

CHLOE CRAWFORD-ROSS

Drag Queen/Entertainer - Houston, TX
@chloecrawfordross

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Amy Evans [00:00:02]: Okay. It is Tuesday, August 25th, 2020. This is Amy Evans on Zoom with Miss Chloe Crawford-Ross. Miss Chloe, if I could get you to say your name and introduce yourself for the record.

Chloe Crawford-Ross [00:00:18]: Okay. Well, my name is Taylor Mabrie. My stage name is Chloe Crawford-Ross. I was born June 7, 1987. My first day of performing—well, Chloe came to be—was June 1st—my math is awful, and I know I'm going to sound dumb—ten years ago. So 2010, yeah, there we go. That's sad. I have a bachelor's degree, and I'm dumb, dumb, dumb. Oh, well.

AE [00:00:58]: It's these times, Miss Chloe. It's these times. I'm telling you, we're all a little bit less-than right now. Although you are looking a lot more-than. This is my fanciest Zoom call I've ever had because you look amazing.

CCR [00:01:13]: This is my lounge-around-and-watch-Netflix look.

AE [00:01:17]: So tell me first about your drag name.

CCR [00:01:21]: Well, it actually—so when I first started, I didn't know what I was going to be called. I didn't want to be campy. You know how some people have a campy name that means something else, like tongue in cheek. I have a really good friend that performs with me. Her name is Violets S'Arbleu. So I didn't want a campy name like that. Also, my roommate, her name is Sin City, like [Las] Vegas. But I didn't want a name like that. I kind of wanted it, in my head, just to be like your friend, like girl next door, approachable but still fashion oriented. That's what I wanted my main focus to be in fashion—and music, of course, because I really love

music. I love a lot of different music. [00:02:19] So I just wrote down ten names, and I just went around and asked people, what do you think about this name, do you like this name, what about this name? Then finally, we landed on Chloe. Well, my name is Taylor, so I wasn't part of a drag house or anything. I was Chloe Taylor. I was Chloe Taylor for a long—at least two years. Then I had a drag mother. Her name was Ailayah Crawford, but I didn't feel like I was learning anything from her. I just felt like I talk to you on the phone and we're friends, but I still look a mess. I haven't learned anything. [00:03:13] When I mean learn anything, I mean makeup tips, how to make costumes, how to sew, that kind of stuff. I just wasn't—no fault of hers because she wasn't used to having a kid. I just kind of latched onto her and was like—what is it called when ducks and animals get first birthed and then the first person they see they're attached to them? That's kind of what it was. But oddly enough, her sister Aria Crawford said that she would take me under her wing. She was my mom for a good five years, and that's where I got the name Chloe Crawford. [00:03:59] Well, there was another—she's still alive of course, an entertainer who I always admired [Tommie Ross]. I loved her sense of self, how other people viewed her and how she viewed herself and how she carried herself. It was always so regal and bigger than life and I was like, oh, I want to be a part of that family. So oddly enough, since I was doing the booking at JR's [bar in Montrose], I booked her on the show. Then we were backstage talking, and she was just kind of being nice to some wide eyed little kid. She goes, "Oh, I'm going to make you my goddaughter," blah, blah, blah. I was like, "Oh wow, how cool." [00:04:52] Then I'm performing and stuff, and then she goes out to watch me perform. She's like, "Oh, no, no, you're going to be my daughter. You're going to be my daughter." So, that's where Ross came from. So I try to combine both parts, if not just one or the other, because without one I won't have the other. I

wouldn't be where I am now without everything that I learned from before. So I'm grateful for this, and this is actually the longest job that I've ever had. I've never had a problem with working. When I was a kid, I would have two jobs because I wanted stuff. I didn't like to just sit at home. My brothers [Justin L. Mabrie, Brent W. Mabrie, and David C. Mabrie] liked to play outside, and that wasn't for me, so I would just be bored. [00:05:49] So I went to go work at The Gap, I think, so I could get nicer school clothes. I got school clothes, but I'm saying I wanted extra school clothes. Who doesn't like new clothes? But none of those jobs lasted. I went to college [at The Art Institute of Houston]. I wanted to do fashion design, but my dad [Herman J. Mabrie III, MD] was like, "That's not lucrative, initially. It's going to be so hard for you to break in. You just need to get a business degree" and blah, blah, blah. So I was like, okay, fine. So I did that. [00:06:35] RuPaul's Drag Race, season three, I was watching it, and I was just so mesmerized by Manila Luzon and Raja [Gemini]. I just loved all the fashion. I hadn't actually—yes, entertainers wear costumes, but I just liked their presentation. So I was like, you know what? I can actually do that. I'm going to do that. So then that's when I actually kind of just got into it and got started dabbling in it and stuff.

AE [00:07:14]: Were you familiar with the drag community at all before RuPaul's Drag Race?

CCR [00:07:21]: To be honest, I didn't even like drag queens before. I would go into the club. But my mindset was different, too. I've been out since I was thirteen, so I've been sneaking into clubs all the whole time. It's not like—I would just be about hanging out with my friends. I wasn't necessarily going to the show to be like, oh, wow, that's so cool. No. It was more about how can I get drunk with my friends, who's all going to be there, what are they going to have on,

am I going to make curfew for my dorm, that kind of stuff. I wasn't trying to see the drag show.

[00:08:24] Not that I hated drag, I just wasn't into it or I didn't know I was into it because I never paid attention. But when I started watching the show, I was just so wow about it. I just had to do it. It wasn't anything that I could live without at that point.

AE [00:08:58]: Yeah. Well, I'm sure, too, I would imagine, that seeing that level of drag performance on RuPaul's Drag Race, that that was the ultimate achievement.

CCR [00:09:10]: Well, to be honest, now that I've been in the business for like ten years, yes, being on Drag Race is very lucky. You're very lucky to be in that situation, but you're only lucky because you were chosen to be on that platform, not necessarily based off of your actual skill or your actual—who you are as that drag queen at that time, because when Shangela had gotten on the show, which, oddly enough, was the same season—well, she went home first, but still she had only been doing drag six months. So it really doesn't even—it's not a true gauge of, wow, you're the best drag queen ever because you were on Drag Race. No, you were the lucky enough person to be chosen for that season. The casting directors saw your dynamic for our reality show, and your personality works best with what we've already chosen. **[00:10:21]** Not dogging any of the girls because a lot of them are very talented in what they do. It just happens to be that they're talented, but that's not necessarily why they were chosen.

AE [00:10:36]: Would you ever want to participate on the show?

CCR [00:10:41]: I do. I would, but like I said off camera earlier, I'm in the process of transitioning. I've been on hormones for going on six, seven months now, and Ru Paul hasn't cast

a transsexual, historically. That doesn't mean that he won't, but he hasn't in the past. So mostly what they do is, if they do have a transsexual on this show, they'll make it seem as though they went to this realization of who they were during this show, which that's just television because they were already—I think that that's not cool because it's deceiving people of who they are. They should be able to go on the show and be like, yeah, I'm trans, whatever, whatever, and I'm going to work just as hard as the other girls. **[00:11:51]** A lot of people think that, because you're trans, as far as entertainment, sometimes you have it a little easier because you don't necessarily have to put on the hip pads, or you don't have to wear a breastplate because you have breasts. I still have to take an hour and forty-five minutes and put all this makeup on, and I still have to have really nice clothes. I still have to have a great music selection. I still have to be entertaining. So I don't think that that's necessarily a valid opinion to take sometimes but—.

AE [00:12:35]: Yeah.

CCR [00:12:37]: I don't want to guess.

AE [00:12:37]: Well, I want to back up a little bit because—are you from Houston, originally?

CCR [00:12:44]: I was born in New York but lived here since I was thirteen.

AE [00:12:48]: In Houston? That was the year you came out also?

CCR [00:12:54]: Well, I didn't come out. My dad kind of told me I was gay. It's kind of weird. We were having a heated discussion about something. I don't even know what it was. Oh, I know what it was. My dad and I used to wear these button down polo shirts, heavy starched, and I

wanted to wear them to school sometimes, but I was also wearing makeup. So when he would get the shirt back, it would have a whole ring of makeup around the collar. It wasn't that I put makeup on my neck. If the color is here, you're doing this *[makes motion of moving face towards shoulder]*. [00:13:42] So he would ask me, "Why does it have makeup on the collar?" I was like, "I don't know. It's dirt. I don't know." So then he was like—he wasn't upset that I was, never at any time. He was upset that I had felt that I couldn't trust him with the information and that I felt that I had to lie about who I was. He didn't like that. But once everything was finally out in the open, it was out in the open. Even recently, even though I was on hormones for the whole time, I've only recently within the last month told everyone in my family that I'm transitioning. They've all been very supportive. They've all been very loving and just really showing support and making sure that I'm okay and that I have a good foundation to battle the world, that I don't feel—their love is my shield to walk out, so I'll feel comfortable from ridicule or whatever. [00:15:18] I know that's not the case for everybody, most likely the majority of people. I've just been lucky and blessed to have that type of family. Yeah, I can't say—It's just a blessing.

AE [00:15:37]: Yeah, that's amazingly fortunate. I'm so happy for you and your family, that they embrace all of who you are. Have they come to see any of your performances as Miss Chloe?

CCR [00:15:51]: No. This is where we have an issue because they're not club people. They're very professional people. My dad's a doctor. My mom [Linda B. Mabrie] was a Catholic school principal. They're very professional. Not uptight, but they don't even really drink. They've never been to a nightclub. Even as young people, they—person people. They've never been to a

nightclub, so my dad was like, "Well, I've never been to a nightclub before, so I don't see why I should be forced to go. I support you. I love you, but it's not my thing." So, yeah. [00:16:38] I understand. I wouldn't want somebody to force me. This is my choice to have this job, and I know that they're not slighting me from not going, but sometimes it does hurt a little, but I understand why.

AE [00:16:55]: You just called it a job. Do you see it as a job, or do you see it as part of who you are, or both?

CCR [00:17:06]: Being transsexual is life, but performing has been a passion of mine for the past ten years. So I've been lucky enough to make my passion my job. It's a career. I've made it my lifelong thing for all practical purposes until I just can't do it anymore for whatever reason. But ,yeah.

AE [00:17:43]: Well, tell me about the first time that you performed in drag. What was the song? What did you wear? What did it feel like?

CCR [00:17:52]: Man. Okay, so like I said, June 1st, my friends were like, "Oh, let's get you dressed up. Let's go walk out in the club so you'll get comfortable being in drag" and blah, blah, blah. I was like, "Okay, cool. Yeah, let's do it, let's do it." So my first night out walking around Montrose [neighborhood] with my friends, blah, blah, blah. I thought it didn't look so bad, but apparently I looked okay that night because, like I was telling you, Ailayah came up to me and she goes, "Oh, have you started doing shows yet?" I said, "No, I haven't." [00:18:44] She's like, "Well, you need to get ready for Tuesday because I've already posted on Facebook that you'll be

performing. If you cancel this booking, then it's already going to send a bad message to other show directors when you start performing." I was like, "What? I didn't even ask you for the booking." She's like, "Well, it's already done so figure it out. Make it work." So I was like, well what song do I know that I can sing word for word and I can groove to the song and not be stressed out? It has a nice groove, it's not all fast, I don't have to get dancy, dancy because it's my first time. I just have a nice little cool vibe. **[00:19:38]** I did Mary J Blige, "Love Without a Limit." It's such a nice little—I love that song. Yeah, that was my first number. It was at Bayou City, which is now called Buddy's, but that's—at the time it was called Bayou City.

AE [00:20:05]: And you were hooked?

CCR [00:20:08]: I mean, I was nervous as heck. My friends said I was visibly shaking, but it's because it was the first time being vulnerable in front of an audience. Just being there in front of them and just feeling my whatever emotion that I was feeling at that time to express the song. Either they could have just turned around and not paid attention and just talking to their friends, or they could have been into the performance so much, which I guess God was like, yeah, let me give you a break. All my friends were there, so it was like—it wasn't a bunch of strangers. I guess there were maybe ten people in an audience of 100 that I didn't know. So, the majority of the time I'm just walking around taking tips. **[00:21:15]** But nonetheless, it was still a nerve-wracking experience. It was just very exhilarating. I was hooked, line and sinker.

AE [00:21:33]: How would you compare that first experience performing in drag to where you are now? How are you different as a performer? What have you learned?

CCR [00:21:46]: Well, it's pretty much the same thing. I still have to plan out my music based on how I'm feeling, what my mood is, that kind of situation. So, that still happens. I still have to figure out costume rotation because this is a green screen [*points over her shoulder*]. Behind this green screen is a big closet of clothes. So you can't—even though you like a costume that you have, you can't wear it the same time in a week because somebody—or at the same location.

[00:22:31] So if I wear it at JR's, I can't wear it at JR's that same week, but I can wear it at another bar that same week. So it's just about juggling, just making sure, putting it in your book to let yourself know, hey, you wore this already. Get something else, you've got plenty of stuff back there. If not, it's just time to get something new. So yeah, planning out music, making mixes, thinking about the crowd, what kind of music they like. **[00:23:15]** A lot of artists now, entertainers now, do more of a creative expression, so their performance is based off what they like and what they want to do, opposed to pleasing their audience on what they want to see. Sometimes it works because, for the most part, if you're into your performance and you're believing it and you're feeling it, then they will. But on the other hand, people like to hear Top 40 [songs], something they can sing along to, something that's familiar to them. So it's just to have a good balance of all those things. After a while, it just becomes second nature about just thinking about the situation of what club and just thinking about everything from there.

AE [00:24:23]: Yeah. Well, now I found your name because I remembered that article in the *Houston Chronicle* about the Black History Month and the history of Black drag queens in Houston. Can you speak about your participation in that a little bit?

CCR [00:24:43]: Okay. My sister, Blackberri, she's a bearded queen. She's a bearded beauty in Houston. We were talking. She had sent me a photo of something similar that the girls from Chicago did. I was like, oh, that would be so cool if we could do that here in Houston. I just think that that would be monumental. It felt like it was the right time to stand in solidarity and just kind of flex. Yeah, look at us, look at all of us and we're still here. We're still a part of the community and we're thriving in all aspects. Really, it was just a big flex, a big — **[00:25:44]** So I just got a lot of girls together. It was at least twenty, thirty girls in the group message. Just like with any kind of group project, we know. I don't even have to go into the semantics, but somebody is going to be there. The overachiever helping, doing all the work. You're going to have some worker bees, and you're going to have some people who don't give a fuck, and they're not trying to do it but they still want the grade. So it's kind of like that. **[00:26:30]** So what we ended up with—out of the twenty, I think it was seven girls in that picture, seven girls. The girls that showed up were invested in it. When they were taking the pictures, they felt proud. Oddly enough, besides my mother that was in the picture [Tommie Ross], it was all younger kids. It was all younger generation, so it felt good. It felt really nice to do that and to just represent Houston and represent all of the aspects that you may not necessarily pay attention to all the time but they're always there. You're not being disrespectful, but you just haven't really just paid attention and just look at certain things. So it was a good thing.

AE [00:27:36]: Because Houston is such a gay city—such a gay-friendly city—we've had that history of the Pride Parade and Montrose and all that, everybody knows about drag queens and RuPaul's Drag Race. But for that article to hit and to think about the legacy of Black drag queens

in Houston, that is something that I never thought about. So I'm wondering, in response to that article, if you got feedback or a little bit of notoriety, or if there was more interest in who y'all are and what you do?

CCR [00:28:13]: Well, being honest, I could have said it wasn't supposed to be this jump off point for that to happen. If it did, it did, but it wasn't as if we said, "Ooh, they're going to see this and they're going to interview us. We're going to be on MTV. Ooh." It wasn't any of that. It was just more of y'all, let's do this picture. Let's do this. Y'all want to take this picture? They're like, yeah, let's take this picture. It was just basically a big excuse to get dressed up, look fancy, and then have it mean something behind it. So, yeah. They're going to do—well, I don't know if I should say. Maybe it's a secret. I don't want to say, but they're going to be doing something. I forget. Is this going to be on Facebook, or is it just going to be in the library?

AE [00:29:21]: Yeah, I'm going to share it. I'm going to do a website and social media, so yeah.

CCR [00:29:26]: Oh, okay. I'll wait.

AE [00:29:27]: Okay, right time. Hold on one second, Miss Chloe. Well, my daughter was at the backdoor trying to get in my kitchen. Okay, so there's a secret coming out to be announced of your next project. But no, I was going to say, going back to the [*Houston*] *Chronicle* article, your mother Miss Tommie Ross is a legend in Houston drag circles, I know. Yes, I learned a lot about her, but I have to tell you because, when I looked up all the names of the women in that *Chronicle* article from Black History Month, you stood out to me because you seem very politically active. You seem like an organizer. You seem like you get people together and get

people organized and get people talking. So that's why I focused on you. So what is it about that part of your personality and who you are that you've carried into your—.

CCR [00:30:28]: If I win, we all win. So if I'm going to get some shine, why not include you? It doesn't take anything away from me to have you shining right next to me. That doesn't hurt me. So like I said, it doesn't even necessarily have to do with just Black. Just, period. With anything, if I have a group idea, I definitely want to include all types of different people and backgrounds and stuff because what they're going to bring is going to be totally different from what my mind would have thought of. So, that's always good just to have a good variety of things. But yeah, basically if I'm winning, why not? You're not taking any money out of my mouth. It doesn't hurt. So, yeah.

AE [00:31:34]: Well, so Black History Month was February. Then in March, mid-March, we had Coronavirus and everybody went on lockdown and the world changed. We're still in it. It's August. So tell me how things have changed for you as a result of COVID-19.

CCR [00:31:55]: Well, I still work in the office. I still put in days. Not all week, but maybe three days a week. I still work with JR's in the office. But we've had to do virtual shows, so basically whatever club or whatever group of friends that you have a common goal or common vision come together and just decide to put on a virtual show. Sometimes it's on Twitch, sometimes they just collectively put all the videos together on iMovie. What I did recently last month and this month, we're actually in this third day of doing it, is JR's is hosting a week-long showcase of all the nights. So all the drag shows that we have on Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday we're showcasing that cast on a virtual level. Like I said, we started off last month and we're doing it

actually—today is Charlie's Angels Drag Review. So that would be Kofi, Violet S'Arbleu, Chloe Knox and myself, but I've been under the weather the past couple of weeks. I haven't made a new video. So one of the show directors from the other night is filling in for me on the show. But yeah, oddly enough, I'm sure it was inevitable because I'm the generation of MTV, of the expensive videos, which they don't really make that much anymore. Yes, they make videos, but they don't make them how they used to make them where it was just over the craziest budget.

[00:34:12] So when it came time for us to make videos, I wanted to go all out. I was just like, yeah, I'm going to do one where I just hold my phone and y'all just look at me. It doesn't feel right. That's what I'm turning in. That's not the energy I bring on the show, so that's not the energy I want to represent myself in the video. So there's a local videographer, his name is Jay Clark. He's really awesome, awesome, awesome. His assistant Barbara Coa. They helped me create, plus my roommate helped me to create magic. We did a Beyonce one, “Blow”—the song “Blow” first. Then I did a Rihanna montage for the second one. I wanted to continue to keep making them, making one just once a month even after corona[virus] is over with, just because it was fun. It really was fun just making these videos, getting costumes made for it, planning it out by setting. It's just really, really fun. I can only imagine what actual vocalists go through doing the—.

AE [00:35:48]: I love the idea that it was kind of like a natural progression of drag performance that you would make videos. That seems like a natural fit.

CCR [00:35:59]: Well, they also had some bars where they did a drive-in theater kind of thing where, at Hamburger Mary's, they had people lined up with their cars in the parking lot and

basically we would perform down the middle of the parking lot. We would have a little poster of our Cash App, our virtual payment ways. Basically just kind of go car to car. We're assigned people and pick up tips, and just continually—when I first did it, it wasn't even necessarily for the money. It was for my own sanity because it had already been like two months since we had performed. I was just getting a little itch. I need to get back in the group or something. Just sitting at home watching Netflix. At the time, my roommate and I was getting fat. We were pinching and stuff. It was just like, no, this can't go down like this. This is not cute.

AE [00:37:21]: So the events and the virtual events and stuff are different. Are the tips different? Are you making good tips or is it harder?

CCR [00:37:29]: At first, when corona[virus] first happened, everyone wasn't laid off yet. So they were having their regular nine-to-five or whatever kind of job they had. They were more eager to tip. Now it's a little harder sometimes to do that. But the good thing is, which is also what I tell myself and other girls on the show when they complain about not getting any money or whatever, the audience was engaged. So if they're engaged and they're watching, they're going to tell somebody else that this was awesome. This was great. They may not tip you that time, but they might tip you next time and they might bring friends the next time. Then they'll all tip you.

[00:38:27] So it's not—with any kind of artist situation, sometimes it's up and it's the gravy train and sometimes it's not. That's why you've just got to learn how to save. That's just art in general, all versions of art, painting, singing.

AE [00:38:54]: Yeah. Well, I remember, I think on your Instagram, where there was some of it—I guess before Abbott closed the bars, Governor Abbott closed the bars and whatnot, were you performing in masks and face shields at some point or at some of it?

CCR [00:39:08]: Masks because—to me, I think that's silly. The whole point is to see my mouth. So we were doing shields. Actually, we still have to do shields at Hamburger Mary's. At JR's, our stage was so elevated that we didn't have physical contact with them, so we didn't have to wear the shield. We just had buckets down there, and they just put the money in the basket when we were performing. Yeah. When I work this other venue, [Bar] Boheme, that I'm show director of in Montrose, we have to wear, like I said, the same kind of shield things, too, for Drag Bingo.

AE [00:40:02]: That you did in 100-degree heat last weekend.

CCR [00:40:09]: That was a testament to perseverance and dedication because, let me tell you, wow, it was really hot, really hot. There was no breeze. It was just stagnant air, but luckily I just stayed hydrated. I had a big carafe of water, ice water, fruit, and a fan.

AE [00:40:45]: Mm-hmm [*affirmative*]. So, if your—I forget what you said the title was, event director at JR's and then also at Bar Boheme, how did you get to have that reputation of being a good kind of networker hostess?

CCR [00:41:04]: Well, the whole Bar Boheme thing, I kind of made up that position. [*Coughs*] There was a promoter that used to live here. He also did Night and Day [Day for Night Festival] venue stuff. His name is Dutch Small. He decided that he wanted to start a brunch at Boheme, so

he asked me and another friend of mine who now lives in Vegas, London Adour, if we wanted to be a part of it. We were like, hell yeah. Then, at the time, Raja was going to be the opening. So we were going to be performing with Raja, so we were all excited about that. So they had that event. When I see an opportunity, I engage with whoever is in charge. I'm in their face. I'm smiling. I'm doing whatever they need me to do. "You need me to do something else? I got this too. I thought about this too. Did you think about this, because I did it already for you." Because I was hungry then. I was really hungry. At the time, I was kind of really new, and there were older queens, veteran, more established queens already in all the spots. So either they were going to die or get fired. So it was like, well, no, that's probably not going to happen any time soon. So if I want to remain relevant, I need to create opportunities for myself. So—sorry, stray hair.

AE [00:42:53]: So, that reminds me that you also got t-shirts made that you're selling with CCR design that you collaborated with an artist on that.

CCR [00:43:07]: Yeah. Actually, I've actually had that design for the past five years, but I didn't think anybody would want to buy it. So I didn't release it until corona[virus], because then it would make more sense to some people, but I should have released it five years ago. But still, yeah, this extra income, and also it feels kind of good when people take pictures of me in their shirts. Like, oh, I love my shirt. It just feels like of warm and fuzzy inside.

AE [00:43:47]: Yeah. Are you with—it seems like you're busy. I don't know how busy you are in a regular year, but it seems like you're busy. Are things okay for you right now? Not to get too deep in your business.

CCR [00:44:05]: Yeah. I'm still working at JR's because I'm not just one of the show directors. I'm director of marketing and public relations. So we still have to market the bar even though we're closed. We still want to be relevant and speak to our audience on other levels and other things, not necessarily just drag. Just to their wellbeing. What are they doing? Let's make them laugh. The owner, Charles Armstrong, puts memes and makes little jokes, but also has a serious message in his posts that he puts daily. It's kind of like little father talk to everybody. That comforts people. Not to say that he's literally changing lives or anything, but I'm saying to know that somebody is trying to make you laugh and trying to do juggling acts and try to make you smile, even during this crazy time, is admirable. So yeah, there's still work to be done even though we're not open.

AE [00:45:29]: Yeah. Well, that's your job when you do have more work is to bring people joy and entertainment and a release. Let them leave their work behind and come to JR's or wherever. So you definitely have an important role, for sure. But the other thing I want to ask you about—and again, I don't want you to feel like you have to put your business in the street, but drag is expensive with the wigs and the makeup and the dresses. Can you talk, just however you want to communicate, what that investment is that you make in being a performer?

CCR [00:46:06]: Okay. I'm not going to tell you how much I spend. I'm going to tell you how much stuff costs. I'll just do this: what I have on. So this wig was 150 dollars. This costume was about 150 dollars, 125. Lashes that I have, they were twenty dollars. Makeup, now I'm not going to tell you as far as everything that goes into it, but if you add up buying an initial package of makeup, let's just say roughly 100 dollars. That's still on the low side of things. That's doing the

greater value version of it. That's not even talking about name brands or anything. **[00:47:08]**

Then it comes into other things, like personal choices: lip fillers, face fillers to look more youthful, more feminine, to form your face. Right now, I have on bangles [earrings]. If I were to put these on [holds up a different pair of earrings], these are about 150 for the set of these. That's just one costume I'm talking about. That's just one look. So just think about all that upkeep. I didn't even mention my pads. Most girls, like I said, have breastplates. A breastplate, a good quality breastplate, 900, 800 dollars. But the thing you have to think about is, once you've bought it, it's bought. I'm not going to be buying a whole bunch of breast plates. It's already done. So it's basically an investment in your own career. So basically, whatever tips I make, I use that money to put back into my career, and I use my booking fees to pay my bills. Then whatever I have left over, I save. Yeah, it's always about reinvesting in yourself. Same thing for businesses. They put new paint on the wall, they get new signs, they put some new flowers in the landscaping. You've got to make it nice and shiny or else nobody is going to want to buy it.

AE [00:48:59]: Well, is there anything that you've had to do without during coronavirus or some suppliers that have closed or places you don't have access to?

CCR [00:49:12]: Most of the people that make these things, since this [dress] is custom, if we're not working then they're not getting business. So they're available. They're wanting you to buy stuff, so that wasn't a problem. The local place where we get makeup has been open the majority of the time, but there was a time when we had the official lockdown-lockdown where everything was closed for a whole month that they weren't open. But when that happened, nothing was open, so you couldn't go anywhere except for the grocery store.

AE [00:49:59]: What about—I know that you have a lot of professional portraits made. How is that a part of what you do and how often do you do that, and have you been able to do it now?

CCR [00:50:11]: Well, funny you mentioned that. Later this week, I have a photo shoot with—he's coming in. His name is Scotty Kirby. He's from Phoenix, Arizona. I shot with him twice already and basically, the way that it happens is we get a group of girls that are interested about new headshots. We contact whatever photographer and see what kind of deal we can get to bring him down. With all of our bookings for photo shoots and stuff like that, the photo shoots are basically to—it's just all part of your own branding. Sometimes it shows the difference between Saks Fifth Avenue and Walmart. If you're advertising yourself with selfies taken off your phone, well now your phone can take amazing photos, but at least five years ago it wasn't all that hot. It was kind of blurry, so it was really needed then. When I was talking to my mom, since there wasn't any real computer presence back in the day, you had to have a whole headshot of yourself like you were a Broadway actor. When you would go to other clubs, you would bring it with you to show people who you are. It was like your business card. So now it's just to use for flyers. Like I said, it's just your own branding. It's an extension of what we were saying about the music video, just creating that image, that vision, or that moment.

AE [00:52:31]: That's cool. I love the idea of all y'all coming together to hire a photographer to come out. That's cool. That's a good community effort, I guess. Speaking of community efforts, I saw that you in June—I guess it was June, beginning of summer, when we had runoff elections and stuff here in Houston. Of course this is the year of the presidential election. You were doing

a get out the vote kind of thing locally in June. Do you have plans for anything like that in the fall?

CCR [00:53:01]: Well, yeah, it's definitely important. They always say, this year when it's time to vote, this year is our killer year. Really, it's every year because there are always issues each year that need to be tackled, that need to be dealt with. It's getting really crazy and really scary sometimes, just the climate of the culture and the division. The weird thing is, it's not even a moderate division. It's like a night day kind of thing, polar opposite kind of thing on a lot of important things, and it just sounds—one way is just definitely wrong. I know we need a good moderation of it, but you can't have both of them. So you just have to make the right choice that you really think is the right choice, not just because that's what you voted for in the past. You need to really think about what they did with their time while they were in office and make your decision based off of that.

AE [00:54:39]: Well, if you can imagine a future that's hopefully not too distant where we're past the election, we're past coronavirus, and things are all right with the world, what's the first thing you're looking forward to doing?

CCR [00:54:56]: Getting back to work, getting back to the stage, getting to see people. I'm a hugger, and I don't like doing this elbow mess. It just feels so awkward and strange. So yeah, just getting back to work and seeing everybody. Even people that you don't necessarily know their names but you know their face because you see them all the time, it's just like oh, hey. You just miss them. You even miss people you don't even like because you miss that interaction.

AE [00:55:41]: Well, I looked down at my notes here and we've been talking for about an hour already. Also, you were Miss Gay Texas America, or are you still holding the title?

CCR [00:55:53]: No, no.

AE [00:55:53]: No?

CCR [00:55:53]: I went there. I was Harris County. I was Miss Harris County America. When I went to go compete for Miss Texas, I had just gotten out of the hospital a month before because I have ulcerative colitis. It was so bad that I had to be hospitalized. So a month after that, I had to go to state to represent and I was told that, if I didn't go, that they would take my crown and that I'd be banned for two years. So I went. I had 102-degree fever the whole time. I was so sick and basically, I was kind of just there as a warm body. I was not me. I actually had some friends of mine, when they saw me walking down for evening gown, they ran up on the side of the stage because they said it looked like I was falling, like I was going to fall, and they wanted to be there to catch me. [00:57:17] So yeah, it was a crazy experience. I would never, in the future, let someone else dictate those kind of things because, ultimately, what if I would have gotten sicker. Based off of just what someone else said, you could have a crown because it clearly doesn't mean the value that I thought it did when I won it. But in hindsight, that's what I would have thought. The person that told me that was only doing what they thought was best, so I don't necessarily blame them. Ultimately, we're all in charge of our own destiny, so it was up to me. It's not like she forced me by gun. I wouldn't have done that if I would have been me now.

AE [00:58:27]: Yeah. Well, Miss Chloe, I have taken an hour of your time and enjoyed this conversation, but I wonder if there's anything that we haven't talked about that you want to make sure to mention or a final thought about being a Black artist during coronavirus in Houston, Texas, in the year 2020?

CCR [00:58:54]: I think that I don't even want to qualify it as saying just Black artists because just being an artist period is hard, especially in a time period where we're at a loss of financial support for regular stuff. Some people can barely pay for food. They don't know where they're going to live, more so now than ever before. So just being an artist and having the self-preservation to realize to still continue to keep doing your art in this time of struggle and using that, and not succumbing to giving up and doing something else is a feat within itself. Because my dad sometimes tells me that being an artist is a luxury because I'm choosing this creative and fun life. I'm like, "Yeah dad, but you're not the one having to eat the ramen to continue to do it and still be productive." It is definitely something to be said about an artist in his own element doing his own craft and showcasing it. That in itself is a feat, white, black, purple, green, especially in this day and age. It's just hard.

AE [01:00:53]: Yeah. Well, that might be the perfect note to end on, I think. Thank you so much, Miss Chloe. I'm going to end our recording, but you hang on for a minute, okay?

CCR [01:01:04]: I will.

AE [01:01:05]: Okay.

[END]