MARLEE GRACE + ROBYN KANNER ON IG LIVE 9/30

Marlee: I'm going to start us over a little bit, for those of us tuning in, we lost sound, we're back. Could be a conspiracy theory by aliens, not sure. I have on my suit, Robyn is still here, we're here talking with Robyn, who is a senior creative advisor for the Biden-Harris campaign. She's here today to talk a little bit about design, a little bit about why we're going to vote for a specific two people. We were talking about design and queer identity - you were saying that any identity you have shows up in the work.

Robyn: Yeah, that's the truth. Making art is all about the lived experiences you've had in the world, whatever they are. It comes back in. So I think that when it comes to the work on the campaign, it's as much about the experiences I've had in the world as it is about what I've heard about the experiences of other folks in the world. One of the greatest things about a campaign is that it's not about you. Everybody around the country and the world are impacted by the decisions you make. As much as it feels interesting, it feels great, it feels wonderful, it's largely about the work itself and the people it impacts. Those are the things I focus on the most.

Marlee: I'd love to talk about how you access humility in service to the American people for the 2020 election?

Robyn: Yeah, how, do I access humility? I think it's about people. I started off this campaign cycle in El Paso, Texas. I'm from rural Maine. Once you interact with folks all across the country, you start to hear stories and find those stories out in the work. That's always a big thing for me - hearing the stories and finding out how I connect with them and how the work connects to them. It's always about other people, that's the good thing.

Marlee: Let's get into some of the nitty gritty moments here. Here's maybe the main reason I wanted to have this talk. I want to shout out to Isabel, my assistant / co-visionary person who's out there today who suggested we have this talk because so many people in my queer community, radical community, we had a vision for Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren being our candidate and being our next president. You were originally the designer for Beto's campaign. We don't have the candidate that many of us originally thought of. What I'm really wanting to talk about with you is like, I don't want to just energetically vote for the people I have to vote for. I want to shift my energy - I want to be excited, at least a little bit excited.I

think there's a hell of a lot of work to be done other than circling this ballot. I think that's actually a pretty easy task. But I'd love for you to talk about your experience working on this campaign, what has helped you be excited about the candidates we didn't originally vision as who we wanted? What can you tell us that can make us a little more excited about who we're going to be voting into office?

Robyn: It's important to remember that everybody is unified. A big theme of the Biden campaign is unity. As we sit here talking today, every candidate from the primary race is all in on Biden-Harris as the ticket. I think that speaks to us being together ready to defeat. I started with Beto O'Rourke in El Paso. I remember having this moment - I was living in New York in 2018 and I just had this feeling of, if I don't do everything I can, I won't be able to wake up on November 4th knowing that I did everything I could. For me at first that was going to El Paso, that was fighting for change in the most incredible way. I lived a block away from the border when I lived there - our campaign headquarters were a block away. So many things happened during that campaign that impacted how I see the 2020 election in general. There were families who were getting hurt by ICE down at the border. I would wake up and hear it. There were actual folks who needed help, needed to figure out a way to make this world better than what it is. Donald Trump talks about making America great again, but the only thing I've seen is it getting hurt a little bit more. And once the Democrats started to come together, to me it felt less like Bernie vs. Warren or Pete against Beto, Bloomberg vs. Warren or whoever, it became about us being all together. In El Paso, I was living there when the mass shooting happened in that Wal-Mart and 23 people died. It was one of the most intense days of my entire life and for the city of El Paso as well. When something like that happens, it is a very intense experience. Things move very quickly. That day, folks called from all over the place, they sent texts, they sent emails, hey checked in. Campaign advisors sent emails and texts and everything. Within the first couple hours, Biden was on the phone with us. He was saying"what do you need, I'm here for you, I'm here for folks, what do you need?" That was a huge moment of knowing that while the primary is about the tension between the nitty gritty of Democratic politics, if you take a step back it's about all of us together. When I think about what makes us excited about the ticket, I think about that call from Joe. I think about Kamala sending us sandwiches as we worked around the clock. We're together on this, and we gotta be because that's the thing that matters the most. It matters that we're together and it matters that we beat Trump. What makes me excited is just about knowing where this country is at and

knowing Joe Biden is the guy to heal us. We need a lot of healing.
Marlee: Thank you Robyn for all of that. Someone just said in the comments, "this is way better than the debate." Last night we saw just chaos, it was chaos. It was hard because I really wanted to watch it, partly to prepare for today to see what I could gather, what I was in for, and it's helpful for me to see what we're talking about. I feel so emotional. I'm a little teary-eyed at how scary it was to see the moderator ask our current President to condemn white supremacy and not only could he not, he made a comment about the Proud Boys basically needing to stand by. What a year, 2020. It's so much of what has always existed in terms of the system - it's not that the system doesn't work, it was built against so many of us and we've had a light shone on that. So tell us about Joe. He condemns white supremacy.

Robyn: Sure does.

Marlee: Somebody did say in the comments, "did I hear correctly that Joe Biden is going to heal us all?"

Robyn: Sure is.

Marlee: That was a pretty big statement that you just said, which I don't know if I agree or disagree with, we'll see. Somebody in the comments says "I've been teary all morning and still recovering from last night." I mean, I think Biden did as good as he could with the circumstances, he literally had to say "will you shut up, man" at one point. It was a difficult thing to watch. We also have the question in the comments "how is Joe on trans rights?"

Robyn: Pretty great.

Marlee: Okay, maybe you can tell us about that. Any other thing about what you thought about last night and what you're hoping comes with the next debates.

Robyn: It was a shitshow. We can call it like it was. That debate was so unhelpful for the American people. People tune into a debate to understand two visions of a country, at this point. And because of the frequent interruptions, the chaos of the thing, it was really hard to figure out what anyone was saying. I think that is not a thing that the American people need to see. People need to see a real conversation. People need to understand the issues. And that's not what happened last night. When I think about everything with Trump,

it’s fascinating because our team - we have a team of 20 designers, and the way these things run is I have one audiopiece in for that conversation and I have another ear for the debate. Two pieces of audio moving at once. And while you’re working on things, going back and forth, making sure everything is sound - sometimes you catch things out of the corner of your ear and you’re like “wait, he really just didn’t condemn white supremacy?” That’s not good, that’s horrible, that’s trash. And that happened last night, where I was listening to it in my left ear being like, what is this guy doing? When it comes to the debate itself, going into the second and third one, I just hope people are able to understand the issues and able to hear folks. I don’t think there was a lot of substance last night, and people need that going into the voting booth. Information is critical, it helps people decide what to do. As I sit here with my team, building things every single day, I see a bunch of talented folks who are spending every day of their lives on this thing. It’s inspiring. It’s what I want this country to be. That’s the whole thing for me. When you add in the chaos of the right and the total inability to discuss anything on a real level, compared to Joe’s strength and leadership and Kamala’s strength and leadership, and them together, and Democrats united, it’s no question for me. It’s just Joe, that’s who it is. It’s so important to vote. 2016 was decided by very few votes. 2020 it’s gotta be clear what we’re doing here. Getting out the vote is number one.

Marlee: That’s a perfect segway. I think for me sometimes I do run against friends who are maybe hurt by either Biden’s or Harris’ past actions or thoughts. Of course, as a gay woman, it doesn’t feel good to see the history of, oh, you didnt always vote for gay rights or different things. I’ve seen both of them change their tune on a lot of different things. I’m such a soft radical that I’m like, but they’re different now. Maybe that makes people hate me or like me, I’m lovingly detached from other people’s opinions at this point. But when people have that argument, like Joe was this way in the past or Kamala used to do this, what are ways that we can help shift people to be like, well, yes and? What would you say in those contentious arguments with people who aren’t Trump supporters but who we want on our team?

Robyn: People evolve. Culture evolves, communities evolve, conversation evolves. Since the dawn of time. I think a president is best when they are a vessel for the American people. I think that’s when they’re their strongest. In a time that was relatively recent, gay marirage was a thing that I almost never thought I’d see in my

lifetime. I'm 33 now, but when I was 20 and was coming out, trying to figure out who I was, I assumed that that was off the table. The truth is Joe fought for that. Joe went on Meet the Press, he talked to folks. He really was the person who advocated for that possibility. Similarly, with KDH - Kamala, internally we use initials, KDH and JRB - with Kamala the truth is that in 2003, there's a story about a girl named Gwen Araujo. It's a story I've had near and dear to my heart for a very long time. Gwen was a trans woman who was murdered in 2003 and was used as a trans panic defense while KDH was a district attorney. As a trans girl in the middle of rural Maine, terrified of the world, that was a story that I focused on a lot and heard and impacted me. Kamala as district attorney helped fight for Gwen, for her family, even after she passed. She didn't let the gay panic or trans panic slide, she fought for it. Gwen was such a critical person, whose story resonated with me so strong at such a young age. If I'm able to get a pinch of work out that helps get these folks elected so we can fight for the right things, then I feel like I'm doing my job, I'm doing the right thing, and I can sleep at night. If I could reframe the question, I'd just say it's about who we've got right now. There's Trump, who doesn't believe that I should be in the military, and there's Mike Pence, who's advocated against my rights my entire life. And then there's Joe and Kamala, who have focused very strongly on the future of America and have moved forward with it. I think that's something worth getting out the vote for, and fighting for. I think that's something to vote for.

Marlee: Me too, I'm voting!

Robyn: You got to!

Marlee: I want to shout out, I just finished a huge ass quilt that I'm raffling off to Walk the Walk, which is an organization that is supporting Black and Latinx-led grassroots orgs in battleground states. We've already raised thousands of dollars and I'm feeling really excited. In 2016, I did very little. I was such a Bernie Bro that when it was Hillary, I voted but I didn't have these conversations. I wasn't giving money. If you're watching, check your voter registration. Check it. You might not be registered. Do a raffle. Check your local ballot. Have the hard conversations. I want the last thing we touch on to be, what should we be doing in these next few weeks with our energy? I also want to shout out my friend Erica Chidi, who made an amazing video today about our nervous systems, how to care for ourselves in this time. A lot of viewers

were really activated by the debate. How do we care for ourselves and get this fucking vote out? What are the action steps we should be doing right now? Iwillvote.com, somebody just typed in the comments.
Robyn: We do a couple things, one is go to iwillvote.com, that's a way for you to figure out your voter registration, that's how you get out the vote, make sure you're all set. It's the simplest website I've ever seen, incredible. I met the folks who made that site and I asked so many nerdy questions because I loved it so much. It has everything. For Biden, there's another website called joebiden.com, which my team and I coded and designed and made and continue to update at this very second. At joebiden.com you can check out when we're live, and we're also fundraising. It's the end of the quarter, end of the month, gotta fundraise. When we're live you can watch Joe. Earlier today we started the train tour. You can organize and take action. That means making phone calls, sending texts, doing everything that you need to do.

Marlee: Textbanking!

Robyn: It's so good.

Marlee: You can do so much from your couch.

Robyn: I don't even own a couch, I got a mattress and a desk and that's all I have in this apartment, but if I had a couch I'd do it from my couch. You can organize, read our plans, get merch, whatever you want to do it's there. Joebiden.com and i willvote.com. That's the good stuff. Drink tea, or water or coffee, take deep breaths, this shit's hard.

Marlee: I'm so proud of you and I think it's amazing we're both even alive today, let alone campaigning for Joe! Who knew we'd stay alive?

Robyn: I sure didn't!

Marlee: I'll just show my suit one last night. Dress for the job you want.

Robyn: I remember when we decided to do this thing, you texted me a photo from the dressing room and I said the suit is so good. I'm just wearing a sweatshirt.

Marlee: I love you, thank you so much for having this conversation with us. Please share this conversation with your neighbors, friends,

in your feeds, let’s get Joe and Kamala in the motherfuckin’ office.

Robyn: Let’s do this shit! I love you Marlee, talk soon!