

S1 E2: Breaking Boxing's Barriers

(AJ II & Lisa "Too fierce" Foster)

Previously recorded on Friday, August 4, 2017

Intro Song: 'To The Max' -Drake

0:07 AJ: Hey, hey everybody! Thank you for tuning in to *Max Out Time* with AJ II where we take social issues and the hottest topics in sports and society then turn up all the way to the max to the max! Today's episode as always will be available on Patreon.com and it's sure to be a hit. We're stepping in the ring...I mean...studio with former boxing great, Lisa "Too Fierce" Foster to also talk her memoir, *Being Too Fierce- One woman's incredible journey from foster child to world championship boxer*, women empowerment in sports, and also hear her keys to the upcoming boxing blockbuster that is Mayweather/McGregor, plus much more. Lisa is a seasoned veteran to the podcast wave, and it's great to have you on today. So first, I want to thank you for dropping by... and now we have the champion hailing from Washington DC, IFBA Junior Featherweight Champion, Lisa "Too Fierce" Foster!

1:06 Lisa: Hey what's up AJ, how you doing? Thanks for having me here.

1:10 AJ: I'm great, I'm great I just want to let you have your time to shine and and let the people know what you are about.

1:17 Lisa: Okay, so what would you like to know? I'm doing several things at the moment but one of my big things is I'm promoting my book, *Being Too Fierce- One woman's incredible journey from foster child to world champion boxer*. And I am still heavily steed in the boxing world. I do a little commentating and I do a lot of advocating for children- foster children.

1:48 AJ: Okay, I'm interested to hear about the commentating. Now you know I did a little sports broadcasting (Lisa: Ok, there you go) in college so you've done the the boxing broadcasting now?

1:56 Lisa: I do the color commentating I do the color commentating for different shows so you'll see me out there sometimes. I've done some writing for a few boxing blogs, boxing magazines and *Huffington Post* and such. So yeah.

2:16 AJ: Where can we find your color commentating? Because I was a color commentator as well. I didn't know we had all these similarities.

2:21 Lisa: Oh yeah! So, I mean I've just been at various boxing events and I sit alongside so you'll find me in DC, I'm in Baltimore from time to time. So the area and when people come and ask me to come out as a special guest commentator, I'll come out. Indeed.

2:39 AJ: Okay, so you got the commentating, you got the writing, we had a little bit of a rap career back in the 80's.

2:46 Lisa: Oh my goodness, no you didn't bring that up.

2:48 AJ: No! We're in the studio we gotta...

2:50 Lisa: Yeah, we're in the studio but don't ask me to spit nothing!

2:55 AJ: Oh man! But the listeners but the viewers! One bar?

2:58 Lisa: No. That's a hard no. You going to give me the - go ahead and beatbox...

3:04 AJ: I was going to get you the beat!

3:07 Lisa: No do not.

3:08 AJ: [Imitates beatboxing] I was going to get you in there with it!

3:10 Lisa: Yeah, I got you!

3:12 AJ: But no, we're here to talk about your memoir *Being too Fierce* and your life story. How was it growing up in DC, you know, like we all did but going from foster home to foster home, and how did that lead you into boxing?

3:26 Lisa: That's the major question that I get all the time. My most asked question is, "how did you become a boxer?" The next most asked question is, "why do you like getting hit in your face?" I am asked the second question because I am a woman. I am asked the first question and that's a very good question. The way I became a boxer is that in 1997, I was inspired by the Mike Tyson undercard which was an all-female bout and it was Bethany Payne versus the coal miner's daughter Christy Mart-

4:08 AJ: Any relation to Martin Payne? We talking about the same Payne family?

4:11 Lisa: No, no no wrong Payne!

4:14 AJ: We talking about rawww doggg?

4:15 Lisa: I would hope not! So, yeah, when I saw this fight on television and I realized my kids were of school age, I was a stay-at-home mom and I've always loved Muhammed Ali. He was my idol to a degree, and I was just like, that is what I am supposed to do. And I searched around for a boxing gym and no-takers. I just had to get in through the back door through a friend of the family and he took me to the gym and I was off from there.

4:55 AJ: What makes your story, what makes your memoir such a success story? Why should people go out and buy this book?

5:00 Lisa: It's a very - I wrote my book so that if a blind person were hearing it, they could visually be there, I put people descriptively in my book. Another good reason to buy it, if you want to learn about our broken foster care system, throughout this country, read my book. You've probably met foster children in your lifetime and you get the sense that they are "problem kids" because they've come from broken homes, or they've come from dysfunctional families, or that they are "problem children" because they've switched from foster home to foster home. I was in thirteen different placements in my switching around however, I didn't even know half the time when or why I was moving. I was a ward of the court so my four brothers and I all went into care at the same time but not before we were in an actual orphanage. So, when they closed the orphanage down, then it was we started to move around and we started to separate, and so when I call our foster care system "broken" I say it for not just for reasons because of the problems with the kids or you know I say it because ---the government does not have a hold on what's happening when a child is in foster care. They just think that these agencies have it, they're [agencies] taking care of all the issues and situations that children have and most of our kids need therapy, need love first of all and secondly therapy from the situation of being separated from their biological parents.-- Those checks and balances still are not being addressed and I am advocating every single day of my life and that is one of the reasons why I wrote my book because I wanted people to see what I went through. All the forms of abuse, every name it, I went through. So when I went into the boxing world that was like, there was nothing that can be done to me that hasn't happened except for death. So, that's what my book is really talking about, it's designed to evoke emotion so, I want people to laugh with me, cry with me, feel joy, feel the pain, feel the despair, feel the enthusiasm. You get all the emotions, all these emotions as you read the book but when you look at the cover of the book, you'll see a picture of me as when I was around 8 years old and that picture was in my files, in my foster care files and then you'll see a picture of me the big picture of me as a boxer when I wasn't yet a champion and then the picture of the back is me right now. So, you'll see three stages

of my life and you can actually see the growth through those three pictures. The cover in itself is designed to give incentive to people like me who come out of foster care or who are emancipated out of any system, it may be the prison system and want to change their lives for the better so that's why I wrote the book.

9:05 AJ: Well it's a very inspiring book and it sounds like you were inspired by Mike Tyson a little bit and I know his story personally. He had a lot of run-ins with the law growing up and he fought on the street before he was taken in and did his boxing career. Were you inclined to fighting as long as you were growing up and in turned that and channelled that and translated that in the ring? Or, how did that anger translate into your boxing career?

9:30 Lisa: Okay, so for the most part, I was never on the street, I was always in a foster home. So let's make that notation, being in foster care, it's bad enough. Being on the street is a lot different. I've never been arrested a day in my life, I've never even been to the principal's office but I'm the exception to the rule of foster children because there are so many children suffering from post-dramatic stress disorder who have been abused in the way that I had been. So the way that I channelled that energy from being in foster care is through writing the book. But, before then to be motivated and it was like a catharsis, me hitting the bag and me letting out that extra energy and anger and resentment that I had toward the foster care system and I always say, I don't look at myself as the victim, because I am not the victim. The individuals that did the things to me and are still doing that to kids out here, they're the real victims because nine times out of ten, it's been done to them. But at some point, we have to break the pattern.

11:06 AJ: I would like to bring up what you're doing now. You train people and you're at the gym working out with people, what is a day in the life of 'Too Fierce' now?

11:18 Lisa: I am an ambassador for *Connect Our Kids*, a nationwide organization, which is designed to use technology to connect kids in foster care to actual family members. Whether it be a third, fourth, fifth cousin that they don't even know that's out there. A brilliant Doctor, Jennifer Jacobs, designed technology that will it is like a cross between Ancestry.com and Match.com that matches children to family that they probably ever knew they had. Studies have been done that this system works that when you're actually with a family member, you move around less because you are with family. Even if it's a third or fourth cousin. So it's like, with me I never even knew that I had other family out there. I was born in '68 and so I started at St. Ann's infant home and I went to Junior Village and then I went on through the foster system from there. Then went on to independent living and then I was emancipated out. Now, just imagine a kid being matched with a relative they didn't even know they had. It

might be in a different state but that kid will be taken care of by a family member instead of a stranger who may be after money only.

13:07 AJ: So have you ran into relatives you never knew you had, since you got out?

13:13 Lisa: Recently. Well, when I got out of foster care, I met relatives later on that never even knew existed. It's difficult because of what I went through, I really didn't know how to develop relationships with them and that's another thing. When you go through these things, you don't know how to hold onto relationships and it it wears in marriages and there's enough problems in marriage as it is. Just imagine not being able to hold onto a mate because of your baggage. Or, not being able to accept or know even what to do in a real family because you've been moved around so much. With every move that I made, I moved to a different school, a different church. So every just about every denomination that you can think of, I've had to, as a Christian, move to that church. From an Episcopalian to Catholic to you know and so nothing's really owned, you don't really own anything until your next move.

14:28 AJ: Do you feel the need to have more long standing relationships with people and jobs? Have you stayed at a job for a really long time because you like to really connect with people now just based off your background?

14:41 Lisa: I am a goal and achievement oriented person because of my background. I love stability so that is part of the reason why - when I sought out the world championship title, I gave it my all and I was determined at 28 year old. No one, people don't normally stop boxing when they're 28. You know kids start and they grow into it and grow up past it to turn pro. I had two amateur fights and then I turned pro because I was on a mission.

15:24 AJ: So how did you cultivate that skill? You talk about Muhammed Ali before (Lisa: Yes, yes.) and how he is one of your idols. What did you do to really enhance the way you were able to box? Did you mirror him or look at his tapes? What was it that got you hooked?

15:39 Lisa: I guess I have been watching Mohammed Ali since the 70's since I was a kid and we used to mimic him. We would get up, when he would come on television, we would get up and do his moves. I had two brothers that were living with me at the time, I had one brother named Mark, who was completely, you know he was the Ali Fan. We quickly became Ali fans because of him because he forced us to watch it because he was the eldest. He was like, "ya'll going to watch this, I don't care." We weren't watching cartoons or whatever, *Gilligan's Island* that night, it didn't matter what was on that night. We were going to be watching the fight. I would get up and mimic and say, "I can do it just as good as you!" That was a gift I always had was that of a mimic. When you have something in your gut, as you

know, when you got to do something especially when it's contact like yourself who is a football player right? [To AJ] You feel that hunger and that burn. Even now as I am retired and much older, I feel like I can step into the ring tomorrow and still be successful but I just happen to know when to stop.

17:00 AJ: Well then I'll put you on the spot a little bit. If you could just step in the ring right now and you can have anybody, either living or deceased, who would you want to throw it down with? Go toe to toe with right now?

17:15 Lisa: Who would I want to? Well I would want to get the biggest pay day that I could. The whole idea is to fight the person that can pull you up to the next level. I would say Claressa Shields right now, she has a fight coming up. She's a two time Olympic gold medallist, history maker, beautiful, gorgeous, wonderful, amazing women. However, if I were to step back in time and want to fight someone, even though she was not in my weight class, I would want to fight Christy Martin. She was the golden girl at the time, I would want to fight her because she was 132lbs and I was 119lbs. She had beaten everybody mostly in knock-outs, so if I were to train for somebody when it was my time, I would want to train up for her because I would want that championship and I would want that money.

18:45 AJ: Alright, so you heard it here first! Wherever you are Christy Martin, we're calling you out right now! Come to D.C.

18:50 Lisa: We got Don King right here.

18:52 AJ: We coming to D.C. live and direct from Stadium... Naw I'm kidding.

18:58 Lisa: So check it out, I just gave Christy Martin respect just then.

19:03 AJ: That's what it is, that's what it is about. In sports, that's all it's about; giving respect to your opponent

19:07 Lisa: Don King.

19:08 AJ: No, no, no, no, no I couldn't do it. I don't got the hair for it. I got the waves. I ain't got it. But just sticking with this boxing and the sports narrative we got going now, a lot of people would say that boxing is a man's sport, you know. A lot of people say women should not be in the sport. Why do you say to the nay-sayers? What do you think about quotes such as these?

19:35 Lisa: I say nothing to the nay-sayers, I just show them. As far as it being a male sport, sure it started out as a male sport but so did everything else and we just make it our own.

For women, I would say to any women who are being told 'women don't do this or women can't do this' I was in the Navy but I'm not going to use that language but I would have told them on here I would tell them to 'go and do something'...

20:13 AJ: Ok well we're unedited around here no FCC airwaves so feel free you know...

20:18 Lisa: Ok yeah you got it you got it. I'm not going to use those exclamation points right yet only when needed. So anyways, they got it they got it, I'm not going to use that explanation we wouldn't need it. But, I would say to the nay-sayers because I have a lot of nay-sayers. I am the first and only female boxing champion coming out of Washington DC and so there it is! If people haven't seen it before, they don't think it can actually happen especially with someone from their home town. Look at Claressa Shields right now, she's making history and I'm so proud of her because she's keeping it alive. It's because of women like her who are keeping it alive and all throughout the world.

21:14 AJ: So, being a woman and actually especially being a black woman, were there any prejudices when you were coming up as a boxer? Did you feel any type of negative treatment or animosity towards you during your career?

21:34 Lisa: Well, in everything that a person is doing or trying to achieve and you know this probably too AJ, they're haters. There's going to be haters (AJ: Hi haters). Hi haters, how y'all doing! They're haters and it's okay. I welcome them because it feeds my ambition to be better. But let me just tell you, boxing is not for the faint of heart. I was on the road most of the time, all the time. I didn't have a manager or a promoter so I was virtually doing it on my own. I would go into Philly, different towns, taking that walk to the ring, you see what you see on television because you're seeing it on television and they keeping that under control. But you're fighting in a smoker, in a small club in Philadelphia or with a Philadelphia audience and you're coming from out of town. You got to have a heart to get through that crowd so if you're not a real boxer or if you're not serious, you're not focused. So, when I walk through that crowd and walk down that aisle I was so focused that I didn't see anybody, all I saw was that corner of the ring that I was going to. Whether they were saying, "Hey! Too fierce" or if they were saying, "You're about to get your ass kicked!" or "You're about to get knocked out!" If they were saying things I never heard it. It's like you hear it or you don't it's all white noise and when I get into that ring, everything becomes clear.

23:40 AJ: One of my former head coaches, Tom Allen, at Indiana University. He had a saying, "Ear muffs and blinders- you don't see them you-don't hear them." I'm glad that you brought that up. Not only is boxing a sport that you said is a male dominated industry, but

the workforce is general is a male dominated industry. Last week was 'black women's equal pay day'.

24:08 AJ: Yes. July 31st was 'black women's equal pay day.'

24:11 Lisa: Let me write that down.

24:13 AJ: Mhm many celebrities, everyone were very outspoken about it on social media, Serena Williams wrote an article on fortune.com.

24:18 Lisa: I did see that. I did see that.

24:21 AJ: So all of that was going on to say that black women make 63 cents to the dollar that any male makes in the workforce. The reason why this day comes in July because it will take 7 more months for a black woman to make the same amount of money that a male made in 2016, so 7 months behind.

24:45 Lisa: That's just ridiculous.

24:46 AJ: It's a ridiculous, a staggering number. But Steph Curry who won the NBA MVP [Most Valuable Player] in 2016 made 11.4 million dollars. Let's put this into perspective, the WMBA MVP, she only made 95, 000 dollars, staggering statistics. So in sports in particular, this is way worse in society actually.

25:14 Lisa: This is indicative in the exact same way in boxing. We don't even see a fraction, I think Laila Ali was the highest paid women's boxer probably then probably Christy Martin. Can you imagine us even being at a George Foreman level let alone a Mayweather level? That's not to take anything away from George. I'm talking about his boxing career not his grill.

25:49 AJ: No, no, no because I used to grill it up. Give you some fried bologna and get me two pieces of potato bread. We used to do that.

26:00 Lisa: It would be completely dry. You have to dry your bologna out.

26:04 AJ: Yeah George Foreman he had the reality show he had everything going on back in the day.

26:06 Lisa: He had it all. Yes he did.

26:10 AJ: Yeah but he was eating too many of them burgers off the grill. But yeah you were saying about Laila Ali and and also in boxing as well?

26:21 Lisa: Laila Ali made most of her money from her endorsements. Serena Williams is doing very well but you can't compare that to male on top of their game. She's known as one of the greatest athletes of all time. Her status at that level as being a black woman is lowered. I think there was an incident last month, she played in *Precious*, Monique was talking about the very same thing, in acting for women and let alone a black woman. She went for Oprah Winfrey and she went for Tyler Perry and said "Look I won an Oscar and you all told me a certain thing if I won an Oscar that I would get paid a certain way" and look at Kerry Washington and Gabrielle Union and *Empire*, Taraji, she's bringing in numbers that are just beyond compare. She may be getting paid better than most but it's still not fair and that was Monique's point.

27:57 AJ: Yeah, it's women in all the workforces, it's women in sports especially. The woman's name from WNBA is Nneka Ogwumike and like I said she's not even making six figures. Steph Curry, LeBron and those guys are making 11, 20/30 million dollars and the numbers are staggering.

28:20 Lisa: I've seen some women who were called 'pork chop lips', I've had my nose broken just in training. You know just, cuts beyond belief, they are going to wear those cuts for the rest of their lives and they're not getting paid any money. But I also say this, don't do anything that you don't love because if you're doing it for money, it's for the wrong reasons anyway.

28:55 AJ: Coming from a legend right here and you've definitely been in in those shoes before so I wanted to have your take on that. Since you are the IFBA Junior Featherweight Champion, I want to take to another champion, my man, is 50 and 0 49 and 0 he is undefeated... Money Mayweather is going to step in the ring with the UFC fighter, Connor McGregor. He right out of Ireland and he has been doing his thing on the UFC circuit and he should be praised for that, that's great, you know? He's got no chance against Money Mayweather but I want to get your insight, the real keys to this match-up. So Vegas bet-ters, let's listen in.

29:38 Lisa: Great entertainment! That's all I have to say.

29:41 AJ: It's Pay-Per-View for a reason.

29:42 Lisa: Great entertainment, but boxing and MMA are two different things entirely, and if McGregor comes and boxes... great entertainment! I don't like to bad-mouth anybody's stuff, do what you do, enjoy your stuff as you like, but great entertainment. And I'm smiling.

30:07 AJ: Skip Bayless is saying this and people who really know boxing are saying, well Mayweather is going to step in and really do something.

30:09 Lisa: Oh come on. Don't do this. No, no, let's not.

30:16 AJ: I'm playing Devil's Advocate, I know who's going to win.

30:21 Lisa: Oh my lord. You're trying to go somewhere else with me.

30:24 AJ: I know who's going to win but he [McGregor] has no chance? Ok on a scale of 1 to 10, what are his chances?

30:30 Lisa: Okay...it's about as good as the chances of another plane flying into the 14th St. Bridge. Crashing.

30:43 AJ: Well...we got aircrafts going down all the time nowadays. What you mean?

30:48 Lisa: That's true but so put your money on McGregor if you feel like that.

30:52 AJ: Oh naw. I don't have any money so I-

30:53 Lisa: Well I just said if you look, look, let me tell you, the smart bet, the smart bet is to bet against Mayweather. Bet money that you are willing to lose but if you win, it's still a smart bet because you just got paid. When I was fighting my fight against the champion, Kathy Williams, out of Canada and I was at Treasure Chest Casino. I said in my book that if people at that casino that night had put their money on me, I was a 13 to 1 underdog, imagine what the pay-off was. In that arena, with my record and who she was and in her status and such. Here I come, a virtual unknown, I am in the ring with the champion and there are a handful of people who put money on me, they got paid because I knocked her out on the 9th round. However, the ones who would of bet on her if she had won, would not have got nearly as much. So just imagine that, so I would say if you going to make a bet, place a bet of about 200\$ on Mayweather and 100\$ on McGregor. It's 300\$, you're willing to lose it all anyway so you're going to win something.

32:26 AJ: Well...all the bookies out there, you've heard it here first. From the champion, DC's Champion, DC's first female champion. Straight out of DC and she came with some knowledge that blew my mind today, didn't even know that she had and she also got some rap skills that will be on the edited, the extendo version of the podcast. Thank you so much and still standing at 5 foot 7, the IFBA Junior Featherweight champion, as always, Miss 'Too Fierce' Foster.

33:03 Lisa: I'd like to say, can I plug my website, so nowadays my name is Lisa P. Cohen, my book is called *Being Too Fierce* and my website is called lisapcohen.com and you can find out anything about me...what I am doing, we are bringing everything up to date. *Give Big America* campaign is coming out if you want to help support foster kids. We're challenging every American in our country to give six dollars towards foster kids and to help make their lives better. *Connect our kids*, we're working with them and actually working with MBI which is a health service center so they deal with a lot of people with mental illnesses and I'm actually a group facilitator there, right here in the District of Columbia. I'm working with our people, I've been there, I'm not above it so I I-

34:16 AJ: Ok. The children are our future. For sure.

34:19 Lisa: I challenge everyone out there to help someone in need. You know you never know if it's going to be you.

34:28 AJ: Well miss Lisa and AJ both love the kids (Lisa: Love the kids), so we're always helping out! It was great to have you on again! But that's going to be a wrap-

34:37 Lisa: Thank you, you're awesome and I am so very proud of you AJ...big things...

34:46 AJ: Thank you. I appreciate it. Thank you. Please continue subscribing to [Patreon.com](https://www.patreon.com) and thank you for the initial platform, [Patreon.com](https://www.patreon.com). Signing off with Lisa Cohen, I'm @arthurjonesii or www.patreon.com/arthurjonesii. AJ Out!

Outro

35:01 –End–

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