

Shola's Voice

Keisha: We'll be ready in five minutes, Derin.

Derin: Thank you. Just going over some notes here. We'll be ready.

Keisha: Excellent. I'm looking forward to the interview.

Derin: Me, too.

Ramona: Any time you're ready, boss.

Keisha: The boss is ready.

Ramona: Roll cameras.

Keisha: Good evening and welcome to the show. New York City, like our country and our world, has passed through a period of history unlike any other in recent memory. There have been highs – dancing in the streets after the national election...

Crowd: *My kids have a future... My kids have a future...*

Keisha: And there have been terrible lows... a pandemic that took the lives and livelihoods of friends, family, coworkers, that kept us apart and sometimes terribly alone.

Keisha: Thankfully, our first responders, so many of whom are immigrant New Yorkers, responded with courage, selflessness, and love for our neighbors.

Derin: Ah! What am I going to do, Shinji?

Shinji: Hold on. ... Excuse me, I need your help.

Derin: I can't do the interview wearing this.

Shola: I'll be right back.

Keisha: In New York, and the whole country and even the world, there were peaceful

Black Lives Matter protests that brought people of all races together in the street with the vision of a better society.

Protestors: *Black Lives Matter... Black Lives Matter...*

Shinji: There's a boutique down the block. Can we find something quickly there?

Derin: Maybe, we have to do something.

Shinji: I'll try.

Shola: Would you like to wear this?

Keisha (off-screen): *There is the hope for America to finally...*

Derin: This is so beautiful.

Keisha (off-screen): *...live up to its founding principles. But it is up to all of us to continue to demand change...*

Derin: Thank you.

Keisha (off-screen): *...and to leaders who listen to the voices of the community.*

Keisha: This has been a historic year. And this year, there will be an important election in our city. We will choose our mayor. We will choose our City Council, and others who will lead our home into the future. What kind of people do you want to choose? The choice is in your hands, in your vote. On our program, we will introduce candidates, the people running for office. We will learn what matters to them. And you will think about what matters to you. Our first guest is Derin Korkmaz, who is running for city council. Welcome, Derin, and thank you for joining us.

Derin: Thank you, Keisha. It's an honor to be on your show. And it would be such an honor to represent the people in this district.

Keisha: Tell us why you are running for City Council?

Derin: Well, the City Council passes bills that can improve the quality of life of our families, our friends, our whole community. Jobs and job training, health care clinics, affordable housing, day care, playgrounds for our children... As a member of City Council, I will represent the needs of our diverse community.

Keisha: We are diverse here. As an immigrant myself, I believe we need a strong voice for immigrant needs—adult education, living wages, affordable health care...

Derin: I want to be a voice for immigrants. I want to give us a reason to vote.

Keisha: You are giving us some good reasons. But what do you say to working people who say they don't have time to vote?

Derin: I tell them about early voting. You can vote early by mail or in person. Also, I urge people to make a plan for how and when they are going to vote.

Keisha: Did you hear that, friends? Make a plan to vote. The more people in our community who vote, the better it is for our community.

Derin: That's right. People in power will pay attention to us if we vote.

Text Message (on Shola's Phone): There is a problem at Tobi's school. Come home quick!

Derin: Also, about the people who live in our community, I would like to you tell you a little story about the blouse I'm wearing...

Eri: What time did Deji say he'd be home?

Shola: Shh... he's asleep.

Deji: I'm going to take him to the bed.

Eri: He was really sleeping.

Shola: He barely ate anything at dinner and has been sleeping since then.

Deji: Eri, since you've been staying with us, did Tobi ever mention being bullied at school?

Eri: No, he always seemed to like school.

Shola: Yeah, but I noticed something was different recently.

Deji: He normally tells me what he did during the day. But not the last few days.

Shola: The parent coordinator is going to arrange a meeting with the counselor on Monday.

Deji: That's good. What about tomorrow? I have to be at the restaurant by 11.

Eri: Do you want me to stay with him?

Shola: I'm going to take Tobi to work tomorrow. He likes the studio. It will be a good change.

Keisha: Okay, Tobi, are you ready? Say hello to the world. Tell us who you are. What are you running for?

Tobi: Hello, world. I'm not running. I'm sitting at Ms. Keisha's table. My name is Tobi, and I want to be mayor of the Bronx. I like this job more than school.

Keisha: Well, if you want to be mayor, I think you should finish school first. Do you want my vote, Mr. Mayor?

Tobi: Yes, please.

Keisha: We have some interesting questions from our audience. Rosa from Morris Heights, asks, what is *ranked-choice voting*? Ken, how do you explain ranked-choice voting to our audience?

Ken: That is a good question, Keisha. In the primary election—when you choose a nominee in your party—you can choose five candidates for each position. You rank your choices. Who do you like the most? That is your first choice. Who do you like after that? That is your second choice. Let me show you. I have an example of a ballot. You can get your ballot in different languages. You can also bring someone to help you when you go vote. But let's look at an example. You see... the candidate's names are here, and you fill in who you want first, second, third, fourth and fifth.

Keisha: I see. So, you are running for City Council. If you are my first choice, I put you in the number one place.

Ken: I like that!

Keisha: I'm sure you do!

Ken: But if you like me, but I am not your first choice, you can put me as your second choice. I like that, too.

Keisha: Yes, because with ranked-choice voting, if a person's first choice is not popular

with a lot of people, maybe their second or third choice is popular, and can win.

Ken: Exactly. And ranked-choice voting is not only for City Council. It's also for mayor and for the other offices—public advocate, comptroller and borough president.

Tobi: These are my choices. Actually, I like them all the same.

Deji: Five mayors?!

Tobi: Not *five* mayors. Only one.

Deji: So, how does ranked-choice voting work?

Shola: Ah, you pick your five favorites. And you put them in order. The one you like the most, you put as number one. That is your first choice.

Tobi: Yeah, *Baba*, look... the one you like second most, you fill in as number two. You have one vote, but you can choose up to five. This way, you don't put all your eggs in one basket!

Deji: All the mayors in one basket?!

Tobi: No, no... Mama, help me!

Shola: If you put all your eggs in one basket, and the basket falls, all the eggs can break.

Tobi: Yeah, no breakfast.

Deji: Well, we don't want that, do we?

Shola: Let's eat breakfast.

Deji: Yeah, ranked-choice voting sounds good, but breakfast sounds better. And you've got to eat before school.

Tobi: I don't want to go to school.

Deji: But you need to go to school.

Shola: That's right. Don't you want to be mayor? You can teach your class about ranked-choice voting. We understand how you feel, Tobi. But you are smart. And we can't let bullies stop us from learning.

Tobi: He said bad things about me. He said bad things about us. He said we should go back to our country.

Deji: What he said is wrong. And we spoke with the teacher about it. The boy is going to write you a letter. He is going to apologize.

Shola: We are going to speak with the teacher again to make sure. And I will be waiting for you when you come home. And I want to hear all about your day at school.

Deji: Go get your things and then we'll have breakfast together.

Eri: I'm going to stop by my apartment tonight to pick up some things. I might be a little late.

Pina: Excuse me, are you registered to vote?

Shola: I'm not. I didn't know you have to register.

Eri: How do you register?

Pina: It's easy. You can do it online or by mail. Here is some information. One thing to know: you have to register as a member of the party to vote in the primary. And here is some information about a great woman from our neighborhood running for City Council.

Shola: I know her!

Pina: That's great! Where did you meet her? Did you hear her speak? Or did she come to your home?

Shola: Come to my home? Why would she come to my home?

Pina: To meet people, to listen. Derin wants to be the best City Council member she can be. And talking to people where they live is a great way to learn what people need.

Shola: I met her where I work. She was doing an interview. I didn't get to hear it all.

Pina: Would you like me to arrange for her to come to your home?

Shola: No, my home is very small.

Eri: It's even smaller because I am staying there. They're doing renovation in my building. They found lead in paint that was peeling in my apartment. I'm not

staying there when they are fixing it.

Pina: Lead is a serious issue. It's a good thing they are taking care of it.

Eri: My husband went to stay in another apartment with his friend. He has asthma and the dust was awful.

Shola: We wanted him to join Eri, but the space is tiny.

Pina: Housing... that is another big issue. And these new condos... they cause rents to go up and take public space, too. Are they good for the community? Derin is very concerned about these issues. She wants to do something about health care and housing.

Shola: I'm glad. It's very nice to talk to you.

Pina: My pleasure. Our contact information is on the card. Have a good day. And don't forget to register!

Pina: Hi, excuse me. Are you register to vote?

Deji: Meeting her at home? I don't think so.

Shola: Why not?

Deji: I don't trust politicians.

Shola: They want to solve problems.

Deji: We have such a small space, not enough room.

Shola: Yeah, so? That is the reality we are dealing with.

Deji: Right, reality. We have real problems. What can she do about our high rent?

Shola: I don't know, but I know she is from the community. And I know that she wants to listen. She wants to speak up for immigrants. There has been so much stress and tension between people.

Deji: Politicians... I don't know... They just want power.

Shola: That's not true. We have power. The power to vote, to choose who we want to represent us. We have power over them. That is democracy.

Deji: I'm not so sure.

Rowan: I'm getting lunch. Does anybody want anything?

Aden: I'll go with you. Just give me a minute.

Rowan: How about you, Shola?

Shola: I have my lunch. Thanks.

Aden: Where's Keisha?

Rowan: I think she stepped out.

Aden: Hello. *[tell me.] [oh, yes...]*

Shola: My... my name is Shola Olatunji. I'm an immigrant. I'm not running for office. I am not trying to win your vote. But I want to say, voting is important. Democracy is important. It gives us the power to choose our leaders. We need to choose people who can make changes in our community, solve problems... like paint that is peeling in old buildings, asthma, high rent, other issues.

Shola: I am so embarrassed. I apologize for sitting in your seat. I did not know you were here.

Keisha: Shola, what are you talking about? *That* was amazing.

Shola: I won't do it again.

Keisha: I want to show this on my program. I want everyone to hear your voice.

Shola: Oh, no. I don't think that is such a good idea. It's your program.

Keisha: It's *our* program. What do you say?

Tobi: Yes! Goal! Mama, are you coming?

Deji: Why does Mama have to come? She doesn't play foosball.

Tobi: Sometimes she does. She's better than me.

Eri: I play foosball. It's my turn. Let's play, Tobi.

Tobi: Okay. Let's play, Auntie.

Deji: I'll play the winner. Just tell me when you're finished.

Shola: What do you want to watch?

Tobi: Mama, you choose. What about your channel, Mama?

Deji: Tobi, are you sure?

Tobi: Yes, let's see who Ms. Keisha is interviewing.

Eri: Goal! See what happens when you don't pay attention?

Keisha: Good evening and welcome to the show. I have been interviewing candidates in the upcoming election. But today, I have a very special guest. In fact, my guest is not a candidate and is not really a guest. She works here. She's a very important person in the community of our station. In fact, I gave her my seat for this occasion. Let's watch.

Shola: My name is Shola Olatunji. I'm an immigrant. I'm not running for office. I am not trying to win your vote. But I want to say, voting is important. Democracy is important. It gives us the power to choose our leaders. We need to choose people who can make changes in our community, solve problems... like paint that is peeling in old buildings, asthma, high rent, other issues. My son got bullied at school because some parents educate their kids with wrong information about immigrants. There is a vaccine against coronavirus. We also need a vaccine against hate. I believe that education is the vaccine for that disease. Part of that education is learning about the candidates and the election. Everyone all over the world knows New York, and we live here. This is our home. I believe we can make it better.

Tobi: *Baba*, what should I say to her? I don't have any ideas!

Deji: You don't have to say anything if you don't want. But I am sure you will think of something good.

Tobi: What are you going to say to her?

Deji: I'm going to ask why she thinks I should vote for her, and what she can do to support your school.

- Eri:** I'm going to ask who she likes for mayor and borough president and her ideas for affordable housing and health care.
- Shola:** I'm going to ask if she likes my blouse. And why I should vote for her.
- Tobi:** I want to vote. But I haven't decided my choices yet.
- Deji:** You have a little time.

**If you are a U.S. citizen
18 years or older,
you are eligible to vote.**

**Ranked-choice voting is for
primary and special elections only.**

**For more information, visit:
www.voting.nyc**

Your city. Your voice. Your vote.