

New Queer on the Block

Rising lesbian comic Lianna Carrera on her unique roots. **By Emelina Minero**

Ready for a new comedy crush? Meet Lianna Carrera, rising lesbian standup star. From joking about catching the gay in a Pentecostal exorcism at Jesus camp to complaining about how her deaf family members can get away with anything, Carrera's hilarious and often controversial brand of comedy comes straight from her life experiences. Raised by a Southern Baptist father and deaf mother, Carrera credits her singular upbringing with helping to shape her comedic world. However, rather than focusing on what divides us, the cutie pie comic hopes her uncompromising comedy will help people see that differences are to be celebrated.

How did you first get into comedy?

I was class president [of Randolph-Macon Woman's College] and we put on this activity, Miss Odd Macon. I hosted it, and the judges were going off and tallying the scores and they were taking forever to tally them. So I started performing Ellen DeGeneres' *Here and Now*, by myself.

So I was like, What's the deal with Gogurt? What? We don't have time for Yogurt? You know. I was just quoting stuff that I had memorized, just being stupid. Trying to entertain the crowd. And then I was like, You know what? I'm going to throw on some stuff that I think is funny, that I have always felt funny and if they don't laugh, they'll just think it's Ellen DeGeneres, so it doesn't even matter, right? So I say something horrible, like, What's the deal with mattress liquidators? Who wants to buy a mattress with the word

liquid in it? Right? I'd been holding onto that joke since I was 13. And people were giggling, and then I started telling stories about my mom and things like that.

And then after that, my roommate came up to me and said, I hope you know that you're supposed to be a standup comic. And I was like, No, no, no. I'm running for congress. My whole resume had been stacked. I was interning on Capitol Hill and from a very young age. And she was like, Nope, this is what you're supposed to do.

How has being raised by a Southern Baptist minister father and a deaf mother influenced your act?

Well it's fundamentally built who I am and my perspective on life. I have experiences that I consider normal that no one else, unless they have deaf parents or a religious parent, know about. I've been interpreting for my mom since I was 4 years old. Mortgage deals at the bank, when she got in a car accident, I'd be her voice and I would tell the person what she was saying. So I grew up really, really quickly. And then as far as my dad being a minister, that's just a whole other layer [laughs]. When I went to camp, it was Jesus camp. It wasn't just camp. When I went to science class, it wasn't just science. It was God-science.

So, what all of this has done is put me in the middle of all of these different cultures. It puts me in the middle of hearing culture and deaf culture. It puts me in the middle of Christian culture and non-Christian culture. I've had to balance these incongruencies my entire life.

Tell me about the web series you're working on.

I'm really excited about it. It's called Salt of L.A. and it's going to be non-scripted.

When I moved to L.A. [so many of my folks and friends] were like, Oh God. That's a God-awful city. It's full of materialism. It's full of just people who all they care about is fame. They're just money hungry. And people kind of feel bad for me, but I'm surrounded by really cool people. I've been lucky to have people who worked hard for what they have, who give back, and these really unique salt of the earth people. Who are the people that make L.A. run that's outside the glam and glitz, the standard side that we have of Hollywood? There will be a lot of comedy in that. (liannacarrera.com) ■

