

Episode 49: Diggstown with Vinessa Antoine and Floyd Kane

Vinessa Antoine: Diggstown is not shy about tackling subjects that are difficult to discuss head on. You know? For me, it was quite emotional because we were already on such a high level of anxiety because of the cases going up. We were already dealing with a subject matter within the script that we were shooting in the storyline, about a death. That happened as a result of COVID, and we were tackling the emotions that go along with that. So. It was a lot of wine drinking by myself trying to figure out how I'm going to navigate through these emotions because a lot of tears were shed but I hope that we managed to tell the story as truthfully as possible.

Tara Thorne: The Halifax set CBC series Diggstown kicked off its third season last night with a COVID episode and an answer to the show's pressing question of will they or won't they? Showrunner Floyd Kane and star Vinessa Antoine will join me to chat shooting during a pandemic. How to tell so much story in so few episodes and what's up with that U.S. broadcasting deal? I'm Tara Thorne, and this is The Tideline.

Musical intro

TT: Hello, and Happy Proof of Vaccination Week. As I am talking, it's very early days, so there's not enough anecdotal evidence about how it's going. And unless you're an idiot, there is truly no reason for it not to be going fine. But I do want to talk about this fucking card. So I'm just back from two weeks in New York and the week before I went down, that city implemented a vax program, the first one in America to do so. So you had to show proof to do anything inside — eat in a restaurant, go to the movies, go to a show. If you weren't vaccinated, you were allowed to order and takeaway as long as you were masked. And listen, masks were a different story. There was always one asshole on the subway with no mask at all, and everyone would glare at them and they would glare right back.

Anyway, before my trip, I'd printed off my COVID vaccination record, and if you did that, you would have noticed that there was a wallet-sized print out at the bottom. I'm not really sure for what — it didn't look nice, but it was wallet sized — so I cut it out and I glued it to an old birthday card. And whenever I showed it in the U.S., they commented on the wallet-sized-ness of it because the vax cards there are very oddly sized, like bigger than any wallet. I want to say four by four inches. Just a large square. I recognise we — the royal we — are doing all of this for the first time. So maybe no one at the CDC considered the actual portability of the card, like when men designed bathroom stalls and put the hooks at the exact level where your bag bonks into the door latch. So here I am, feeling smug about my wallet-sized proof of vax. And then this Monday comes and I go to print out the official proof of vaccination as administered by the province of Nova Scotia. And it is a full 8 1/2 by 11 page with a QR code as big as my face. Literally, what the fuck?

Also, this sentence is printed on this piece of paper: "If this document is folded, ensure the QR code is not creased." Come on. Don't crease the fucking QR code. How about put it in a place well above the halfway point on the piece of paper where someone anyone would fold it in half? Why is it the size of a fist? Why can't I continue to use my little vax card tucked nicely between my Scene card and my Optimum? Why am I talking about QR codes in the Year of Our Lord 2021? Sometimes there's enough general outcry on these things that they change them, so I hope this rant is out of date as you're hearing it, but I sincerely doubt it. In the grand scheme of things, is this that big of a deal? Obviously not. But how have we, to the surprise of literally the world, done everything right? Except this, the final step.

On the plus side, it means shows can come back the way they're supposed to: standing on a cement floor with terrible sightlines, just how I like it. And you could do that this Saturday at the Marquee, when the Town Heroes released their new concept record called Home. Mike and Bruce are two of the nicest — and most notably — funniest guys in the business, and I want to play you something from them. This is called 1999.

Music: 1999, by Town Heroes

TT: Floyd Kane is a producer, writer and director whose credits include *Bowling for Columbine*, *Shattered City*, *North-South*, *Across the Line*, and the incredible *25th Year of Mitzi Bear Claw*. In 2018, he created the CBC series *Diggstown*, centered on the lawyer, Marcie Diggs, who returns to Halifax in the wake of a tragedy and begins a new life at legal aid. Speaking of which, he's also a Dalhousie law grad. Floyd Kane, hello!

Floyd Kane: Hey, how are you?

TT: I am good. I'm going to jump right into this. The show in season three ran out of the gate. It addresses COVID. It's a COVID episode. There's a bit of the Northwood situation threaded in. At what point did you have to decide whether COVID exists in the world of *Diggstown* or doesn't?

FK: Thankfully, we had like we had started our writing room just around when COVID was happening. And then we had a hiatus. And then we went back into the writing room, just as we are now, like, I think, 14 months into COVID. And it just became clear that we had to address it. You know, plus, the original plan was we were going to do an intimate partner violence storyline involving somebody in the legal aid office and... what we were planning — and I can say this because we ended up trashing it — we were planning to have the partner come to the office and shoot and there was going to be a shooting, the workplace shooting? And this we, planned this out just like, I guess, two months before the shooting that happened here. And so we just were like, Well, we're not going to do that.

And so when we joined back together, it was like — OK, COVID's still happening. I really felt like the situation in the long term care homes is going to be something that we're sorting through, probably for the next 10 years after COVID, you know, if there is such a thing. And so I also just wanted to hit on those anxieties that people feel when, like if you have been diagnosed with COVID, I've heard people talk about how frightening it is just to have to tell people that you have COVID. And the anxiety that you feel around that, and I really wanted to get into that a little bit within the context of the show.

TT: Yeah, and it was a health care worker on top of that.

FK: Yeah. You know, and also that whole notion of — what happens when there isn't anybody to blame?...We're in the height of COVID. When you walk out the door, you don't really know what's going to happen, who you're going to interact with over the day. I mean, depending upon who you're talking to, people were telling you you could get COVID off of surfaces, that you had to wash your groceries down. All of this stuff that was happening at the beginning of COVID, that we now know more. We now have more information and we understand that, well, no, that's not how it transmits — it transmits in this way. I feel like we kind of didn't...There are still people who cling to that misinformation, and I think there's this thing where, if somebody tells you...

The other part of this, of course, was the fact that the former premier here, not Rankin, but McNeil, had made that comment during one of the COVID briefings, where he referred to Preston as a hotspot. And that got people up in arms here, and I felt like that's an interesting thing to think about, in terms of how information coming from someone in a position of authority, how that filters out into the general public. And so I really wanted to incorporate that into the show as well. So yeah... because I just think that the whole COVID — it's a very dense topic to get into. And I feel like I really want, myself and the writers, we want to really get into it from a holistic point of view, and just kind of go at it and find that human person who we could have be the subject of all of the COVID anger. And just have Marcie trying to make the point that, Listen: at the end of the day, as sad as it is, you may not know definitively, what happened when somebody who you love dies.

TT: Yeah. And is COVID something that's going to come up through the rest of the season, or did you just sort of focus it on this on the first episode?

FK: No, it comes up periodically throughout the show. I think we didn't want to lean too heavily into it, but I think it's the A story in episode one, it's a B story in episode three, it's a C runner because Marcie's sister had COVID and she's still recovering. And so that kind of lingers throughout the show when there are some consequences. We don't get too deep into it. But she essentially loses custody of her children because during, while she was in the midst of her COVID diagnosis, she couldn't, she was not in a place where she could take care of her kids. So we do come back to it from time to time, but the whole season is not focused on COVID.

TT: OK, cool. How do you break a season because you've only got six episodes a season and you've got this great character Marcie at the centre, and then you've got her family, you've got everyone she works with. You've got this ensemble, plus you've got weekly issues, and the case of the week, and what issues those pull in. You already talked about how this week's episode kind of touches on a bunch of things. How do you break a season? Do you make a list of, here's what I want to talk about this year? How does it work?

FK: This is an amazing question. First of all, the reason it's so great is because this season, the third season is eight episodes. So seasons one and two were six. And I can tell you everything you just listed, those were the challenges of doing this show as a six-episode season. Because it's not like we're doing one case that goes over the course of all six episodes that we can pull all of our cast into every week. It's two new cases, plus family stuff, plus something with the other lawyers, plus plus plus. So it's just a lot, right? And look, I love the work that we did on season one and two, but I know I feel the narrative strain when I watch those shows because there's a lot going on, and there are weeks where we've got these great actors who are literally just background, because they're not part of the main story that week.

And so this year, because we have eight episodes, we're able to really kind of go, OK, so in these episodes, we may not have Reggie or we may not have Iris or Doug. And we're just going to focus on the people who we have in the story for that week, and we're also going to try to give everybody a nice emotional thread throughout the season. So, this year we were able to...we weren't dealing with Marcie and Avery, and the "will they or won't they?" thing so much. So we get to see them be more of a — not to spoil it, but they are more of a couple this year. We're going to get a chance to meet Reggie's son, who I've been wanting to meet since season one.

We have a lot of room to really get into story, but what what we typically do in terms of breaking a season is, I will typically come to the room with a three- or four-page outline which basically says, these are the cases. These are the topics I want to think about this season. These are the personal arcs that I want to look at in terms of — typically, Marcie is first up, and then I might do something with the other characters. But then once I have that four-page document we get the writing room together and I give it to the writers and I say, OK, so this is what I'm thinking. Let's rip it apart.

And so on season three, first up, once again, our whole plan was we're going to arc the season, and we usually spend two weeks sitting and talking about how we're going to arc out the season, and what the storylines are going to be for each character... And then as we start filtering down, then it's about how are we going to break this down in terms of every episode, what episodes are we going to hit this story? What episodes are we going to relax the story? What are going to be high points in those stories? What characters do we need to pull into those stories? And then we're looking at, OK, so who aren't we utilising properly in this episode? Maybe we can pull them into this other story involving another character. What characters have we not put together yet on the show? Let's see if we can mix that up. So we spend two weeks just talking through all of that.

And then we typically will start getting into the episodes and what happens over the course of that two week discussion, that four-page document that I came into the room with — a lot of that gets thrown out. Because the way that I work with the writers is "best idea wins." The only thing that I will say is I'll go, "I want to do something here that's going to precipitate X," right? Because this season, one of the things that I really wanted was to have a major event happen in the show mid-season, that essentially changes everything with the show going forward. And so that was really — for me, the one thing that was sacrosanct — was we gotta have a pivotal thing that happens that triggers a reaction from Marcie. That was really the main thing. Everything else — pitch me.

TT: Haha. How — I'm not really sure how Canadian network TV works, it's not like they're like, "Here, have five seasons." Are you working one season at a time? So, do you have to sort of temper how much story you're telling just to save some for down the road, or to be able to stop suddenly?

FK: I don't think — you know what? We didn't save anything. It's one at a time. Most times you're assuming you're going to be cancelled. So to me, it's like, OK, so if this is all we've got, let's just make it crazy, right? Let's see what we can get into. We don't want to play it safe in terms of the topics that we get into. This season we took a risk, I definitely think by the time that you get to the end of this season three, you're going to see, something happens in the show that I don't think you're going to see coming, or that you're going to expect from our show. And I think it's a tough one. That's all I can say — it's a tough one.

TT: OK. I spend most of my time — or not most of it — I spend a lot of time watching Diggstown, just yelling out the names of local actors (laughs) whenever someone pops on screen. This show was shot during COVID times when no one had any — you know, when work was coming here but local actors weren't necessarily getting the work. Productions from the U.S. that had gotten punted up here, or whatever. What was it like for you as a Haligonian to come here and give Haligonians work at a time when they needed it the most?

FK: Well, first of all, I will say, this is the best year that we've had for Nova Scotian actors. Bar none. I think 70 percent of our actors ended up being Nova Scotian. I mean, we've

we've been making the show for three seasons, so we thought we'd seen everybody. And the fact that there were all of these actors who we never saw. Mauralea Austin — who we cast as a judge — was amazing, she was so amazing that they wrapped her out when she finished, and then I brought her back for a later episode.

TT: Law & Order-style.

FK: Yeah. Like, she's amazing and she's just one of the people who we had just never seen before. Listen, I love that. I love the fact that there are BIPOC actors here who we've never seen before. And they were able to come and do what we needed them to do, and we didn't have to bring people from Toronto to do one day on the show, because we could find it here. And that's always the objective, find the local talent who we can put on the screen and give them a national platform to show what they can do. I think for me, one of the things that I hope, is that when there's somebody who's on our show and they're new to television acting, that that person actually gets an opportunity to launch themselves into a sustainable career so if they want to pursue acting, they actually can do it right. I mean — I am not going to name him, but there's a guy who was in season two of the show, a phenomenal, phenomenal young Black actor. And in season three he worked on the crew. And I just thought, Why is this guy not working on the shows that are here? This guy is a phenomenal actor. He should not be working on crew. And that's the thing that I really hope, that if we get to do more of Diggstown, as the show progresses, we'll be able to find those people who we can get them out there so the world can see what they can do.

TT: Awesome. Speaking of the world, the beginning of this year it was announced that the show was picked up by Fox.

FK: Yes.

TT: Has that aired? I don't feel like it has aired yet.

FK: It hasn't. And I mean, just to be blunt, my — Here's how it works. So, the US networks will pick up a Canadian show, I think at that time during COVID, they were just they were stockpiling whatever they could in case they needed it. And I think the way it works with Fox is that they will decide at some point during the term of their licence on the show, if they need the show, they'll air it. If they don't, they won't. And I think like part of it for me is that, as a creator, the bigger issue is about, I want to have that international partner who is going to put some heft behind the show in terms of profile. I think one of the things that we're dealing with right now is, the show currently airs on BET+, in the States we want to get it on to the main network BET Linear in the U.S., and we'd really like to get them behind the show in a significant way in terms of having social platforms that are branded Diggstown BET. Because for us, even though the show is available in the U.S., it doesn't have any social media presence because it doesn't have any — there are no handles. So, my focus going into the launch of this season is really around making sure that we have the right U.S. and international partners on this show who are gonna love it the way that we love it.

TT: Right. That makes sense. What a business!

FK: Yeah, what a business. (Both laugh)

TT: I want to close that with a fun question. Do people still give you shit or did they ever, about shooting Dartmouth as Halifax?

FK: So here's the thing. Nobody gives me shit about that.

TT: Just to me! (Laughs)

FK: No, because in all honesty, it's like the funniest part is that we have these conversations all the time because initially when... We have a tight budget. And when we write the scripts, we write them to the show, and then we have to kind of see if we can...the scripts have ambitions and it's always a struggle about will the production be able to meet the ambitions of the scripts? And nine times out of 10, it works. But one of the things that always comes up every season is, because we are a show that shoots usually three days on location and four days in the studio, sometimes it's five days on location and two days of studio. We're running around the city a lot. And the thing I always start with every season is: we don't need to go to Halifax, we can stay in Dartmouth. Because the moment we cross the bridge, it becomes massively, massively more expensive. And I'm sorry if this is too "inside baseball."

TT: I'm very interested. I don't know what anyone else thinks.

FK: Like, everything just becomes way more expensive. So I'm like, Let's just try to find this in Dartmouth. And I'm always saying, Well, what about this building? What about that building? I know I irritate the hell out of the locations department. Like, we have like the best locations department, they're fantastic, but —it's one of the things that I kind of like — what happens is every season the directors show up. And the directors are like, Let's go to Halifax. And of course, they're like, Oh, we love this blah blah blah blah! Let's let's just shoot over here! And sometimes a location will be, we're supposed to be in a certain neighbourhood in Dartmouth, but we actually shot at a house in Halifax. But most of the time we spend quite a bit of time shooting on the Dartmouth side of the bridge just because I personally favour this side of the bridge.

TT: That's legit. So Floyd, thanks so much for coming on the show. Congrats on the new season. I hope next year you get 10, and I hope this American deal works out.

FK: Yeah, let's just put it this way. I don't think my wife is hoping we get 10.

TT: Well, whatever makes everyone happy, I hope it happens.

FK: Yes. Thank you so much.

TT: Thanks Floyd, take care.

TT: Vinessa Antoine is an actor and dancer who, prior to Diggstown was best known as Jordan Ashford on General Hospital. She's also appeared on Being Erica, NCIS, and Heartland, and off-Broadway in New York. She's just wrapped her third season as Marcie Diggs, and she's on the line from Toronto. Hi, Vanessa. Congratulations on season three.

Vinessa Antoine Thank you. Thank you so much.

TT: I talked to Floyd about how this season he didn't want to spoil too much, but basically we saw from last night's episode that Marcie and Avery, they're like, they're doing it. And there's always — I didn't mean IT. I meant, like they're they're going for a relationship. And there's always a thing in TV about how one of the reasons you keep you keep people

apart — Jim and Pam, Mulder and Scully, whatever the couple is — it's because it's more dramatically interesting. So what I mean, without giving too much away, what has it been like for you as an actor to play this relationship, finally?

VA: Oh, wow. You know, it was really a great choice for Floyd. I sort of planted a seed in his brain last season about the importance of showing 30-something young, Black, successful, happy couples on Canadian television — on television, period. And talked about the importance of that. And it's always great fodder and amazing to watch on television when couples are going through conflict, but I just found it to be very rare to see a happy couple who is successful. And of course, they have their own personal issues and darkness within them. But I thought it was a really bold choice to just show these two people that have kind of longed to be with each other and kind of give the audience a little taste of what that might look like.

TT: And I mean, they certainly earned it.

VA: Yeah, yeah, they've been through it emotionally, these too. (Both laugh)

TT: So you live in Los Angeles?

VA: Um, no, not so much.

TT: Not so much?

VA: Not so much. I sort of, the beginning — well, I wouldn't say the beginning of the pandemic, but maybe the end of last summer I made a decision to get out of L.A. and get out of the states for a bit. And you know, we were in the height of... the COVID numbers were just ridiculous. This was obviously pre-vaccination time. We were also right in the middle of the elections and all of the stuff happening with Trump, and politically that sort of jammed together with all of the things that are happening in terms of BLM and those injustices with the police. I just felt it was best for myself and for my family to take a break from it all. And we came back home and we've been sort of jumping around — hop, skipping and jumping around — since the end of last summer. We went to Vancouver and we came to Toronto for the holidays, and then I went to Nova Scotia to shoot the show. And now we're back in Toronto and we're actually going to maybe stay for a little bit longer.

TT: Oh, wow. So that's cool. OK, well, my original question was going to be about the difference between L.A. and Nova Scotia, but that's super cool that you've been in Canada for a while. But! Toronto has, Ontario has had its own issues with COVID. What was your experience like to come and shoot the show in a place where — that actually for the first time ever, I think — benefitted from something terrible happening in the rest of the world? You know, we got a lot of work come here to Nova Scotia, film-wise. What was your experience like here shooting it? I mean, I know it was also a weird, truncated experience in terms of how you actually shot, but on a day-to-day-basis, what was your experience being here? I mean, I know a ton of actors were definitely grateful to have the work.

VA: For sure. I mean, that was one of the things that we talked about a lot with the other actors like myself, you know. Natasha and I spoke a lot about just being really grateful to work, and it's a beautiful thing to see films and television productions coming back to Nova Scotia, not only because aesthetically it's so beautiful, but the people are just so great to work with. And it was just a really interesting time because right when we landed, we were

all in quarantine as everybody had to do in the beginning and the Atlantic bubble. And then soon as we started shooting, within less than a week later, Nova Scotia went back into a bit of a lockdown. So we had to kind of shuffle and shift around a lot of things in terms of script, in terms of actors flying in, when they were being quarantined, where they were being quarantined, and how we were shooting. So it was it was pretty difficult, actually, but we got through it.

TT: Yeah. And I was surprised and I talked to Floyd about this a little bit, that the show just addressed COVID head on. What did you think about that in terms of, you know, episode-wise?

VA: I mean, Diggstown is not shy about tackling subjects that are difficult to discuss head on. For me, it was it was quite emotional because we were already on such a high level of anxiety because of the cases going up. We were already dealing with a subject matter within the script that we were shooting in the storyline about a death that happened as a result of COVID. And we were tackling the emotions that go along with that. So it was a lot of wine drinking by myself, trying to figure out how I'm going to navigate through these emotions because a lot of tears were shed, but I hope that we we managed to tell the story as truthfully as possible.

TT: Well, and COVID specifically, it's changed so much, just the way we react to it, in the way that we've dealt with it. It's not even like you've had time to even sit with the experience because we're still in it.

VA: Well, that's it. The other day I went for — a little side note story here, story time — I went to a massage because I've had an insane amount of stress and anxiety, and haven't been able to sleep and just sort of thinking about the whole last year, now almost two years, of what has gone on... And I sat quietly in the massage place, and a beautiful therapist was quietly just checking off boxes about my health, and do I have high blood pressure, and family things, and he said, So what's going on with you? I literally broke out into tears, just started crying, and I was like, Oh my gosh, so embarrassed. Of course, I've got my mask on so I'm trying to like, hide the tears, but they just keep coming. And he was like, You know, don't worry about it. You're in a safe space. This happens all the time.

And I was like, I guess I'm just now coming to the realization of all of the things that have been going on for the last two years. And at that time, we were just finding out about all of the babies and the children, all the Indigenous babies that were found. And that coupled with everything happening, health wise, and then all of the things that were happening politically. And it's been a long, hard year to just kind of take everything in, and just to go back to your question — yeah, we haven't had a moment to really sit with it and digest it, you know?

TT: Yeah, I'm actually really interested to see the next year or two or five of art and how the pandemic is addressed, and if it's going to be addressed, a lot.

VA: Yeah, I definitely think in this first episode, right out of the gate, we're going to see it addressed and we're going to see a side of it that had not been really addressed, or — I don't think a lot of people really understood the different levels of COVID in terms of how it affects different communities. Specifically there are communities all across the world, but specifically in Nova Scotia, there were communities that were labelled as "hotspots," and these hotspots were primarily BIPOC communities. And North Preston was one of them, a predominantly Black community. And a lot of the people that were working and living there

were at the front lines of COVID in the height of the pandemic, where — you have to remember there was a time where we were given so many different levels of information, and different types of information. It was masks / no masks. A lot of frontline workers, in particular people working in long term care facilities and hospitals, were given one mask for the week, they were shuffled around from different facilities. There was no testing. And so there was a lot of blame placed on individuals in these hotspot communities for being super spreaders. And we find out in this episode how that really affects someone's life and their livelihood.

TT: So you and I chatted a few years ago ahead of the first season and all of the headlines surrounding the show at that time were about how you were the first Black actress to be starring in a Canadian drama ever. And you at the time said, "Yeah, sure, that's cool. But I'm just here to do good work in a good part." But now that you've had a couple of years that, well, three years now as Marcie and you've been able to see the show out in the world and how it's affected people, what has her impact been like? Does that factoid mean anything different to you now that you've been Marcie for three seasons?

VA: You know, I've seen very little change if I'm going to be honest in terms of how the show started vs. now, and I want to say that the writing and the performances and the storytelling have gotten so much better. But in terms of how it's received and the level of, I would say, attention paid to stories that primarily are driven by identity issues, social issues, racial issues — I find that those shows don't necessarily get as much love as other shows that I think a lot of Canadians are used to seeing and watching. That being said, I will say that there's been a large number of Black women, in this upcoming season that we're about to see, really start to kind of find and discover the show from season one and two, and they're sort of rediscovering what we had started back in 2018, and that has been really interesting and really cool.

Because now I'm starting to — so people are even stopping me on the street recently and being like, Oh my gosh, I love your story, and I love the show, and thank you for representing. And little memes and things are starting to pop up about "Think like Marcie Diggs" or "Dress like Marcie Diggs." And that to me is really special, because like I said before in many interviews, I just had not seen anyone that looked like me when I was growing up, even into adulthood. And it's just nice to have a tangible visual person on television that you can say, Oh, I matter. Right, OK. I'm OK. You know? I mean something. What I'm doing is important, you know?

TT: For sure. And you come from soap operas, which I love, but you did years on General Hospital, so you had time to sort of dig into a character and be that person day after day, year after year. How do you approach someone like Marcie who you're doing six — or eight this year — episodes at a time? Where also, and I talked to Floyd about this — it's not just Marcie's story, there's all this supporting cast, and there's the case of the week and all of the issues that you're dealing with. Like, how do you how do you find the nuance in her, and do you feel like you know who she is, three seasons in?

VA: Wow, such a good question. You know, with soap opera, depending on the character that you're allotted to play in soap opera land, with soap operas, sometimes you can really get into the real bones of who someone is, and you can really dig your heels in over the course of years, even decades. And then there are other characters where you see them for one year and they're gone the next, or you see them for twenty five years, but you only get a little glimpse of who they are. So you really only see one side, the side that sort of helps tell the story for the storyline of the soap. But with with Marcie and with Diggstown,

this is the first opportunity that I've ever had, to be honest, in a character where I got to really build who she is from the moment that she entered the planet and up until now, and there are so many levels and so many parts of her that I get to sort of tap into.

And that has been probably one of the most amazing experiences as an artist, as an actor to be able to actually use those parts because I think actors — we do that anyway. We're going to build the whole storyline. We're going to build the whole biography. We're going to build all kinds of secrets about our characters, which may or may not be seen on screen, but they all help to tell the story. And it all helps when you're seeing these characters on your TV screens. But with Marcie, thank God, it's a real privilege to be able to sort of drive the narrative of the show through the lens of this woman's eyes, and you get to kind of go a little bit into her past, her family, her love life, her social life, her work life, and dabble into some of her darker areas as well, like who she is.

TT: And actually, of all of those lives, which is your favourite part to play, because you know you do have Marcie on her own, you've got the love story, you've got the work stuff. What's the best day on set for you, when you get to do what?

VA: I mean, listen, as much as I'd love to say, I love being in court and taking someone to task, and addressing the jury, and going toe to toe with someone in the witness stand with all my evidence — that feels great and I'm not going to lie. It's a nice dream of mine to be able to be in front of somebody in the witness stand and call them on their bull. But for me, I have to say, because I'm, I would say naturally, probably more of a melancholy kind of girl, who tends to live in my own darkness and my own secrets, in my own trauma, and play that out extensively — I tend to gravitate more towards the parts of humans that are sad or dark or secretive, or emotional. So the parts that I get to play, with family, and love interest, and romantic relationships — those are the areas that I get to kind of live in those worlds.

TT: Cool. And what's your relationship to the surfing portion these days?

VA: (Laughs) Still very scared and still trying my best to represent. I'm by no means a great surfer, but I definitely, I love the water and I love the beach. And I have such a huge respect for the sport of surfing, and it plays so much into my character. The way she thinks about the world, you know, for Marcie, the ocean is her church. She has a very interesting relationship with the traditional church that she grew up in. She has an interesting relationship with God. And I think there are parts of her that she does not want to tackle when it comes to her spirituality. So I think she's relegated that to the ocean, and it's been a beautiful journey, especially this season. We were able to really open up so many areas of surfing, particularly in the Black community and really uplift and shine a light on Black surfers who really have not been talked about in the surf community up until recently.

TT: Very cool. And this last question is sort of a local flavour question for the Haligonians listening: Do you have favourite places here at this point, having spent three seasons? I mean, maybe you don't want to give them away?

VA: Oh man, I do! Listen, while one of my favourite places is no longer there, it was called Little Oaks, which I think I've already talked about, was like my number one, numero uno place. That was a little cute restaurant, almost tapas wine place, right beside The Bicycle Thief. But this year — because of COVID, because of my schedule, and because I actually lived in Dartmouth this year — this is the first year that I did not stay in Halifax. I stayed on the Dartmouth side. I actually lived in Marcie Diggs' actual house.

TT: Oh wow.

VA: Yeah, we shot there and I lived there. It was very method and weird of me, but I still did it. (Both laugh.) And there weren't a lot of choices in Dartmouth, I have to say, that I love. But of the ones that I did get an opportunity to order Uber Eats and DoorDash, was this one spot called R&B Kitchen. Oh, my goodness gracious! Oh, I actually ordered from them for a little party that we threw. But my God, if you go on Instagram, it's called R&B Kitchen, and they only have a certain amount of food, and they have specific days that they upload it on Instagram. And that's the dishes that you get. You literally have to call and pre-order. And once they're done, they're done. It is the most amazing, soulful soul food, comfort food. Probably the best — if you're really into fried chicken, and mac and cheese, and southern, just good comfort food. R&B Kitchen killed it every time.

TT: Excellent! Thanks for the recommendation. Yeah, that's awesome. Well, Vinessa, thanks so much. Congratulations on the third season, and I hope to see the American deal happen this year, and a season four, of course. So best of luck.

VA: Thank you so much. I appreciate you for having me on.

Music outro

TT: The Tideline is engineered by Palmer Jamieson at the Golden Palm and produced by the Halifax Examiner.

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