



## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Announcer:

Welcome to the Activist Files, the Center for Constitutional Rights podcast, where we featured the stories of activists, lawyers, and storytellers on the front lines fighting for justice and liberation. If you want to know more about the Center for Constitutional Rights and our work, visit our website [ccrjustice.org](mailto:ccrjustice.org). You can sign up for our weekly newsletter, Front Lines of Justice, and we'll keep you up-to-date on important developments and exciting events near you or online. You can also make a donation to help us keep doing the vital work of supporting our partners, movements, and communities. As always, don't forget to subscribe to the Activist Files and rate us on iTunes, Spotify, and SoundCloud. And now here's the Activist Files podcast.

Zee Scout:

Good morning everyone. Coming to you live from Rome, Georgia. This is Zee Scout with the Activist Files, CCR's podcast. And I'm here today with the remarkable human, the one and only Ashley Diamond.

Ashley Diamond:

Hi everybody.

Zee Scout:

Hey Ashley. So why don't you tell all our listeners here in your own words, who you are and why you're here today.

Zee Scout:

Who am I? I'm a little bit of Whitney. I'm a little bit of Brittany. I'm a little bit of everybody, but no, who I am is a free spirit who loves, that's really who I am. I love to love people.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Zee Scout:

You're also a bit of a civil rights activist, aren't you? As one of CCR's clients?

Ashley Diamond:

Yes. I hate to toot my own horn, but Beep-Beep. Yes, um, I've been doing this for a while now and um, it's challenging but it's fun.

Zee Scout:

What kind of civil rights activism have you been doing?

Zee Scout:

I've been working in the prison arena, of course I've had several suits that were not in prison that were very successful as well as being pro se representing my own self in several matters like I did in this matter. You know, I filed the initial complaint and went from there.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. Yeah. To give some more background to that, you filed two lawsuits against the Georgia Department of Corrections.

Ashley Diamond:

Correct.

Zee Scout:

The first one, when you were imprisoned in an all male facility, even though you are a striking woman.

Ashley Diamond:

Thank You.

Zee Scout:

You are so welcome. They denied all hormone therapy replacement treatment to you.

Ashley Diamond:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

And that lawsuit which you successfully brought and were able to challenge with great success put a halt to a lot of what people were calling freeze-frame policies.

Ashley Diamond:

Absolutely

Zee Scout:

Right. And those are where the prison will not let you continue your HRT as a trans person or as frankly anyone who needs HRT if you enter without being on it already or without a prescription that they can verify. And that's just horrific. So that was an incredible suit. The second one I

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

know that you brought when you had to return to prison because of a parole violation for traveling out of state to get some mental health treatment.

Ashley Diamond:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

Very needed mental health treatment.

Ashley Diamond:

Absolutely.

Zee Scout:

So that second suit challenged- frankly, what was just a horrifying fact pattern day after day after day after day of your life. Something that also as a trans woman, I was horrified to read and see and experience kind of alongside with you because why don't you tell our listeners how we know each other.

Ashley Diamond:

Zee worked on my case and the week that I went down for trial, we met in person and I have just clicked with you, I think in a way that is just inexplicable. It's nice to actually know someone and like them.

Zee Scout:

<laugh>. Yeah. That that part's operative, right?

Ashley Diamond:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

You have to like a person.

Zee Scout:

Yeah, no doubt. But it was really so special to um, like meet you on this case, work with you. I had been doing work from afar, like on your case, but I had never got to like talk to you and be there alongside you as you were really surmounting, just like daily horrifying things even out of prison. In fact, that's kind of where I wanna go next is, you know, the trial was in middle to early of January, 2023, very recent. But what was the lead up to trial like for you?

Ashley Diamond:

Um, for me it was just, I automatically knew that we would have to go to trial. Like I knew that the state was not gonna budge no matter, you know, what anybody else's outlook on the situation was. I knew that I wouldn't be safe, I'm black, I'm trans, I sued the state of Georgia. What more do I need to say? I mean, what do you think is gonna happen to me? You think if I went back to prison they were gonna be nice and protect me? Absolutely not.

Zee Scout:

Especially after you beat 'em the first time.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Ashley Diamond:

In fact, they made it very, very difficult and this time was even worse. But you know, I felt like it was the right thing to do and I just felt like it was my right and I felt like it was constitutionally my right and that I should not let these people get away with what they did.

Zee Scout:

Yeah, yeah. Great points. What was it like for your health in the lead up to trial?

Ashley Diamond:

You know, to be honest, I have been very melancholy since I've been out,

Zee Scout:

Which was when, again,

Ashley Diamond:

I got out in September, August,

Zee Scout:

August, 2022, right?

Ashley Diamond:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

Okay. So August, 2022 to about January you're having to just reorient everything. Everything.

Ashley Diamond:

And it was really a challenge this time. I mean, I don't think people, it's a challenge for anybody coming outta prison, but being Ashley Diamond coming outta prison, it has its trials.

Zee Scout:

Yeah.

Ashley Diamond:

And so I was, um, I don't know, I was just not taking very good care of myself-

Zee Scout:

mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

-the way that I should and the way, I mean, you know, I was trying, it wasn't like I was just like throwing myself to the wolves, but like every day it was a struggle to just get up and do just normal things and just just be myself. Like, cuz I hadn't been myself for so long in prison, I had to wear so many different hats.

Zee Scout:

Mm. Say more about that real quick.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Ashley Diamond:

And I talk about, um, I talk about that in my book actually. Um, you know how this time I did play the game a little differently when I realized that there was no help coming to me, I knew that I had to do something and so I had to play the game. And unfortunately it's so sad because, you know, it's not safe and there were repercussions for some of the actions that I took, but I felt like there were absolutely necessary-

Zee Scout:

mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

-to take and some other people didn't feel that strongly about it. So-

Zee Scout:

yeah

Ashley Diamond:

I did and I still feel very strongly, but I've also come to the realization that trans lives matter. And I know everyone says that, and I know it's a bumper sticker and a t-shirt. But, um, I came to the point where I realized that my life is really valuable and I never, you know, I always thought I was okay and I deserved things, but I didn't really understand the magnitude of number one, my effect on just living my life and, and fighting for the things I'm fighting for, how they affect other people and just how many people have been affected by me. Anytime you can affect somebody that is not yourself and you can help other people, it is always a great thing to do because I was literally fighting for my life. But to be able to make mass changes for trans people is absolutely, you know. Wonderful.

Zee Scout:

Yeah, it is. Thank you for your work and thank you for everything you just said.

Ashley Diamond:

Absolutely. Thank you.

Zee Scout:

Of Course. I'm gonna zoom us back really quick to kind of, when you were getting out of prison again.

Ashley Diamond:

mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

Reorienting to life, everything was a challenge. Now you and I share some diagnoses. We of course have our lovely gender dysphoria, but then there's major depressive disorder

Ashley Diamond:

mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Zee Scout:  
and PTSD.

Ashley Diamond:  
mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:  
And people who deal with those things everyday is a struggle. Right?.

Ashley Diamond:  
Absolutely. I think, you know, because now everybody gets PTSD.

Zee Scout:  
Right.

Ashley Diamond:  
That people don't realize the seriousness of the condition.

Zee Scout:  
Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. Talk about how you answer your door, for instance.

Ashley Diamond:  
Oh yeah. I'll change my voice to answer my door.

Zee Scout:  
Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:  
Sometimes I leave the vacuum cleaner running so people think somebody's here.

Zee Scout:  
Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:  
And because I spent so much time in solitary confinement, I've just gotten used to being in dimly lit places and staying in one spot. Like, I'll find one room in this house and I'll just, that's where I'm always at.

Zee Scout:  
Interesting.

Ashley Diamond:  
And that's good. But it's also, I realize that, you know, it wasn't very healthy so,

Zee Scout:  
mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Ashley Diamond:  
you know, I'm making changes.

Zee Scout:  
Yeah.

Ashley Diamond:  
But they're gonna be slow. I don't expect it to be overnight.

Zee Scout:  
I remember when I met you a couple days before your trial started, you told me that you were really unhappy with how you were feeling, how you were looking and what your motivations were for things because of this period from when you got outta prison to the moment where we're coming up to trial in January and you're living in the ways you just described on a daily basis. And so walk me through and tell people a little bit, if you don't mind, if you want to share, why you were upset with your appearance and with-

Ashley Diamond:  
Oh, I was very upset with my appearance because, and not that I'm a vain person, but I've lost a lot of weight.

Zee Scout:  
Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Ashley Diamond:  
Dramatically.

Zee Scout:  
Um, from the stress of everything?

Ashley Diamond:  
Yes. Just the stress and not eating and, and, and so many things. Not sleeping. I had bags under my eyes. I was just like, oh my god. Like just really, really not well.

Zee Scout:  
Yeah. And during that time, what was your healthcare situation like?

Ashley Diamond:  
Oh gosh. Uh, the prison had decided that when I went home I didn't deserve a 30 day supply of my hormones.

Zee Scout:  
Of Course.

Ashley Diamond:  
And so I had to go a month almost without them. And you know, it's still a struggle with them. You know, I work, I'm so happy to have my job. I work for a wonderful legal organization, TGIJP.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Zee Scout:

So we're entering January, 2023 going to trial when you've been losing weight, dealing with very significant mental health issues throughout your reorienting to life. After getting out of prison where you spent horrific times, um, you have limited healthcare and you're in this position where you are having to fight for your life by advocating for your life, by telling your life in the best version possible and all the pressure that entails. So trial, I remember you got in my car and we drove to the courthouse that morning for jury selection. Let's tell people a little bit more about that. What was the scene like? Paint a little picture for us.

Ashley Diamond:

Yes. Uh, it was just your typical courtroom.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

Typical, I guess I do it all the time, so it's like not a big deal for me. But it was stressful because of the situation.

Zee Scout:

So it's jury selection and we walk into this courtroom.

Ashley Diamond:

mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

And the judge is in the front. And then our table was right in front of the judge.

Ashley Diamond:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

And the defense table-

Ashley Diamond:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

-was behind us. And then the gallery with 100-something strangers was just sitting there.

Ashley Diamond:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

And then all the defendants who you sued all these officials in the state of Georgia working for the Department of Corrections-



## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Ashley Diamond:

It was good to see them.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. What was that like for you? Because they were just staring at you.

Ashley Diamond:

It was great.

Zee Scout:

mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

For me, it was great to let you know, don't play with me.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

I'm not the one to play with at all. I don't play the radio on a personal level and I don't play it on a professional level. It, that is a part of who I am and sometimes that gets me into trouble, but it is what it is. And you know, I was not afraid. Everyone wanted me to feel intimidated. I was actually just more concentrated on the process.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. I remember we were all sitting there looking at these 100-something folks trying to decide who would be the most amenable to like, not only trans rights, but like rights of individuals, civil rights in prisons. So it was a very, um, I remember thinking that it was really curious the number of people who were like out loud saying, oh yeah, I have, you know, queer relatives or friends.

Ashley Diamond:

It was so many.

Zee Scout:

There were so many. So I don't know. What was your impression from that?

Ashley Diamond:

Um, again, I do that all the time. So it's not, it was a look at reality because almost everyone of those jurors knew someone who was gay or transgender.

Zee Scout:

Yeah.

Ashley Diamond:

And so that was neat to me. And the fact that they would openly stand up and say it in court.

Zee Scout:

I thought so too.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Ashley Diamond:

I thought that that was not only brave, but you know, that it was a step that is a step in the right direction for people to just be able to say it. So many kids and teens struggle with their family and friends. They have nowhere to go. Like, I'm so over this. Like, I really intend to like take this all the way to Washington. Um, I'm having a big event coming up at the end of March. Um, it's a welcome home event, but we will be fundraising for travel and, and for me to do what I do best as well as live. There are some necessities that are needed. I'm ready to lead by example.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. I can tell. We're gonna definitely talk a little bit more about this fundraising event at the end of March. Uh, we'll plug that too in any way we can. I was really glad, circling back to the jury that so many people stood up and said that. I mean, I remember where I was sitting. I was like five feet away from some of them in a chair just trying to gauge their reactions. Anytime we would be asking them questions, I wasn't sure if I was passing or not. I had no idea if they knew I was

Ashley Diamond:

Don't you hate that when you're- I hate that.

Zee Scout:

I hate it too.

Ashley Diamond:

But they kept announcing me and I think that was confusing for the jury cuz they'd be like, Ashley Diamond is a trans woman and they look at me and they'd be like, <laugh>.

Zee Scout:

They're like, oh, I thought she was just a woman.

Ashley Diamond:

Oh my God. It is the Jerry Springer show. Literally is what that was.

Zee Scout:

Mm.

Zee Scout:

I do recall like even just small things were really... Felt big. And I was glad actually to be there with you. Like at one point we took a break. Do you remember from the jury proceedings? Then we just like went to take you to the restroom. I almost never used restrooms in public places if I can help it.

Ashley Diamond:

But you came in there.

Zee Scout:

Yes. And cause we had another, you know, I had, I had a friend, I had an ally there.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Ashley Diamond:  
You were brave.

Zee Scout:  
You were brave the whole time.

Ashley Diamond:  
Say What you wanna say. Let the word fly out. <laugh>,

Zee Scout:  
There we go. Yeah. Little do our listeners know. This is why you should stay listening. We're gonna be singing at the end of this podcast.

Ashley Diamond:  
Oh, Yay. That's gonna be so fun too.

Zee Scout:  
I think so. So now we're finally up to the moment.

Ashley Diamond:  
They know what they did and like no matter how much I sue or how many times I keep doing this, uh, with the Department of Corrections, they're still gonna be the same. They're not gonna change.

Zee Scout:  
Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah.

Ashley Diamond:  
They're still gonna follow the ignorant ways that they have because there's changes that have been made on paper.

Zee Scout:  
Right.

Ashley Diamond:  
But they're not in effect obviously. And I think that, um, I'm stronger and better used helping my community not go to prison than I am trying to make these people do. Right. I will always fight for prisoners' rights. Not just trans prisoners, but all prisoners, but especially trans prisoners because they have it bad. I will always do that. But my main thing is the suicides. The, the unwanted-ness, the angst that my people are feeling. Um, I, I wanna do something to ease that because like there needs to be immediate relief for this community. It doesn't need to be 10 more years, 20 more years. It needs to be immediate and there's gotta be some changes and there can be some changes. I know it's not gonna change overnight, but I definitely know that there are things that we all could be doing to make things better. And I don't mean just cuz you get a bumper sticker or a T-shirt. Like if you're not committed to the cause, don't do that. That's cute. That's sweet. Thank you. But there are a lot of people that false commit, we call 'em posers.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Zee Scout:  
<laugh>.

Zee Scout:

Yeah, unless that bumper sticker money is going to Ashley Diamond then I don't know if I'm here for it. But... Yeah. So the model in which we try and seek all these rights, right? Like we go into court, we file a lawsuit, we bring the lawsuit on behalf of someone who lives at every single marginalization. Right? And then we expect them to be perfect. We expect 'em to be this perfect plaintiff. Let's just talk about that model for a second. Like why is that wrong to you? What is flawed with it?

Ashley Diamond:

Well, I think I, I'm gonna tell you what's flawed with that whole system period.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

Is that we judge people based on their crimes.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

And just because I don't care what your crime is, you don't deserve to be mistreated. And there are a lot of people that feel differently about that. I don't, I think that, you know, God does all of that or whatever higher power or that you believe or don't believe in, it ain't people. And that is a big misconception right there. You know, again, like I said, being spiritual, for me, loving people is the most important thing that there is no matter what you like about them or not. Like you have to listen. People are hard to love and, and things about people are hard to love and you may not like every facet of someone's life, but people deserve and have an inherent dignity to be able to exist. And um, right now that's, you know, being jeopardized. Especially here in Georgia too because you know, I hid, I feel it from just three years of being gone and coming back. Everything was beginning better and now there's been just a marginal decrease.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. What are some things that you've noticed in those three years since you've been back here?

Ashley Diamond:

I noticed how the way they treat trans youth and the lack of resources for them, which is horrible. It is better for you to throw yourself into the river with a rock chained to your feet than it is for you to harm or mislead a child.

Zee Scout:

You were a trans youth in many ways. Like I didn't live, I didn't know I was a trans child when I was a child, you know? So do you feel kind of closer to their struggle as a result of that? Or do you just feel close in general too?

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Ashley Diamond:

I mean, everybody's story is different I think.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Ashley Diamond:

I think. And it's so unique and I love it. I love to hear everybody's story coming into their own and who they are. But I think this is something that is inborn.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

And I think there's different degrees to it. I also believe that there's a medical and psychological profile that is effective and needed for it. A lot of trans girls have a problem with, you know, but the problem with people having a problem with being labeled is you're gonna be labeled anyway.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

And if you're gonna be labeled, you should be labeled by people who know what they're talking about and have an outlined plan for the condition to be treated.

Zee Scout:

You've mentioned something that I would love to spend a couple minutes talking about. You're spending a lot of time debating intra-communal issues about pronouns, identity, who should be calling who what.

Ashley Diamond:

mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Zee Scout:

Who can enter what spaces. But we still have this larger question of liberation and freedom.

Ashley Diamond:

Yeah.

Zee Scout:

What needs to happen to get people free in your opinion?

Ashley Diamond:

I think the fact that we are not able to legally have protection. Like there are no laws against harassing, beating up, murdering or doing anything to a trans person. They are for humans. And I know people say, well, they're all for all humans, but it is completely different. People who going up blowing up Jewish monasteries or blowing up Asian churches. Like every, like there's a theme that runs with all of that. And that's scary and that's crazy. But they have hate crimes

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

when you do that. If you bash my face in and rob me well, there's not really nothing going to happen to you. You might go to jail.

Zee Scout:  
mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Ashley Diamond:  
But like, no one's gonna be like you beat up a trans woman just cuz she was a trans woman or you, you know, something silly like that. And there that is a problem. I think that um, you know, it's so funny in other states and big cities, everyone has unisex bathrooms. I think they should have always done that. I know people say, oh well people pretend to be this. Well guess what? They probably been doing that all long. But I ain't never heard of one case where no man pretended to be no woman. And just to go peep at people. I've saw a lot too growing up. Um, I've saw a lot of friends hurt. I've been hurt.

Zee Scout:  
Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Ashley Diamond:  
I've been, oh my god, I've suffered a lot of violence my whole life. My hand chopped off with a machete. A lot of very hateful things.

Zee Scout:  
Yeah.

Ashley Diamond:  
And that is a real fear. And my father used to always tell me, I never understood. He's like, your life's gonna be hard. That's why I never accepted you. We made peace before he died, but I now I know what he meant.

Zee Scout:  
Yeah.

Ashley Diamond:  
And see with me it makes it so worse because it's almost just because I am passable and all of that. People feel deceived. Like my whole life, no one's ever known. I go eat with my friends, they bring me home people. But when people find out they really like, have a problem with that, they feel so deceived.

But I'm like, why are you deceived? Because I'm being who I am.

Zee Scout:  
Mm-hmm. <affirmative>,

Ashley Diamond:  
Even in prison when they shaved my head bald and no makeup and not looking like a girl, people still calling me a girl inadvertently, they didn't even mean to. Some of 'em would correct it

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

later. But because of the mannerisms, because of the soul. Gender's in your spirit, yes. It is in between your legs. It's anatomy. But gender is also a feeling.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

And unfortunately that's not being addressed. Everyone is looking at this like they see it as an, whether you see this transgenderism as an affliction or not, these are a group of people who deserve a chance.

Zee Scout:

Yeah.

Ashley Diamond:

Just a chance to go to school. Just a chance to work. Just a chance. And some of us do. Well some of us come from great lives. Some of us, you know, they don't know what it's like to have a problem.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. Some people transition very quickly. One week they're this way, the next week they're a woman. And there's a, you know, it's really, it's disheartening that, you know, we have this image that we have.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. It bothers me a lot.

Zee Scout:

And we're a sexual fetish.

Zee Scout:

I know right.

Ashley Diamond:

One of the largest sexual fetishes in the world. And what kills me is most of the men that, especially officials that are trying to sue and kill me, are the same men that try to sleep with me.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

So it's just, it's a double edged sword.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. I know when I walk I try not to speak at all. Right. Like I walk down the street and I get honked at, or people wave or they slow their cars down or they start following me. But I'm like,

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

don't open your mouth Zee cuz when you do this is what they're going to hear. And then you might be in some trouble. Don't you hate it when like you're just like standing there and someone comes up to you thinking you're a girl and then they're like, get a little closer and they're like, "Ooh!" And they like recoil on you. They literally recoil.

Ashley Diamond:

I talked about that on the radio show about that.

Zee Scout:

Oh, trans violence?

Zee Scout:

Being passing, passable and.

Zee Scout:

Yeah.

Ashley Diamond:

How people react. Yeah. It's weird.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

And that's the normal reaction.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. Do you ever feel like, um, you didn't have like permission to feel upset when something like that would happen to you?

Ashley Diamond:

All the time. Yeah. I feel like I brought it on myself. This is the wall, but I took it gladly.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

If that's all you gonna do. Long as you don't beat me up.

Zee Scout:

Right.

Ashley Diamond:

But, you know, name callin never affects me. Never has, never will. That doesn't bother me. I, I know who I am. If you don't know who you are when you walk out the door in the morning, then name calling will affect you.



## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Zee Scout

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

But like, I know who I am. I've always known who I am and um, that's why it's important for people to be authentic. And the way to do that is to see someone authentically living their life with the normal trials and tribulations that come with our life, but still having the chance, like just as many negative things about my life. I have positive things to counteract that. You know, I'm friends with celebrities, you can Google me.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. You got a Wiki page

Ashley Diamond:

And I mean there are a lot of good ups to it, but there are still also a lot of downs too. But while you are up, bring somebody else up.

Zee Scout:

Mm. You make a lot of music and you're a very good singer. You were singing before we just started recording.

Ashley Diamond:

Oh God.

Zee Scout:

And I was impressed by your high notes. And you say you're writing a book too. Tell me more about what you're working on.

Ashley Diamond:

Well, the book was finished. It's called The Memoirs of a Chain Gang Sissy. Some people don't like that title, but this, it's not tell 'em to write their own book and then they can call it whatever they want. But I call it that because Sissy is the name that they refer to trans women and people in prison. And so it was a name that I had to embrace and so I was like, okay, [unintelligible] Sissy was also a YouTube series that I recorded in prison. There were several videos that we smuggled in that I, the offenders in prison and people stood up with me and we posted them on YouTube and they're called the Memoirs of a Chain Gang Sissy. It's part, it's 12 parts. And you know, just that unity because no matter what, even in there, even though there were some people that were just awful, even trans people that were just downright awful and nasty and mean.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. We're just people At the end of the day too.

Ashley Diamond:

There were, yeah, that's true. But there were so many people who needed my spirit and needed me, just being me and I started to realize the gravity of that. But sometimes it's hard to be me. Sometimes I don't feel like me.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Zee Scout:

Yeah. Say more.

Ashley Diamond:

And it's not that I, again, cuz I know who I am, but like, I don't, like there was a big part, I used to be very, very, very trusting and outgoing and still outgoing but not as trusting.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

And that's unfortunate because I've, I lose a lot, I lose a lot of relationships. Um, it's difficult to make new friends because to me, if you ain't being here, you don't need to be here <laugh>. But like that's not the right attitude. And so, but the feelings are real.

Zee Scout:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Ashley Diamond:

And I need to live them out and play them out. So how else can I advise people? The reason I'm doing what I'm doing is cuz I have experience, I've got experience not just in the courtroom, but experience being in the prison, not just being in the prison, working at the prison, facilitating like, I don't know what people thought, but like I've worked in prison, I got many degrees, certificates, all lining... You see those?

Zee Scout:

My hairdresser used to be, um, someone who worked in prison too.

Ashley Diamond:

See, so, you know,

Zee Scout:

We have the best conversations.

Ashley Diamond:

So it's like, you know, and I just wanna be appreciated for that. At the end of the day.

Zee Scout:

You're appreciated and you're very loved.

Zee Scout:

I hope so.

Zee Scout:

You wanna do a little singing?

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Ashley Diamond:

Yes. <laugh>, everybody. We're gonna do my song. It's gonna be on my album. It's called, It Doesn't Matter. And it might be relatable, it might not, but, um, let's give it a go.

Zee Scout:

Let's give it a go. Take one here in Rome, Georgia. It's just D minor and A minor. Right?

Ashley Diamond:

Right.

Zee Scout:

Okay.

Ashley Diamond:

Hit it.

Zee Scout:

The whole way through?

Ashley Diamond:

Yep.

Zee Scout:

Okay.

Ashley Diamond:

<singing>

Oh. It's 2:00 AM. I guess there's nothing left to say. When you asked me what was wrong, I ought to tell you, but I don't. It doesn't really matter what you say. When the love is gone, it doesn't matter anyway. Doesn't even matter. No more. The time I did in county jail, you know, I never got your mail, but like I died and went to hell. That's how I fell. Did you think I let it go? Lord have mercy, heavens no. When I finally made it out, the twin, I really figured out. Oh, but it doesn't really matter what you say. When the love is gone, it doesn't matter anyway.

Zee Scout:

Okay. Woo! That was good. I was feeling that.

Ashley Diamond:

Okay, great. I hope everybody else is too.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. Very personal song. So, um-

Ashley Diamond:

All of my songs are, and they tell stories.

Zee Scout:

mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Ashley Diamond:

So I'm excited to let everybody hear that side of me.

Zee Scout:

Me too.

Ashley Diamond:

Because I am a Whitney Houston impersonator and I did that for many years.

Zee Scout:

Yeah.

New Speaker:

And so I've practiced well I have great vocal coaches. Cheryl Porter. Shout out to Cheryl. Cheryl, you rock

Zee Scout:

Shouts out. Hey, speaking of other things, we gotta plug. And by the way, whenever this album comes down, I will be listening. I'll be loving and I'll be sharing.

Ashley Diamond:

Thank you.

Zee Scout:

Tell me more about this fundraiser you're doing and then we can wrap up and go have some fun.

Ashley Diamond:

Okay. Well we are doing an event called Home because I guess that's what I'm still looking for, I guess. And even though I'm home, like, um, we didn't get a chance to celebrate it and talk about it and like have everybody come and this is our opportunity. The Free Ashley Diamond team, allies, other allies, and people are coming together to do an event. We'll be celebrating and we'll be fundraising as well just to celebrate us, and me, but us.

Zee Scout:

Yeah. I'm so glad. I mean, I know that you have such incredible ambitions and you can accomplish them because you're so talented. But right now you need support. You need to move somewhere else. Yes. You need money to do that. You need money for therapy and healthcare. This stuff ain't cheap. Not in this economy.

Ashley Diamond:

That's Right.

Zee Scout:

So we should continue to plug this event for you.

Ashley Diamond:

Thank you.

## The Activist Files Episode 54: Ashley Diamond's Life Matters - on Dismissing Her Case Before Trial, Healing, and How The Fight for Her Life Continues

Zee Scout:

And I hope that you keep us updated on it.

Ashley Diamond:

Absolutely.

Zee Scout:

And let us know about it.

Ashley Diamond:

Absolutely. Shout out to Chinyere Ezie.

Zee Scout:

Oh yeah, absolutely. Shout out to Leah Todd, shout out to CJ Sandley.

Ashley Diamond:

Shout out to CCR period.

Zee Scout:

<laugh>. Okay. And everybody, lots of love for the great Ashley Diamond.

Ashley Diamond:

Wow. I love you guys. Thank you Zee this is wonderful.

Announcer:

We hope you enjoyed this episode of The Activist Files, the Center for Constitutional Rights Podcast. Just a reminder to subscribe and rate us on iTunes, Spotify, and SoundCloud. And if you wanna find out more about our work, visit our website [ccrjustice.org](https://ccrjustice.org). That's all until next time on the Activist Files.