on a journey. But Wendy told me my skirt was too short and she was, like, "You need to go home and change your skirt." And I was, like, "No," and she was, like, "You're not going to be taken seriously, you're representing our organization." Like, because people in her generation, and she's a generation above me, right? Feminists had to fit into a certain box to be taken seriously and they had tougher hurdles than we had. And so we all come with, like, certain baggage of, like, where we have had to experience something that then translates into us honestly being part of perpetuating our own oppression. Like, we need to abolish the police inside ourselves. We need to stop policing one another.

And when you take it a step further with trans people, and why I've actually, and I want to shout out, like, the NCTE—National Center for Trans Equality—has been, like, the best ally. They're dope, they're amazing, and throw your money at them, anyone listening. So there are a lot of trans activists that are out here supporting trans and intersex solidarity because we have so many issues in common, from hormone replacement therapy to growing up in the closet to, like, not fitting into these binaries. Like, we're the most natural allies in the world. So there are trans people that are out here fighting the intersex fight, and I, I wanna make that clear, too. But I think what part of it is with trans folks and why some of the trans community has not embraced the intersex message, and I've heard this firsthand from some of my trans friends, that when they came to terms with being trans, they wanted to be intersex because they felt like it legitimized their trans-ness. They were, like, "If I were intersex, I would have this thing I could point to that would be, like, 'Ha, Look! My body is not fitting in this category that y'all put on my birth certificate. And so I have this, like, validating factor that legitimizes me.'" And I think all of those trans people who have told me that have had to come to terms with the fact that, "Hey, our brains are also part of our body. And if our brains are telling me I don't fit in this category, like, that's not my category," right? Like, our brains are also a body part. So, so, like, that is validation enough, in and of itself.

JVN // I also love this, that you write. So in *Inverse Cowgirl*, you're also on a mission to show that intersex people are in fact hot, not just brave that really, really resonates with me. So how is this duality an intentional part of your activism?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // In so many ways! First off, like, intersex people have been de-sexualized by society because, like, we were always called “hermaphrodites,” which was always like the butt of jokes like even on *Will and Grace*, for example, which is this, like, pivotal show for the queer community. Like, they made jokes about hermaphrodites. And again, that just shows we're all on a learning curve, right? So, like, we were de-sexualized, we were viewed as, like, this joke. We were told our bodies were disgusting, that they were not desirable. I was told by the doctors, like, I had to lie and tell, never tell anyone about who I was because I would never find a good husband one day, I would never be worthy of love. I would never be lovable if people knew who I really was, because they would think I was gross because it's rooted in homophobia. It's rooted in transphobia, all these things. To the point where so many intersex friends that I've talked to tell the same lie. A bunch of my intersex friends would walk around as kids and we would literally tell people that we were born with ovarian cancer and that we had to have our ovaries removed. And that's why we couldn't have children. Which is, like, really wild that we have doctors out here pushing us into this place where we're, like, “We need to lie about having childhood cancer.” It's pretty freaking weird, like, that, that's weird.

And anyway, so we, we were told we had to lie about ourselves to be ever worthy of love and attraction and affection. And it took a long time for me to unlearn that. And also, I had learned to, like, dissociate from myself because my own boundaries were so violated by, like, doctors as a kid and, like, being put under anesthesia to, like, be, like, observed by, like, medical students and, like, just not being treated like I had boundaries over my own body. I had learned to dissociate from my own body. And when I look at my sex life in my early years, it was based all on this, like, desire for validation from the male gaze that, like, I was attractive and that I was desirable. It wasn't at all focused on my pleasure. And I had to, like, re-learn to bring myself back into my body. They call it, like, embodiment in, like, therapy spaces and stuff. I had to, like, learn to stop dissociating from my own body, bring myself back into my own body, which I've learned to do in a lot of different ways—through running through dancing through all these things that helped bring me back into myself.

So it took me a long time to first off, like, feel OK in my own body and then be, like, “Wait, like, I actually am, like, really hot and, like, I deserve to also be taking thirst traps on Instagram and, like, to enjoy my own sexuality. And, and this is the most important part to me that that doesn't make me any lesser of a person. It doesn't make me less professional, it doesn't make me less impactful or less powerful in my arguments, like, as an advocate. And it's something I write about in my book that there was a former Maxim model who ran for Congress in California. There's a former stripper who ran for office in Philadelphia. We're seeing this more. Like, sex workers are out here organizing and, like, the fact that we are sexual beings does not mean that we're not also intelligent or that we're not also effective and that we're not also powerful as professionals, like, any human being who's not asexual is sexual and, like, we all have bodies. And that's, like, the weirdest thing for me, it's like, it's so weird that we all carry so much shame about our bodies when, like, the one thing all human beings have in common is that we all have them. It's, like, we need to unlearn that.

And so for me, it's really been—beyond fighting for the rest of my community—a huge part of my own activism has been learning to love my own body, feel comfortable in my own body, feel safe in my own body. And then, like, sharing that with other people—to be, like, “We, we should, we should all feel empowered to do what we want with our bodies.” And for all of the, like, politicians who are uncomfortable talking about sex work or talking about these other issues, like, if we're saying that the government should not be telling people

what to do with their uterus through abortion, then they also shouldn't be telling people what to do with their vaginas through sex work. It just seems really simple to me. But I think there's, there's just so much beyond the intersex community, like, body positivity is something that I think we all need to work on. And so I'm, I'm doing that through, through my advocacy, but also through, you know, my ass shots on Instagram.

JVN // You better. I love duality. It's, I love that so much. Okay, so we say that really hard. It's not our fault. So we'll be answering some listener questions on Curious Now, it's, like, a new thing that we're doing, and we're excited to introduce it. So here's one that we would love your help answering. This person asks, "I'm a school board member battling against book bans and banned pride flags in our classrooms. Our community is getting tired of the battle and I'm hearing we should quote, 'stop talking about these LGBTQ issues.'" See, they, we didn't even say "IA+." So, we'll get that. So, "We shouldn't even talk about these LGBTQIA+ issues." I will fix the quote! "But I need more talking points on how to make it clear that these issues affect all students. I know they do but I feel like I need better arguments, more examples. Something! Quick snappy comebacks to redirect the conversation." My favorite one is, like, "Get fucked bitch!" but you probably can't say that at, like, a school board meeting. You know what I mean? So I'm trying to be more ALOK my answers. But Alicia Roth Weigel, do you have any, like, fierce, like, interesting nuanced comebacks?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Yeah. Well, one thing I like to do and then I'll get into, like, a specific idea that I have, but, like, more broadly is I often like to flip it on their heads and talk to them in their own language. So, like, they're out here talking about Jesus and the Bible and stuff. Sometimes, I come in and my entire testimony is, like, framed in biblical terms. And it makes them, it makes it really hard for them to be like, "No, I don't agree with that," when I'm, like, "When Jesus said in the Bible, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, this means that like we need to accept, like, all these people, including the gay kids and whatever," and it's, it makes it harder for them when you're, like, meeting them where they're at and they're, like, "Well, crap. It's harder for me to like, argue against this." So, so that's one thing that I do. But also, and we talked about this earlier: just pointing out the utter hypocrisy of these people that are targeting the LGBTQIA+ community. So they're saying that they want to protect children, and yet the same exact laws targeting trans children that say, "Don't give surgeries and hormones say that we can force surgeries and hormones on intersex children." And it just points out the utter hypocrisy in these bills, and it points out the, the very visible fact, which is, this is not about protecting children. It's about enforcing their cis, white, hetero, patriarchal view of what is considered "normal" and what is considered "not normal." And that is not for them to decide, that is for us to decide. These are our bodies, these are our lives, these are our decisions to make for ourselves.

JVN // Absolutely. I also think as far as, like, school things are concerned, like, one of the really effective arguments I feel like I've heard is that, like, so much of it is about parental rights, like, parental rights as far as, like, what your kid reads, how they read it, how they learn it, like, you know, parents should be involved in, in what kids do and how they learn. Yet when it comes to gender expression and health care, then the parents shouldn't have rights? And shouldn't be allowed to make decisions—health care decisions and you know, lifestyle decisions that are best for them and their family? But I think the really slippery part with that is, is like, especially here in Texas is, you know, you had Ken Paxton, you know, issue this directive that said that, like, if you *suspect* a family of having a trans kid, well, you should report them to the Department of Child and Family Services for child abuse. But that could be because you let your kid grow their hair out, because they have an outfit, because they do a pronoun change. It doesn't, I mean, you don't even have to be doing any sort of puberty blockers or any sort of, like—and that's not even child abuse, any fucking how.



ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // That's where it affects everyone. And, and intersex kids—there is an intersex activist I know in Houston, who was born in between, was born physically in between, was born intersex, and the doctors told his family to raise him as a girl because that is usually the default with intersex children, because they say, "It's easier to dig a hole than it is to build a pole." They think it's easier to create a vagina than it is to make a penis. So they're, like, "Let's default to saying these little kids are girls." This intersex kid was born intersex. The doctors told his parents to raise him as a girl. He was, like, "Hey, actually, like, I'm a boy, no one ever asked me, y'all did all these surgeries without asking me." So his parents were, like, "Okay." And they started letting him wear boy's clothing and his neighbors started reporting him. This was many years ago, and he got taken away from his parents because they were, like, "They're out here raising this kid as a boy when he's a girl." And it was, like, "No, actually he's intersex. Like, he was born with anatomy that's in between. Like, it was the doctors that made this decision to raise him as a girl in the first place." And I think that example just shows how, like, it's all so freaking complicated and, like, rather than like, policing again, like what other people are doing and whatever, like, why don't we just let people be who they are.

JVN // Obsessed. Also, I got in, like, a pretty heated debate about trans rights with someone who I really, really respect and it really, really traumatized me because it was, like, just, you know how, like, sometimes when you get into a fight about trans stuff with someone who you didn't see coming and then you're just, like, "Oh shit!" I also think it was really funny. The person who I got in a fight with has daughters, like, young daughters and they were talking about, like, a, you know, hypothetical situation—like, that's why they were so worried about sports because they were, like, "I have to protect women's sports. Like, for my daughters, like I have a right to ask these questions." And it didn't matter if I was talking about, "Well, you know, sports are inherently dangerous, period," because if you're getting into a sport, like you could get hurt, like, no matter if there's trans women there or not, like, women get hurt in sports all the time, like, torn ACLs, broken ankles, broken arms, all sorts of shit. Like sports are dangerous. They're also unfair because of, like, money and access and all of these things. But it's like, the thing is, is that, like, we are more concerned about hypothetical threats to women's sports than the fact that, like, now kids can't play sports, kids are already getting bullied for—and, and getting taken away. I mean, the, the real world harm of what's already happening to trans and intersex people. It's not all about winning medals or winning state or being competitive or getting a scholarship. It's, these are, like, real world, social capital things that are actually, like, so important to, like, raising kids. Not all kids gotta, you know, play sports in order to, like, be raised well. But the opportunity to do so gives us—a lot of people—their formation of foundational way of being in the world. So to deprive that of kids is so fucked up.

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // It is. And I was a, I was a big athlete growing up and to, to go by these people's logic, and say that I should have been required to, like, play on the men's sports team. Again, I think if anyone took one look at me, they would realize how inherently flawed all of these arguments are. And really scaling it bigger than trans people, intersex people with sports. I mean, just scapegoating is the most effective thing in the world. They have us all out here focusing so hard on little kids' genitals. When in the state of Texas, we have had 60 plus days of temperatures above 100 degrees. And then on the flip side—that's in the summertime—in the wintertime when it goes below freezing, we all lose power because we're on our own weird, fucked up Texas power grid, not the national grid. And so in the summer, we can't leave our homes because it's stiflingly hot. In the winter, we can't leave our homes because we don't have power and the roads don't have ice and don't have plows because they're acting like these are fluke, winter storms rather than just climate change, what it is. And so, like, when, when they have all of these Texas voters out here focusing on little kids' genitals, they're not focusing on the fact that their current

government is really messing up their lives in a whole lot of other ways. And so I, I really think, like, scapegoating is one of the oldest tactics of all time. It's, like, when you want people to avoid looking at one thing, like, have them look at some other bright shiny object. And I would just say, like, let's just take that shiny object, like, out of, like, little kids' pants. It's a really weird place for that shiny object to be.

JVN // Yet strangely effective. You know, it's because it's really, it's—so *Inverse Cowgirl* is an absolute must read. I don't wanna, like, fully spoil, but it's a memoir. It's, it's your story in the world. But what, what's, like, a teaser or anything that you wanna share like an elevator pitch?

JVN // Yeah, I think that again, I would just point out that it's, it's for everybody. So I have read intersex books and I want to point out there's my friend, Pidgeon [Pagonis] has an intersex book out right now that just came out and it's called *Nobody Needs To Know*. And it's really good and pigeons delves really deeply into like the intersex experience. And so I think anyone who wants to learn more beyond my story, mind is not the only intersex story out there. And thank god, we're finally starting to have publishers and movie production companies realize that although we need way more of that. But my book in particular, it is, you are gonna learn about intersex stuff. But, like, it really is way bigger than that. I talk about magic mushrooms. I talk about abortion rights. I talk about so many different things. And again, it's really just, like—the very first line of my book. The day I sat down to write my book was the day that *Roe versus Wade* was reversed. And I was, like, the day I sat down to write this, half of the United States lost the right to their own body. That's a right I never had since I was a baby. And so y'all are freaking out now because you just lost that right. I've never had it. So let me help you understand how you can learn to reclaim that.

And so I think, like, anyone who's listening, like whether or not you think you've ever met an intersex person, which I know you have, they've just been closeted, you know, regardless of whether you're interested in learning more, which I hope you do about intersex rights. This book is like, I, I hope it will be helpful for anyone. It's really just about learning to reclaim your rights to your own body, to find your voice, learn how to advocate for yourself and learn how to heal. And I think those are things that, like, would resonate with anybody. And then just like a cool teaser, I guess, like, I—and you know this because you've read the book—but each of the chapters is centered on one of my tattoos and we talked earlier in this conversation about embodiment and like how to reclaim your body when it's been taken from you. And one of the coolest ways that I've found to do that is like literally getting tattoos, getting inks on my skin. It's literally helping me reclaim my own skin. And it's like I was told by doctors in society that like, my body was inherently ugly. And it's like, “Well, let me find things that I find beautiful and let me bring that into this body.” Each of my chapters is focused on one of my tattoos and what I find beautiful and, and I hope other people will find beauty in, in my essays and in my work and will encourage other people to read it, too.

JVN // So, Alicia tell us: *Inverse Cowgirl*, out on what date, where are we buying it? Like wherever you get your books?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Everyone can preorder write this instant, you can get it anywhere books are sold online. If you pre-order it, it'll be delivered to your hands or you can pick it up in that bookstore when it goes live in stores on September 19th. So don't wait till the 19th to get it preorder it, it's also you can get the the audiobook on Audible. You can get an e-reader. All of that's gonna be dropping on September 19th, but I highly recommend preordering it in the meantime.

JVN // And did you voice your book?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // I did, I did voice my audio book and I've been told that I have a good voice for radio.

JVN // You have an incredible voice. We've all been listening to it. So get it yesterday. Also, we've been working hard on a Bookshop.org page for all of Getting Curious. So, like, anyone who's ever been on Getting Curious, their book is linked there, Alicia yours included. So if you want to get your Getting Curious expertise by our experts on, check that out, we'll put a link in the description of whatever you're listening to the show on. But I'm really excited for this, Alicia Roth Weigel, because this is a rapid fire media moment, which we're obsessed with. So, but some of these answers we could get into, like, an entire dissertation on them. So rapid—

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // I know, but we gotta keep it rapid, rapid.

JVN // Ok. Ready? What story could you not get enough of growing up—or, like, ever? Elián González was a big one for me growing up. Like, you remember Elián González? The flood of '93? Monica? Like, the Olympics—'96 Olympics, Magnificent Seven?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // I feel like the only thing I can remember from growing up is when the Spice Girls broke up.

JVN // Oh my God, that's a really, that's a really, really formative. I was also about to say, like, realizing that I wanted Michael Phelps to fuck me from, like, 2008 to, like, 2016. That was, like—his chest was another media moment I couldn't get enough of it, really just did it for me.

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // You have just an amazing, you have an amazing memory. I think for me the most formative was probably the Spice Girls breaking up. I'm still a little bit salty.

JVN // What's your current pop culture obsession?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Barbie! And, *and* Barbie has unintentional intersex representation. There's a whole scene where, where she's, like, "Yeah, I don't, like, have genitalia," and all the people in the scene are, like, "Oh, that's OK." And it's, like, "Hello atypical genitalia representation!"

JVN // C'mon!

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // And then at the end she's going into the doctor into the gynecologist to get her, like, you know, surgery. I'm, like, Barbie is, like, unintentionally the most intersex affirming movie ever. Ok, next question!

JVN // What's a recent "Today I Learned?" moment for you. Like, at the world track and field championships, like, we got disqualified from the 4 x 400 relay. But that was the first time that that's happened since 2005. Our girls shit their pants out there. It was so sad. They did it outside the transfer zone. Oh! Or, a lady, this lady at the world track and field championships. This American lady, she won discus for the first time ever from the United States. We had our first discus winner.

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // These are amazing. I'm trying to think of something, like, positive and not bummer jams. Hold on—

JVN // Did you learn on our episode of Getting Curious from last, three weeks ago that there's 10 eco-types of orcas?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // I did learn that, actually! And I love orcas, and let me tell you, as an activist, I'm really into the orca uprising. So I appreciate that you dedicated an entire episode to that.

JVN // Fuck me hard. Like, knowing a fact from Getting Curious. That was hot, Alicia! Like, oh my God! OK, what's a meme or GIF that made you LOL recently?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // So 99% of what I follow on Instagram is Chihuahua accounts. So if you, like, go to my @xoxy\_alicia and you look at my followed accounts, like, you'll just find a plethora of Chihuahua memes that I would highly recommend.

JVN // Is that a leftover from loving the mascot of Taco Bell growing up on the commercials?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // No, that's a leftover of the love of my life, Chiquita! Who's been sitting on our lap the whole time in this conversation! [PULLS CHIQUITA FROM HER LAP!]

JVN // Oh my God. You're such a good girl. I never done anything wrong. You're such a good girl. You're so sweet and cute and perfect.

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // She's the princess, the angel princess of the entire universe.

JVN // She is angel princess of Genovia, and the universe. What's a moment of queer joy we can end on. Is it Chiquita? Or is it different?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // I think the moment of queer joy that we can end on is, like, having everybody see Every Body online because the fact that we have intersex representation in a movie streaming that everyone can watch, that is, like, the queerest joy I can think of. Oh my God, Alicia Roth Weigel. I love you so much. Thank you so much for being the first guest on Curious Now! I could not think of any better person in the world. Congratulations on Inverse Cowgirl. We are so proud of you. Chiquita, you've already had a nap. No more yawning. You're awake now. We love you so much, Alicia, thank you!

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Love you. See you soon!

### [CREDITS]

JVN // Senator Weigel, Does that not get, like, am I, like—doesn't that kind of sound interest? Someday?

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // Maybe someday, maybe someday. I'm like, for me, I'm someone that's like it would have to be the right person for the right seat at the right time. I'm not gonna, like—

JVN // Ooooh, you fucking political strategist!

ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL // I'm, like, I'm not gonna take millions of dollars from people I care about if I don't see a path to winning. But if there ever is a path to winning and if it ever makes sense and if I'm the right person, I'm not saying never.