

Transcript for Laila Ali | Reach! (Episode 607)

Full show notes found here:

<https://theartofcharm.com/podcast-episodes/laila-ali-reach-episode-607/>

LAILA: Taking our history into account, taking just sensationalizing certain things into account, just rolling it all up into a ball, we've come a long way but there's a whole lot more work to do.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm. I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Today we're talking with Laila Ali, world champion boxer, entrepreneur, and daughter of Muhammad Ali. We'll talk about her journey from troubled childhood, to entrepreneur, to boxer and back again. Growing up around fame, learning to fend for herself, getting in the ring, and what that can teach us about ourselves and how we interact with the world at large. I really enjoyed this chat. I think you'll enjoy listening to it as well. Enjoy this episode with Laila Ali and by the way if you're new to the show, we'd love to send you some top episodes and the AoC Toolbox.

We discuss things like the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, social engineering, reading body language, having charismatic nonverbal communication, networking and influence strategies, mentorship, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm. So check that out at theartofcharm.com/toolbox or in our iPhone app at theartofcharm.com/iphone. Also at theartofcharm.com you'll find the full show notes for this and all previous episodes of the show. All right, we're glad to have you with us here today at AoC. Enjoy this episode with Laila Ali.

I'm a little bit self conscious about, "Oh, how did I just look in that?"

LAILA: Right, right, right.

JORDAN: And I can imagine also --

LAILA: Right.

JORDAN: -- as a female --

LAILA: Right.

JORDAN: -- it must be even worse because people are judgy with that.

LAILA: Of course.

JORDAN: Worst case someone says, "Oh, Jordan, you need to hit the gym." As a woman like, if you just even make a funny face and they get the photo, you're like, "Oh, crap, now that's on the Internet."

LAILA: Lucky for me, I'm used to fighting in a ring and they have all kinds of crazy looking photos. You know when you're like getting hit in the face.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: Yeah you like have a glove up against your face --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: So I don't worry. I get in the ring with no makeup on, I used to so --

JORDAN: Good point. So obviously when you box, you don't have makeup on.

LAILA: You know I used to wear mascara into the ring because that's one of the things I just don't leave the house without. I just feel sleepy. Like your eyes just don't really pop. So I would wear --

JORDAN: Getting punched --

LAILA: --waterproof mascara.

JORDAN: Getting punched in the face doesn't keep you awake in the ring?

LAILA: Oh, I didn't get punched in the face that much.

JORDAN: That's a good point.--

LAILA: I was doing the punching, yeah.

JORDAN: That's a good point.

LAILA: But yeah. No I'm just joking. You get punched every once in awhile. I did anyway but no.

JORDAN: You're the eighth of nine children. That's a lot of kids.

LAILA: Yeah that is a lot of kids. My father had two children with my mother, my sister and I -- My sister Hana and I so --

JORDAN: Your mom is really pretty.

LAILA: She is actually, thank you.

JORDAN: Yeah. Yeah.

LAILA: She's beautiful. She did some modeling. She wasn't a model but a lot of people thought that she was because she looked like she could be. But thank you.

JORDAN: Yeah the photo I saw of her was that Diana Ross hair era. Where it was like it's big on one side --

LAILA: Cool.

JORDAN: -- and it's great. It's a black and white photo that I saw. You probably know the one.

LAILA: She wore her hair to the side a lot.

JORDAN: Yeah. And I just thought, "Wow that's really next level." And your dad of course was a well known boxer. You became a boxer but why did the other kids in your family not box?

LAILA: Well you'd have to ask them that question but from my perspective I think that, first of all, you have to have it in you to want to be a fighter. It's not something that you just go, "Oh, I think I'll just try boxing," you know because you're going to get your ass beat --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- if you get there and you don't have it in you. Then also just the pressure of being a child of the greatest fighter of all time, right? But I think that I've always been a fighter. Outside of boxing --

JORDAN: Oh, okay.

LAILA: I've always been the one -- yeah. So it was no surprise to anyone in my family that I became a professional boxer because I used to get in trouble and get in fights in school. So I've always been a fighter. I still am now, even though I'm not fighting, but I just have it in me to just fight for what I want -- physically, verbally, you know, all that.

JORDAN: Nice. When you started to box people went, "Okay good, now it's legal," or whatever. Right? Now all this punching is okay.

LAILA: Well I actually -- when I saw women's boxing on television for the first time, that's when I wanted to do it myself. I didn't want to box professionally just because my dad was Muhammad Ali. I never thought about it.

JORDAN: Interesting.

LAILA: I didn't know that it was available for me to do. I just thought, "Okay that's dad. That's for him to do. Or men to do." When I

saw women's boxing, I remember being amazed and surprised like, "Women fight?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: "I didn't even know this. How did I not know this?" Right? It was Christy Martin, at the time was the biggest name before I came into boxing. And she was fighting on a Mike Tyson undercard. So a lot of people saw women's boxing for the first time because Don King was the promoter --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: -- he put her on. And that's it. When you get that opportunity, it was a brawl. I mean it was bloody, it was like crazy. And I was like, "I want to do that."

JORDAN: Why though? You know, why --

LAILA: Well it's in my blood --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- you have to remember.

JORDAN: That's for sure.

LAILA: It's in my DNA. So -- because it is crazy. I mean to say you want to fight for a living. Because people are like, "Why would you want to just get hit for a living?" But there is a sweet science to it but at that moment it wasn't the sweet science I was attracted to --

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: -- it was just the fact that I could fight and not get in trouble?

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: Like you know, that's just right up my alley. Because I felt like I would be good at it, you know, and I could do it.

JORDAN: When I look at people getting punched by professional boxers especially, I think, "Dang that's got to hurt." And I realize -- and I've seen interviews with you and I saw part of your documentary where you I think flat out said, "People who aren't fighters don't get it." Because to them it looks like, "Oh, man how --"

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: "Ow!" And you're thinking, "Yeah get in there, get them!"

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: Or something like that. I know there's a different level that you're thinking at.

LAILA: Well the thing is, is that you are for one -- you're not feeling the punches like you would imagine because your adrenaline is going.

JORDAN: Oh, that's good to know.

LAILA: It's kind of like, you know someone's just kind of tapping you. Tap, tap, tap. And every once in awhile, that bam! It's that hard one, "Ooo okay I felt that." You know, so it -- and it also depends on the fighter. You would think anyone punching you would hurt, right?

JORDAN: Yeah sure.

LAILA: But as fighters, it's like, "Oh, that person can punch, that person can't." So even though they're hitting you, you don't feel it. It doesn't hurt. It's just kind of like someone tapping you on the shoulder. And then the punches you feel. You might be able to feel those shots or just get hit with a good shot. So, it's just like with football. I watch football and I'm like --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: "Why do guys jump in the air, landing the ground, on their shoulder -- How are they not hurt?" I don't understand but as football players, they don't feel all of that. You know, and of course it is a wear and tear. There is a wear and tear on your body. They're getting shot up. You know they're getting all this done after the game to go out there and do it again. But in the moment they're not feeling it because their adrenaline is going so --

JORDAN: Right. That's what your husband does, right? He's a football player. Or was he --

LAILA: He's retired.

JORDAN: Yeah. Retired football player.

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: So does he still have a bunch of battle scars where you're like, "It's raining today! My knee is hurting."

LAILA: Right, he actually came out really well. He only had one major injury. He broke his collarbone but he has bad shins so sometimes, yeah he'll have problems with his shins. But other than that, he didn't really get broke up.

JORDAN: That's --

LAILA: He was a wide receiver and he ran fast and well.

JORDAN: Yeah super fortunate, yeah.

LAILA: Right.

JORDAN: He ran all the way to the end.

LAILA: Yes, exactly.

JORDAN: Nobody tackles you when you get there. Yeah.

LAILA: He played for 13 years so he did really well. Most guys' career I think the average is four years in the NFL.

JORDAN: How long was your boxing career?

LAILA: About nine years. I took year off.

JORDAN: Okay.

LAILA: Because I had a shoulder surgery in the very beginning which was devastating to me, in the beginning to have to take a whole year off.

JORDAN: Because when I looked at online, I thought, "There's not that many fights individually in there."

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: So I thought, "Was this two years, three years, ten years?"

LAILA: Right.

JORDAN: You can't really tell. How much --

LAILA: Twenty-four fights.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: No amateur career. You might look at somebody who fought the same amount of time, they might have less fights than that. They might only have 16 fights. You know, and then you look at somebody like Christy Martin who fought a lot longer than me, she had 50 fights, you know? So, it would just depend. For me, I would fight -- especially in the beginning -- maybe once or twice a year.

JORDAN: I mean is that normal? Because it just seems like that's a lot of training for --

LAILA: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- one night.

LAILA: It is.

JORDAN: You better hope you're on that night.

LAILA: It is. For me in the beginning -- I don't even remember my own record of when I fought and I'm bad with numbers. But for me, in the beginning I fought a little bit more often. But I was doing a lot of learning. I did a lot of my learning during my career. You know, just because I didn't have an amateur background, so we really took it slow in the beginning. And then, with my weight class, being at 168, there just weren't that many girls.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: You know at that weight class, maybe if I was at 140, 135 -- so many more options.

JORDAN: At some point, you just, you reach a level where, yeah maybe there's not that many --

LAILA: Who am I going to fight?

JORDAN: Who are you going to fight?

LAILA: Yeah and then you look at their record and you think of the business side. You want someone who's going to give you a good fight, you want somebody who -- I don't care if they have a good record. You know, I look at who they fought, you know I look at their size --

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

LAILA: -- their height, you look at all of that. You know, you're just like, "Okay." That's the only thing you could do, because a lot of these girls you didn't really video on or anything. I didn't know what I was going to get in there with. And then everybody would fight me harder than they fought the last person. So I remember seeing tape on certain girls and then not expecting much, and they get in there and they're a whole different fighter.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

LAILA: Because they think this is their moment, you know?

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: And they're at their best. They've got the best trainer, the best nutrition, and they're like, "This is my time to make it big." That's what they think.

JORDAN: Or maybe, "I've got to get one good punch in there before I get knocked out."

LAILA: Yeah. No. Yo, yo a lot of people didn't give me my respect as a boxer because they would think, "Oh, she's just a pretty girl. She can't fight. It's all a lot of hype."

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: So that was always fun to see that first shot where they're like, "Oh." You know the surprise in the ring when they --

JORDAN: Did they not watch the video at all?

LAILA: Well, you know, it's just like when your mind is telling you one thing, sometimes your eyes can be fooled.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So it's like I don't look like I'm punching that hard a lot of the time. You see someone go down but then they think, "Oh, she just couldn't take a punch."

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: People come up with all kind of excuses for themselves.

JORDAN: Yeah I can imagine they're just saying, "Well the only reason she even got to this far is because her dad called some people --"

LAILA: Exactly.

JORDAN: -- "And he made some calls." And so now you're -- he wants one daughter that boxes so that you're the one.

LAILA: And he didn't want me to box and he had nothing to do with my boxing career. And you cannot become a world champion and have multiple titles without fighting other champions to get them. So it would be different if I just had 24 and 0, 24 knockouts no titles --

JORDAN: Right, sure.

LAILA: -- but when you start getting the boxing the WBC, which is the most respected boxing organization. I mean my dad's a WBC champion, you know Mike Tyson, Sugar Ray Leonard, all those people. Evander Holyfield, Lennox Lewis, all the top fighters -- they're not just going to give me a title, you know what I mean? So I had to fight for that title, defend that title. Now yes, I will say that in my weight class, there was the least amount of talent. So I would say people would -- can say, "Oh, well the girls that you fought weren't that much." And I'm like, "You're right. There were a lot of them that weren't that much." But that doesn't mean that I'm not a great fighter. I mean I've sparred with world champion men.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: You know so I know what I can do but that was one of the reasons I retired. I got tired of being in these situations where I just didn't feel like -- the only way I can describe it is a pro football team having to play a high school team. So even though you're going to beat them, you don't really feel that good about it in the end.

JORDAN: Sure, right.

LAILA: So it's how much of that can I do? Where I -- I'm going to keep training at an elite level, you know. So I can say though, there were certain girls and in the beginning -- like Valerie Mahfood, I remember won. Suzy Taylor, they were champions. In the beginning I was like, "Man I want to fight those girls but I have to wait until I have enough experience." And I finally got in there with them, it was easy. I took their titles. So at one time, they were the top echelon. They made it look like they weren't anything.

JORDAN: Right. You bumped them down an entire --

LAILA: Right. Right.

JORDAN: -- level. In looking at the highlight reels and things like that, it is a whole level that they maybe didn't think existed.

LAILA: Right.

JORDAN: It was like these are the best female boxers and then you got in there and it was like, "Oh."

LAILA: Yeah.

JORDAN: "Okay well we've got to find somebody who can fight on her level." And one of the reasons you retired is because there wasn't anybody.

LAILA: Right in my weight class. So I never like to make it sound like there was -- I mean there's so much talent. And I never go around saying, "I'm the best ever. I'm the best." I don't need to -- anyone to tell me I'm the best --

JORDAN: You leave that to the -- your old man eh?

LAILA: Well yeah, he was. And there's people who will, you know, who argue that. To me it's never been about being the best ever. It's just about being the best that I could be, being the best in my weight class --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- but there are so many other talented fighters in other weight classes. Do I think I could beat them pound per pound? Yes. But at the same time, I have to put that out there because I never want to sit up and sound like I'm just saying I'm the best ever to walk this earth and there was just no talent for me. But I'm a realistic person. There's certain fighters that would sit here right now and act like they were just that great --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- and not mention the talent level.

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: Being the perfectionist that I am. You know who Floyd Mayweather is --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: I trained with Roger Mayweather who trained him. I trained with Floyd Mayweather Senior who trained him. I've trained Buddy McGirt who trained world champs. Those are my trainers.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: So it's not like I'm just out here just Muhammad Ali's daughter. I had the best trainers, I had the best nutrition, and I got the Ali blood in me. So anyone who would just think, "Oh, she's just a pretty face," they're not that smart of a person to think --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- this is Muhammad Ali's daughter. If I was a guy, they would take it a whole lot more serious.

JORDAN: It's not a singing career --

LAILA: No.

JORDAN: -- where you can auto tune it --

LAILA: No.

JORDAN: -- and it's like, "Oh, you know, she's Frank Sinatra's granddaughter." You're getting hit by other people.

LAILA: Yes.

JORDAN: You can't fake that.

LAILA: No and --

JORDAN: There's no CG.

LAILA: Right there's a million other things that I could do. Hence what I'm doing now. I mean outside of boxing, this is what I -- I didn't make a lot of money boxing. I didn't get a lot of exposure boxing.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah, that's true. It's --

LAILA: I didn't.

JORDAN: -- undercard only for that stuff.

LAILA: No. I was a main event but nobody was watching it on the level of like, you know I fought Jaqui Frazier, Joe Frazier's daughter.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: I don't remember how many views we got but it wasn't like that big of a deal as it would have been if we say we were men.

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: But the tension that would have been on it -- and it wasn't like we're in a time where you have the Ronda Rousey now and you got the UFC behind her and they've pumped her up to a certain level. It wasn't going on back then. I mean I was offered movies, just like Ronda Rousey, I turned them down because I was like, "No I want to be a serious -- I want to be a fighter, I want to be taken serious." If I would have known, if I was older, smarter, I would have taken some of those opportunities, possibly. But it was just something I loved to do and now I got it out of my system, I'm back onto my path --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- like I was before I started boxing -- business.

JORDAN: Ronda had some words before she had the recent sort of not so successful few fights. And I thought that was interesting because I thought -- and maybe this was just my non fighter mindset but I feel like when you get to the top of the fighting game, shouldn't you be super respectful of everybody?

LAILA: Mmm.

JORDAN: Wouldn't that seem more powerful or not really? I just don't get that dynamic.

LAILA: It depends. I mean, because -- I mean when I was boxing I used to say all kinds of stuff.

JORDAN: I heard some of it.

LAILA: Yeah.

JORDAN: I got some of that in here.

LAILA: Yeah and I didn't have a problem with it. That's just who I was. I mean what I did, I did for me. So it affected the way that I felt. You know, a lot of times, so I didn't really care what anyone had to say. And anything I said, I was being honest. Were there some things that I've said before that I could change? Yeah I remember I went to China once. It was only my fourth fight and I was younger then and I'm fighting this girl and I saw her and she was overweight. Like what I would consider to be just fat or chubby.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: And she was talking real hard. And I was just like, "Do you really think I would let a fat girl beat me?" That's what I said to the public --

JORDAN: Oh, man.

LAILA: -- but when I meant by that -- I could have changed the wording. But what I meant that is I take my sport so seriously I put in the work that I need to. I lost 30 pounds, you know what I mean? I trained to get here, you know. These muscles didn't just show up overnight.

JORDAN: Sure, yeah.

LAILA: I'm weight training. I'm training, I'm putting work. Because to me I look at you as an athlete, you're not even doing your job.

JORDAN: Right, right.

LAILA: Because you can not be doing your job and looking like that. So for me, because it naturally would happen. You see what I'm saying?

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So I'm not going to take you seriously if you don't have your body in the top, you know, shape.

JORDAN: I see what you're saying, yeah.

LAILA: But I didn't -- I didn't -- it didn't come out that way. Right I'm -- but I was so young, so at the time, you might say that to your friend like --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: "You think I'm going to let that fat chick beat me?" Because all that comes with that -- so like I said, stuff like that I would have changed. So I don't know what you saw but a lot of it I would say now, because that's just who I am and all is fair in war. So no. To answer your question about Ronda Rousey, she is supposed to have thought that she could beat everybody and like she said before, "I think I could beat Floyd Mayweather, I think I could beat Laila Ali. No I would need some training, but I think I could beat them." And at the time I was like, "Hmm."

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: You know I don't care how much training you did. But in her mind -- but she was saying to herself about comments that I made, she was saying, "Well she's supposed to feel that way." She was saying that about me.

JORDAN: Uh-huh.

LAILA: Because you are. You're supposed to feel like you're the best. But you also need to have -- be realistic and I would never say I

could beat Floyd Mayweather, you know? No matter how much training I had because he's a man, he's stronger, and he's on a whole different skill level.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: You need to respect other people's sports, is what you need to do. Especially when you're talking about people much bigger than you.

JORDAN: Sure. Do you think that when you're talking about fighting in general, you have to have a mindset where you honestly believe you can beat everybody in your path? Otherwise you're at a disadvantage?

LAILA: Yeah you do but that's not going to work for everybody.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So I think it has to be more than just that. But first of all with anything you do, you have to believe, but you have to also take into consideration who you're facing. So if you and I are fighting one another and we're both champions -- I mean there's those fights where you've got two fighters, Oscar De La Hoya and Sugar Shane Mosley when they fought. They both were undefeated, they both knew each other, they fought in the amateurs, they didn't fight purposely for many years because they wanted to have that mega fight --

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: -- that's the business side of it. You know what all of his strengths are, you know what yours are but you really -- that's when it really comes down to strategy because you both really are really great fighters. It's just who's going to be the better fighter that night and who's not going to make mistakes? So yeah, you've got to go in there feeling like you can beat him. If Shane was like, "Oh, I don't know if I can really beat Oscar," you're not going to win. So that can make you lose a fight in

itself. But it can't in itself help you win a fight. You understand what I'm saying?

JORDAN: Yeah. I do. That actually makes a lot of sense. It won't substitute skill.

LAILA: It won't.

JORDAN: It won't substitute training, it won't substitute nutrition and endurance, but if you don't have it --

LAILA: You could lose period. You could have all those other things and still lose.

JORDAN: Because other guy could growl at you or the other gal --

LAILA: Right.

JORDAN: -- could growl at you and you can go, "Crap," --

LAILA: Weak.

JORDAN: -- "I knew I was going to lose this fight."

LAILA: Weak minded.

JORDAN: And then she's got that extra little bit of swag to go after it.

CROSSTALK

LAILA: And I believe in the power of thought and the energy that you put out there. So it's just like, there's been a lot of fights where I could see in the moment when somebody lost. Is -- that's it. Because they've --

JORDAN: Really?

LAILA: -- kind of -- yeah. It's, you know I could see when they're about to give up. So I used to do this thing I used to call the beat down, you know --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- where it's like I'm not necessarily -- a lot of technical knockouts. I could see you're tired so I'm going to throw like a gang of punches all at once, and so the point where you're not going to be able to stop them and the ref's going to jump in.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: But I could see in their eyes that moment. So then when they feel that barrage, just like, they kind of give this body language of "I'm defeated," --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- and the ref will stop it. So it's just all kind of like look.

JORDAN: I understand that. I think it makes perfect sense, right. You're sensing at the moment, in the fight that they've made a decision in their mind that says, "If she does that one more time, I'm giving up."

LAILA: Exactly.

JORDAN: "This is not going to work for me."

LAILA: Something like that.

JORDAN: And you kind of see that and you go, "Ah the beatdown is coming, and you're going to quit." And you get that little extra burst of energy that might cost you if you just did that right up front and then they're done.

LAILA: Yeah, something like that.

JORDAN: Yeah it's hard for me to articulate --

LAILA: I know, I know.

JORDAN: -- because I've never been in there.

LAILA: Yeah.

JORDAN: But I feel like I know what you're saying.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: Your nickname was She Be Stingin'.

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: Who gives those nicknames to people?

LAILA: I hate that. I hate that.

JORDAN: Yeah, I wondered if you liked it or hated it.

LAILA: I hate it. I had a cutman named Cassius, a real eccentric guy but. He'd just start saying, "She be stingin'. She be stingin'." I'm like, "No I don't want a nick -- " because from the very beginning I was like, "I don't want a nickname." Because it was corny to me.

JORDAN: They are corny, yeah.

LAILA: So, you know by my father being, "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee."

JORDAN: Sting like a bee, yeah.

LAILA: She as in a girl.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: And then bee as in B-E-E.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: And -- or just she be, as in B-E-

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: Stinging like bam! Because I punch hard and it stings. So he just came up with that on -- and it just -- people just kept on saying it --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- and it just kind of stuck. I was like, "Ugh!" But yeah, no I would never refer to myself in that way.

JORDAN: Yeah it seems like, it could go either way. It is clever but do you want that?

LAILA: I don't like it. No, I don't like it. But it's funny because that's the name of my corporation now -- She Bee Stingin'.

JORDAN: Right so --

LAILA: Because it just worked for that --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: But as far as my name, no I didn't like that.

JORDAN: Why the late start with boxing? You owned a nail salon before you became a boxer. And I'm just imagining you sitting there like, "Hmm, I don't know what I want to do. I want to do something with my hands. Maybe I'll do nails, nah I'd rather punch people in the face."

LAILA: I know people ask me that all the time. So the connection between the two is being in control, okay? So for me, you know,

I grew up and I said I want to move out of the house when I'm 18, and I want to be independent and I want to make my own money." I had decided that at a very early age. I didn't want to just be Muhammad Ali's daughter, have fake friends, and you know, have daddy taking care of me. So I started going to school to learn how to do nails because I strategize. I'm still that way now. I was like, "What can I do? If I can go to school, --" I wasn't going to go to SC, I was going to Santa Monica College, because I didn't do good in high school and I had to go to the city college first and I was going to transfer to SC. So but I also want to live on my own. It's a high order for myself here --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: -- which I didn't realize being so young. When I'm having this conversation with myself, I was like fourteen.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: Fourteen or fifteen. So I said, "I don't want to do hair because that's so many hours or so many hairstylists out there but there wasn't as many nails -- a lot of Asian nail places.

JORDAN: Yeah, Vietnamese nail place.

LAILA: Yeah. So I was like, "Okay I'm going to start a beautiful business, and it's going to be a pampering business and all that. I'm going to charge X amount of money."

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: So I went to school, learned how to do nails, got my license, then I started working in different nail salons, saving up money, getting experience, because you're not good when you first come out.

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: You mess up a lot.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: You know, you're slow. You know, you've got to figure out a lot. So, once I got to a point where I started building a clientele -- and I remember what gave me my boost is, there was a woman who worked near me and her name was Lydia. She lived very far but she worked in Marina del Rey. And she had a full clientele. She was having a baby and she was like, "Laila, can you take over my clientele for me?"

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

LAILA: And I was like, "Sure!" You know, because I didn't have that many clients at the time and I took over her clients. Then she came back. A lot of her clients wanted to stay with me --

JORDAN: Oh, man.

LAILA: -- which I felt bad about but --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: I said, "You've got to talk to her about it." So I took some of her clients but what her clientele did was, she had her clients booked every hour. Like back, to back, to back, to back. So it made me have to get faster, you know as far as experience. I got better, I had that pressure on me and I did really well under pressure and that's how it really gave my business a boost because I became better.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So long story short, I ended up subleasing a salon from a hairstylist where I had a whole separate entrance. It was called Laila's Nail Studio. I had a full clientele and I was going to school full time making my own money.

JORDAN: Jeez.

LAILA: Exactly. So, not managing my money well but I was making my money well.

JORDAN: Okay.

(laugh)

LAILA: I was always like, "Can I pay my rent a week late?" It was being in control of my own business and I loved doing nails. I mean I used to pass out fliers and all of that. None of my clients even knew I was Muhammad Ali's daughter.

JORDAN: I'm not sure that's a selling point for a nail salon anyway.

LAILA: No. It didn't -- it wasn't but it was just like, what's the point, you know?

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: Because then it's like -- it's a whole different conversation at that point. You're very close to your clients, you know all their business they want to talk to you. So being very young, you're learning a lot of people, right at that time.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So anyway, that's when I saw women's boxing on television for the first time and I had this plan. I was going to transfer to SC, I was going to, you know, open nail salons all over the country. And I was like, "Wow," you know, "How am I going to tell my family? What are people going to think?" I had all the fear and limitation and changing my career plans was just crazy. So the seed was planted but it was in my heart to do. So finally, it was funny I had a client who was like, "Well I'm taking a boxing class downtown and he's a great coach." And I was like, "Really?" So I went down there and of course the guy's like this street guy --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: -- and he was like, "Yeah, I'll train you." I was saying that I just was doing it for fitness. It was a secret, I didn't want people to know I was actually thinking about becoming a professional boxer. So he started training me. I started going after school, after work, every night, eight o'clock at night, lost 30 pounds and I was like, "I want to do this," you know? And then it kind of started getting around. Met my ex husband. He was a fighter, a world champion. And then he saw how serious I was and he was like, "You're with the wrong trainer. Like first of all, if you're going to be serious about this, you've got to close your nail salon." And I was like, "Not the nail salon!"

JORDAN: Yeah, "No I just set that up!"

LAILA: Like I can't do that. Not just -- I mean at that point I had been in business for a couple years, I was also working out in Malibu.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: You know --

JORDAN: But you got over the hump of like starting the whole thing.

LAILA: Yeah it was a lot. It was my baby.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: So and I tried to have someone else take it over, that didn't work. Because they don't respect your business the same way, it starts going down, and I end up having to close the doors.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So, you know I was so serious about boxing, I said, "Fine, boxing full time it is." And that's when things got taken to another level. I got a new trainer then I had fought Jacqui

Frazier, beat her. Then I had to get shoulder surgery, took a year off, moved to Vegas, started training with Roger Mayweather and that's when it really started to be full time boxing.

JORDAN: Why not just ask your dad, "Hey I'm thinking about becoming a boxer. Can you show me who to talk to and how to start?"

LAILA: Because he doesn't now. So he didn't know. First of all --

JORDAN: Yeah, what?

LAILA: -- that's just not the way Laila does things, okay?

JORDAN: Okay.

LAILA: So Laila doesn't go say, "Show me this, show me that." So I know that you think, "Why don't go to someone who knows more than you?" But I know my father didn't know more than me because he's not involved in boxing. So just because you were a boxer, doesn't mean you know who the top trainers are.

JORDAN: Oh, I didn't know that.

LAILA: No.

JORDAN: I figured he would have just known everybody.

LAILA: No, no, no, he didn't. And he wasn't connected to -- my dad was doing humanitarian work, you know?

JORDAN: Yeah, by that point, yeah.

LAILA: Yeah, not doing any boxing. So, for me it's something I had to figure out on my own and again, remember it was a secret. I didn't want to tell anybody that I was thinking about boxing.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So, just used to always doing things on my own. So that's just how it is.

JORDAN: Gotcha. So super independent.

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: I would imagine it's hard to be a world famous athlete and a celebrity and a parent at the same time.

(laugh)

LAILA: It's funny I don't think of myself as a celebrity. And I always tell people that's -- there's a differentiation between celebrities and athletes, right? Just a actor and a singer and an athlete.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: Because we're just real people, meaning all the time. We're not playing a character. Even when you're a singer like Beyoncé -- is a different Beyoncé on stage than she is at home, right?

JORDAN: I would hope so.

LAILA: Right.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: So for me -- I'm always the same, any time you see me. So it's just different. To try to balance everything that I'm doing, because being Muhammad Ali's daughter, especially now that my father is passed, you know, there's a little bit of a burden there.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: You know like I get emails every week now just from kids doing, you know, reports in school --

JORDAN: Really?

LAILA: "Can you -- I'm doing a report on you father. Can I interview you? Can I --"

JORDAN: Oh, man.

LAILA: And it's like -- I can't do that.

JORDAN: No.

LAILA: I can't do 10 interviews a week with these kids. And plus, go online, you know --

JORDAN: Yeah. Go on YouTube.

LAILA: And then people are honoring my dad and giving awards and they want you to show up and you don't want to be mean and say no. It's not that you don't care but you can't be burdened with that now.

JORDAN: Well you've got to live your own too.

LAILA: Exactly.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: I appreciate it. They loved him when he was alive, they love him when he passed. So -- but you have to be careful about how you handle those situations. United Nations wants me to come for something I can't just --

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

LAILA: I mean whatever it is, it's just you just have to figure out. So there's that portion, and then there's just me and my life and my business and then being a mom. It's two separate things. And a wife. Because, I was just talking to my friend about this

today. People ask me all the time. Because if you were a woman doing an interview right now --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- you might be asking me, "How do you balance it all? How do you figure it out?"

JORDAN: I have that in here.

LAILA: Oh, you do?

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: Okay.

(laugh)

JORDAN: Thanks for the segue.

LAILA: That's just because you know it's a good question, that's all.

JORDAN: That's right. That's right.

LAILA: But I mean they want to know, like I can see in their eyes, they want to know for themselves.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: Because there's nothing like a mom. Where you're like -- okay, aside from being a dad, everyone knows women multitask and we try to do too much and a lot of times we don't think about ourselves and take care of ourselves.

JORDAN: That's what my wife is like and we don't even have kids yet.

LAILA: See? They ask me that question and I'm like, "I don't want to sit here and act like I have it figured out." Of course there's things that I've figured out that work better but you can't be, you

know, balanced across all areas. Like if everything is flowing for work and with my kids and my husband's like, "Well babe, you know? What about us?"

JORDAN: Where am I?

LAILA: "We're just parents now. Like are we going to hang out? Are we going to have sex?" It's like, I'm tired. I'm like, "I'm tired God Damn it."

JORDAN: Yeah. Have my assistant put it on the calendar and we'll get it done.

LAILA: Yeah I'm like -- I'm like we got to calendar this. It's like, "Well I want it to be spontaneous." I'm like, "Look you better take what you can get. Because I'm tired as hell."

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: "Okay? So I'm sorry. I can not be your Superwoman!" And then I've got those moments where I'm just like, I'm not your Superwoman. You remember that song? You know that Superwoman song? No.

JORDAN: Is that Tina Turner or something like that?

LAILA: Karyn White, Karyn White.

JORDAN: The answer is no, I do not know that song.

LAILA: I know, I know you didn't know but that -- go look it up. Karyn White, I'm Not Your Superwoman and all the women will be playing that, trust me.

JORDAN: So how did those same concerns affect your relationship with your dad? I mean it seems like he must have also been like going to do this, going to do that all the time. And nine kids, there's a lot of --

LAILA: And I'm the youngest.

JORDAN: There's a lot of tension being shared around the house.

LAILA: Yeah. Well I would say that I grew up a certain way and that's just what it was. So my dad was not present a lot of the time. When we lived with my dad before he got a divorce, there was always people around. Like I look now as a parent and go, "God, like that's crazy how I grew up." Like -- because my kids like, your home is your private space, right?

JORDAN: Sure, yeah. Yeah.

LAILA: My house wasn't. It was like a public place. Like --

JORDAN: Because stopping by all the time?

LAILA: All the time. Literally.

JORDAN: Wow.

LAILA: You would think it was a business. Just coming through, coming in, coming out. He loved it. I mean he loved people, he loved entertaining. But as a child, I never felt like, "Oh, I'm home." First of all we had a mansion. It was a 13,000 square foot house --

JORDAN: Geez.

LAILA: -- three stories. You know you've got staff and things and it's just like -- you're just running around. But it wasn't like home. I don't have those feelings. I'm not complaining because there's some kids that don't even have a roof over their head.

JORDAN: Sure sure.

LAILA: So I definitely wouldn't complain about that but that's just what it is. And then he wasn't around for the ups and the downs and you know the graduation. And it's like every time

you kind of talk, it was like a update kind of, "Oh, what's going on? Buh, buh. Buh." You know he has all these other kids.

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: But that's just -- you can not be fighting the world and be who he was to the world and be home for dinner and be there, you know, as a dad.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So we did have to sacrifice. Now do we have a relationship with him? Yes. But it was the one that we knew. So and he was always there. So if I need to call him, if I need anything or -- he ended up moving out of town. Then I saw him even less. But I never felt like, "Oh, my God, where's my dad?" But I can definitely say, through my hard times growing up -- because I got in trouble growing up.

JORDAN: Yeah, yeah.

LAILA: And he wasn't there for that. And I didn't want to make him there for that.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: You know I always felt like I had a dysfunctional family growing up with my mother, once my parents got divorced. So I took on this, "All right I got to do it all for myself."

JORDAN: All for myself.

LAILA: "Nobody's here for me." It's not like I tried to ask and he shut me out. He didn't even know a lot of things that were going on. Because he started getting Parkinson's and it was always like, "We don't want to make daddy worry."

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: You know, so -- but at the same time, like I said I'm not complaining, but that's my truth. That's my story.

JORDAN: Any house that big, even if there's 10 people in it or 11 or 12 or whatever people in it, it's not cozy, right? You've got to have that cozy home safe feeling.

LAILA: Exactly, I mean, I love that my kids have it. Me and my husband both say, "God wouldn't it have been nice if we'd grow up like this? Like we come home, they know mom cooks dinner, we eat at 6, you know. Then we do homework at 7. Then it's bath time at 8, and let's go to bed." Like we have a --

JORDAN: Super normal family.

LAILA: Yeah. We have --

(laugh)

JORDAN: That is every sitcom family ever.

LAILA: That's what it is though.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: And it came from my husband. Because me and him have gone back and forth. He's like, "You can't just let them." I'm like, "Well you need to bring in the structure because I didn't have structure."

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: So I'm going to be like, "Oh, it's 8:15, it's okay!"

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: You know and he's like, "No." This is --

JORDAN: Sure you want to go --

LAILA: Right.

JORDAN: -- run around with your friends?

LAILA: Yeah. This is --

JORDAN: Leave the house --

LAILA: Yeah this is -- well they're only five and eight --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- they're not doing that yet. But you know what I mean. I'm just like, I'm not that on point, but my husband is because that's how he grew up.

JORDAN: Sure. That's good though. It's good that you have a partner who's going to go, "Wait no, that's not normal."

LAILA: Right.

JORDAN: "We're not doing what mommy said, that's weird."

LAILA: Yeah. Right.

JORDAN: "That's weird. You're staying home. You're doing it this way." What was your father's reaction to you wanting to box? I mean was he like, "All right finally one wants to box!" Or was he like, " Ah, here's the thing."

LAILA: He didn't like it.

JORDAN: No?

LAILA: No. I could imagine what his reaction was when I wasn't there and he heard. But it finally got around to him that Laila's decided to box. So when he came in town and we had a meeting at his hotel. Which we do and he says you know, "I

hear you're boxing." And I'm like, "Yeah I am." No let me just back up. I've always been the hard rock. You know we've always bumped heads, my father and I.

JORDAN: Really?

LAILA: Oh, yeah. Like big time. And people assume I'm daddy's girl because --

JORDAN: Yeah I kind of assumed that too.

LAILA: No, no, no. Not at all. Don't get me wrong. I'm a daddy's girl, he loves me. But I'm that one that's just like, has given him the challenge because I'm just like him.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: So -- like from a very young age I was like, "Dad I don't want to be Muslim." "What?!"

JORDAN: Oh.

LAILA: With everything he's been through, you know.

JORDAN: After he did the whole highly visible --

LAILA: All of that. He put his whole career on the line but his -- and then your baby girl comes to you saying she doesn't want to be Muslim and he's just like, "First of all how do you-- you don't even -- not even old enough to know what you want."

JORDAN: How old were you when you said that?

LAILA: Probably like seven.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

LAILA: And I --

JORDAN: I thought you were going to say like 25.

LAILA: No, no, no, no. Seven. I'm like, "I know enough to know that I don't want to do it. I don't want it."

JORDAN: Yeah wow.

LAILA: Boom. Yeah so --

JORDAN: Wow.

LAILA: Most people don't -- first of all don't want to stand up to my father.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: But for me to say that to him at a young age and just like, "No, this is what it is." And then, just growing up. You know I was the one that was always very independent. I moved out of the house. I didn't mention to you, I moved in with a boyfriend.

JORDAN: Oh, man. He must have been thrilled.

LAILA: Yeah so he was just like, "You know you're living in sin." I'm like, "Wait a minute. How many kids do you have? How many marriages do you have?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: "Wait, are you judging me?" Like we would have those -- and then he'd be, "You're right, you're right, you're right." I would always kind of break him down. So for me he knew he wasn't going to be able to tell me don't box but he did try to talk me out of it indirectly.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: And he said, you know, "Well what are you going to do if you get knocked down? You know the whole world's going to be

watching." I'm like, "If I get knocked down, I'm going to get back up just like you did." "Well what if you get knocked out?" I'm like, "Well I don't think that's going to happen, but if it does, I'm going to ask for a rematch." So we went all through all these scenarios and he never said don't do it, but I knew he didn't want me to do it.

JORDAN: You guys were sparring before you even put the gloves on.

LAILA: Oh, yeah.

JORDAN: That's so --

LAILA: But I mean, I already knew. I mean we've had a couple of these conversations over the years. Like the living with the boyfriend conversation where he -- that was an interesting one. But I was honest with him. But, I'm -- "This is what I'm doing and nothing you can do about it." So he would -- he supported me though. He came to a lot of my fights. He couldn't be at all of them, but he was at more than half of them. And I could always see that glare in his eyes of him being proud. It was nice because I felt like sometimes I was fighting for both of us --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: -- because I felt like he was trapped in his body with Parkinson's.

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: And just to come into that arena and having everyone chanting, "Ali! Ali!" And he -- you just see him light up. And then again when I came into the ring and then just to see me in that ring and him just remembering himself. And even though I would never compare myself to my father on skill level, but our boxing styles were similar. The way I'm shaped -- my body shape, all of that --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- is very similar to my dad's. So just seeing all of that had to be a super crazy experience for him.

JORDAN: I would imagine. I assume you've seen this video where they've put -- you're in the ring --

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: -- and they put him in the ring --

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: -- and you guys are sparring.

LAILA: Adidas commercial.

JORDAN: Oh, it's a commercial.

LAILA: Yeah it's a commercial.

JORDAN: Oh, I thought some clever YouTuber put that together.

LAILA: No, no, no. No, no.

JORDAN: I thought like, "Wow whoever did this is a genius."

LAILA: No the whole campaign, Impossible is Nothing. Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah. That was real cool.

LAILA: Yeah.

JORDAN: Because you do look very similar in those videos.

LAILA: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: And he's dodging your punches with his hands down and I thought, "Man that's brilliant."

LAILA: Yeah, what they did is they took -- like I forget who he was fighting, but I had to go and do exactly what the fighter he was in the ring with was doing --

JORDAN: Oh.

LAILA: -- and then they kind of -- they put it together that way. So it was so cool.

JORDAN: That is cool. I thought they just found some video. I don't know how they got some parts.

LAILA: No, no, no, no, no. There's a whole lot of work and money went into that man.

JORDAN: Yeah. I bet, I bet. And you later fought the woman who inspired you to box, Christy Martin.

LAILA: Yeah, mm-hmm.

JORDAN: How did that feel? It must have been kind of like, "Oh, cool I'm going to fight Christy Martin." And also like, "I better beat Christy Martin," as well.

LAILA: Yeah, no it was neither of those, actually.

JORDAN: No?

LAILA: No. That's funny, you're not a fighter. No I'm just playing.

JORDAN: You can tell? Was it -- I mean -- that's not your first clue that I'm not a fighter.

LAILA: No, but that was a smart observation. But no because you don't know how I think. So first of all, Christy was a lot smaller than me. So physically, we didn't need to be in the ring together.

JORDAN: Oh, really?

LAILA: I was not interested in fighting Christy. So she fought at like different weights throughout her career but her -- about 135, 140. I fought at 165 to 175.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

LAILA: So physically, I'm a lot bigger than her. Now some people, people who don't know any better, just look at height. Okay?

JORDAN: That's what I do.

LAILA: Yeah.

JORDAN: I thought you were about the same height. She was tall.

LAILA: No she's short.

JORDAN: How tall are you?

LAILA: She's probably about 5'5"?

JORDAN: Oh, you --

LAILA: And I'm 5'11". You think like, okay take Mike Tyson and Floyd Mayweather --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: Mike Tyson may be taller but he's also heavier, bigger, stronger.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So I think Christy also looked at me like I was just taller. She didn't realize how physically -- I mean I got big hands. I'm a big girl.

JORDAN: A lot of reach.

LAILA: Big bones, yeah. Strong. So, I came down in weight, she came up in weight for a catch weight. But still, I was just too strong for her. So but, I didn't to fight her, she wanted to fight me. Then the public started saying, "Oh!" They wanted to see the fight. And as soon as I felt like somebody thought she could do something, that's when I'm like --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- "I'm going to have to show them." And then there was some money behind it, I was like, "Okay this will be a good easy fight for me." So it was so funny with that fight because these are the best known female fighters in the world. My outfit didn't come. It got stuck in a storm. My ring outfit, right, --

JORDAN: Oh.

LAILA: -- that I was going to wear. So I ended up having to wear some other fighter's shorts, a cup -- I mean his sweaty cup. Everything.

JORDAN: Ugh.

LAILA: Yeah, it was kind of nasty. So when I got in, I didn't have a robe, anything. I had this sweater on, if you see it, that I took off. And I was just like, "Oh, my God, I want to get out." I was so mad I was like, "I want to get out of this ring as quickly as I can." Because I really didn't think that the fight was going to last long. So I was like, "I'm just going to try to get her out." And so first round, I was throwing everything. Now I wasn't as strong as I normally would be because I lost like 10 pounds and I physically wasn't as strong. But I thought I could still just get her out of there. I didn't.

First of all, when you're trying to get someone out, and I know this -- trying to get someone out of there, a lot of times it won't

happen. You've got to let it just come. So that was the first thing. Then it took -- I think I got her out of there in the third or fourth round. But she was tough. Like she could take a punch. So she hit me -- she hit me a couple times like dead on. And she was heavy handed. And I said, "Wow she can't." Because she's a puncher. She's a very strong puncher for her weight class. So I was able to feel her power and say, "Okay that's why she's been so successful because she can punch." It wasn't enough for me because I'm just too much bigger --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: -- than she is. Just like I box guys and they're like, "Whoa, you can punch." But I'm not going to knock them out because they're a guy, and they're used to taking you know, heavier shots. But I can't take what they can give.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: You see, that's the difference. So it's interesting. So no, I didn't want to fight her, for one. But it made sense to fight her and I never for one thought that I -- there's any chance of me losing that fight. So I wasn't like, "I got to -- I better beat her." It was like, "I'm going to beat her."

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: You said you had to wear someone else's sweaty cup. This might be a dumb question, again I'm not a fighter. Why are women wearing cups? I know why guys wear cups.

LAILA: Yeah, yeah. So the cup not only protects, you know private area --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- for men, it also is for your rib cage and all of that.

JORDAN: Oh, okay.

LAILA: So yeah you, yeah we wear the cup. You know, because you can get your ribs broken. So it does protect you to a certain extent. And women wear them too now. In a lot of states -- I don't know how it is now, it's optional. We don't have to wear them and a lot of women don't because it just makes you look wider. And I --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- I remember that. I remember that in the beginning, I was like, "I don't want to wear that cup. It makes me look all wide and bulky," and -- but then you know, you get hit with a couple good body shots, you're like, "Okay I think I'm going to wear the cup."

JORDAN: Yeah I'm going to put that thing on.

LAILA: So, yeah our cup is different. It doesn't have that cup down in the bottom area.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: It was flat at the bottom but you still have that waist. And then we have cups that we can wear on our chest, which is soft on the inside --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: -- that's up against your breasts, but a shell on the outside.

JORDAN: I was wondering, because I know that that pressure on that would hurt --

LAILA: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- and if you're getting punched in the --

LAILA: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- in the chest --

LAILA: And it's an unspoken rule, for women, not to punch each other in the chest, but stuff happens all the time. Because that's a shot, over the heart. Like I'll aim to hit somebody over the heart and sometimes they move, you're going to get hit in the chest. Any time I box the guys -- because I only sparred with men. Like when I trained, I only boxed guys. They always used to hit me in the chest.

JORDAN: Right, yeah.

LAILA: They're not thinking about it and it's a shot to hit someone in the chest. So you can't say, "Stop it!" You know because --

JORDAN: Yeah. That's --

LAILA: -- it's like, "Well what are you doing in here?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: You don't complain. You just be like, "Oh!" you know, and then that might make them be like, "Oh, sorry." But then it happens again, so you have --

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: -- to wear your protection.

JORDAN: Yeah that makes sense. I tried to research this a lot more by looking for your biopic, which is called Daddy's Girl. Let's just say a lot of other Google search results were coming up for that phrase.

LAILA: Oh, God.

(laugh)

JORDAN: That didn't work out for me.

LAILA: Did you find it?

JORDAN: I didn't.

LAILA: Okay yeah --

JORDAN: I couldn't find it.

LAILA: I didn't -- okay, that's --

JORDAN: It was hard to find.

LAILA: Yeah because I sent someone to go looking for it and they told me they couldn't find it so I got to get a DVD.

JORDAN: I find everything and I couldn't find it.

LAILA: Oh, okay --

JORDAN: So --

LAILA: So it must not be -- it's not on there. Okay.

JORDAN: It's not around. Your mother and father are both athletes. Your mom rode horses, is that right?

LAILA: She did. I wouldn't consider her an athlete though. But, she could have been. But she wasn't an athlete. She did ride horses but not professionally.

JORDAN: Oh, okay, for some reason I thought she was --

LAILA: Yes. She was really good. She could have probably.

JORDAN: Was there a lot of pressure in your house from your parents to be good at everything or to be good at anything at all? In school or --

LAILA: No.

JORDAN: No -- sports --

LAILA: I didn't really have a lot of direction from my parents --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- growing up. Just from, like I mentioned to you. You know, both my parents were busy. You know, we were safe, we had food on the table all the time. I was raised by a lot of nannies.

JORDAN: Oh, okay.

LAILA: So -- so no I didn't feel any pressure. The pressure that I have, even now, I put on myself. You know, so it's kind of like, I have high expectations of myself, I have high expectations of the people around me that work with me. So it's just like, I want to be successful and I understand it takes hard work and dedication and, you know, all that goes into it so -- no one put that on me though.

JORDAN: Why do you think you put it on yourself?

LAILA: That I don't have the answer to but I think to me it's just -- from my point of view, it's just being smart. It's like if you want to be successful, you've got to do the hard work that it takes. I mean, a lot of people see people who have made it and they don't realize all the work that was done behind the scenes. They think, you know, they're just -- for me, for example, it's just like, "Oh, you know, you just decided to become a boxer." They don't realize how hard I trained and you know like --

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: Even to learn how to run. They see me -- I'm talking about now. Like I'll help people with fitness and wellness, what I'm doing

now and like, "Oh, but you're an athlete." I said, "But I had to work hard to become an athlete."

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: I had to make sacrifices, I had to learn. You know, you have to first decide that you want to do it in the first place. You know, and then you can make it happen. I had a whole different body type and lifestyle before I decided to go in a certain direction that -- I said, "What do I have to do be the best and what I do, to become a world champion?" And that's when you start hiring people and they teach you things like, "Well you've got to eat this way and you've got make sure you get rest, and you've got to not drink, and not do this." "Okay well I'm going to do those things." You know, so you just learn more and more as you go and you have to be willing. There's so many people that -- even my husband that grew up in the hood -- There was so many people that could have been great athletes but they wanted to hang out --

JORDAN: Right.

LAILA: -- and they wanted to drink and they wanted to smoke weed and they didn't make it. You know, so it's like it takes more than just having talent and you have to be willing to work harder than everybody else. And for me, like I said, I got to a point where I was just like, "Wow, you know, I don't want to do this anymore because I'm not getting the fight that I want in the ring."

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: You know, the challenge that I want. So now I'm doing it outside of the ring, so --

JORDAN: When you watch the highlight reels and things like that, it does kind of look like Michael Jordan dunking over the high school captain of the basketball team.

LAILA: And depending on which one you watch --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- especially because they're always going to use the best parts of the fight, you know?

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: And then there's certain fights that I like. A lot of the title fights and things like that with those girls. And, it's funny if you watch those girls in other fights, they might look great.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: And part of it is the mental side of it, like I said. If you come in there believing, because you're listening to your camp and you're listening to everyone, your yes men around you saying, "She's nothing and she this and she that."

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: And then you have to get your ass in there and then you feel that punch like, "No she can punch!" and --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: "No she's not just a pretty face." If you see me across that ring looking at you like, "You remember all that stuff you talked? Now it's about to happen. Just me and you."

JORDAN: Oh, man.

LAILA: "Nobody else can get in there with you." You know, and it's like, I'm going to remind of all the things you said. Because a lot of time they thought I was a celebrity to them. They were watching me. They don't realize I was watching them. I'm going on the blog and reading what you write and -- because I've got to find inspiration to get myself revved up.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: And that's what would get me going, you know? It's like, "Oh, you said that? Okay. We're going to do this now."

JORDAN: Dang. Yeah. That's --

LAILA: And I love it. I love it, I love it, I love it. You don't understand. And I was kind of a bully, I will say. I was kind of a bully when I was a boxer. But to me, it was all a part of the game and I need to have that edge because, like I said, people would just see a picture and think, "She's so pretty," but they didn't know that street side of me. And then they realize -- and not everyone has that. You don't have to.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: But I do. So it's like, I'm going to kind of gangster you a little bit around the hotel. You know and be like, "Yep, five hours til that ass whooping." Like remember, so it was like --

JORDAN: Oh, you would see them in the hotel and say --

LAILA: Oh, yeah. Oh, well because we'd be in the same hotel --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- the week of the fight. You've got the weigh-ins and press conference, and that's when I'm really going to work on you --

JORDAN: Oh, man.

LAILA: Because now you get to meet someone. You see how they walk, see how they hold themselves, you see if there's any fear in their eyes. I would be -- just want someone to say something back to me, because that would just get me fired up.

JORDAN: Oh, man. So you're like, you're down there --

LAILA: I know listeners are like, "God she's mean." But you have to remember what business I was in, so --

JORDAN: Sure. Before this you went to jail for a little bit

LAILA: Not jail, Juvenile Hall.

JORDAN: Juvenile Hall.

LAILA: You make it sound so bad.

JORDAN: It says jail on your website, you might want to look into that.

LAILA: Not -- It says jail on my website? Lailaali.com?

JORDAN: On one of the websites that wrote about you. Yeah.

LAILA: Okay, okay. Yeah.

JORDAN: You might want to look into that.

LAILA: Not mine.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: It is jail for kids, yes I did. Well the thing is, like you can't talk about that without telling a little bit of the story. So I had mentioned already, told you I got in trouble --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: -- growing up. Then I wrote a book about [*Reach: Finding Strength, Spirit, and Personal Power*](#). So I got in trouble because, you know, a lot of times people look at me and say, "Oh, you know, you're Muhammad Ali's daughter. You think you're all that," and they would start fights with you and I wouldn't back down, okay? Because I told you I'm a fighter.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: So I would get myself into trouble, get suspended, got kicked out of different schools, things like that. Grades weren't that great because of that, right? And I also told you I had a dysfunctional situation with my mother when she got remarried. She had an abusive husband and I had anger. And I was taking it out in different ways, right? So, for me I was hanging out with the wrong crowd, and the first time I got in trouble, I was with three girls. No it was three of us, I was one of the three. And we went shopping and one of these girls is shoplifting.

JORDAN: Mmm.

LAILA: And then I was like, "Oh, I'm going to shoplift too." I had money in my pocket but just dumb, you know --

JORDAN: Yeah, sure.

LAILA: -- and just like, "Oh." And then of course we get caught, we get arrested, and I always have this little attitude with -- about myself. And they're crying, like shaking in their boots.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: And I was like, "What are you guys crying for? Like we knew what we were doing," you know --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: It was like -- but they saw that as, "Oh, you're not even afraid? You're not even what," --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: So the officer was like, "Oh, okay." So they end up processing me through the system but they let them go. So I end up having to go to court because of the attitude.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

LAILA: They didn't like my attitude. It looked like I had no remorse. I don't think that I didn't have remorse, but I wasn't scared.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So, I end up going to court and once you're in the system, they're going to look at your grades, they're going to look at your family situation and then I ended up in Juvenile Hall. So, in Juvenile Hall, of course you've got all kinds of kids there. Kids that don't have a great family, don't have support, come from, you know, bad situations.

JORDAN: Sure. Yeah.

LAILA: And you know, you have to deal with all that. So --

JORDAN: I watched the sparring match with you on YouTube and the guy afterwards said, "She's better than most South African guys." You know the clip I'm talking about?

LAILA: Oh, yeah that was in Africa, yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah. And my favorite part is this guy's backing up and you're going after him, you're going after him, you go, "Come on sucka!"

LAILA: I know.

JORDAN: And I thought that -- that was so funny. And my first thought, not being a fighter was, it must have been hard for you to date when you were younger. Because I feel like a lot of guys couldn't handle that.

LAILA: Yeah, you know, it's funny because I remember that sparring session because I was fighting in South Africa and you need to

spar. So you've got this guy and you've got to pick the right guy.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: Because a man is always going to be stronger than a woman. And I remember he hit me with some hard shots and I'm never going to say, as a fighter, you know, too much pride, "don't hit me that hard," but it's up to my corner --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- to see that and say something to him. So at one point they did tell him, "Okay you need to calm down, don't hit her so hard. Still hit hard but not as hard as you can." But I'm cracking him so he wants to get me back. You know and he was inexperienced. So an inexperienced fighter is more dangerous than an experienced fighter.

JORDAN: Because they can't control the pressure?

LAILA: They can't control it, yeah. And it's like, you know, the ego comes in after I hit you upside your head. "I'm going to get her back." It's just a natural reaction. I think that because he had already hit me hard a couple times, that sometimes I get into the moment and start talking ****, you know. To the guys and the girls. And that's just a part of sparring. Like it'd get worse than that. So that was nothing but that always happens, yeah.

But it was -- no as far as dating is concerned, I'm a totally different person than I am outside of the ring. I'm not a fighter. Even with my husband people say, "What's it like when you guys get into it?" Yeah I would never try to fight my husband. I wouldn't even want a man, first of all, that I felt like I could beat up on. You always hear me say, no matter how badass I think I am, I never say I'm going to beat a man up. I never say -- act like I'm stronger than a man. Are there some men I could beat up? Of course. But in general, like pound for pound, no. A man is always going to be stronger than a woman. Now there

are women who think they're so bad they can beat a man up.
Hence, Ronda Rousey.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: And others. But, I'm not like that. So no I still have that feminine side, definitely. But I need a strong man. I can't have a weak man because there are other sides of me that are strong also. Just being confident, just --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- sometimes my husband says, "Could you not talk to me like that?" Because he'll say, "Why are you bulking up on me?" Because sometimes I do and I do it to a lot of people. If I want to get my point across, my voice will change and I'll start annunciating. I'll be like, "No, because like I said, what I need you to do is go to the store, get what I asked you to get me." You know what I mean?

JORDAN: Yeah that's -- that's scary.

LAILA: So I'm saying --

JORDAN: For those of you listening, that would be scary.

LAILA: He's like -- he probably just says something smart back to me and then it's like, "If you would just go get what I asked you to get, then we wouldn't be having this conversation right now."

(laugh)

LAILA: And I start annunciating and looking at you dead and my upper lip gets kind of tight.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: So, yeah.

JORDAN: That's --

LAILA: And I'd be like, "Sorry babe. It's just I get really focused." I'll apologize though.

JORDAN: Your son's out there and he's like, "Yeah, story of my life, man."

LAILA: My poor baby. He's so sweet. He's a highly sensitive child. And even with him, like if I'm having a bad day, sometimes I'll give him this look and he's like, "Okay." You know and I see the fear in him and then I feel bad.

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: I'm like, "I'm sorry baby."

JORDAN: You do it. You have the tough experience and then the nice inside. In fact I read a story that you'd called Hulk Hogan one day to check on him, he seemed a little bit sad on American Gladiators. He says that saved his life actually.

LAILA: I know. And I was just as surprised when he made that statement that I saved his life. He said he was getting ready to commit suicide and I called and stopped it, you know. And that's what he meant by it. And I'm like, "He didn't tell me that." And I didn't even really recall what call that was. And I'm like, "Wow, you'd think he'd call me before he went to the press and said that." You know I just that divine intervention, you know?

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: So that's --

JORDAN: Good timing on that one.

LAILA: Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: You said you use anger to motivate yourself in the ring. Are you able to harness that motivational anger in business or in other areas of your life or is that just kind of boxing only?

LAILA: In general, you can. I can harness energy in general. But in boxing you need in that moment and you need it to come through in a powerful way. So it's different like -- because I'm actually, physically able to transfer that into a punch. So that's totally different. You know, I have a way of making the moment bigger than me. So for me, if I feel any butterflies, if I feel any nerves, anything, you know I'm able to say, "You know what? You know F this. I'm about to go in here and do this for these kids in Africa." Then it's like, I have to be the savior. you know what I'm saying?

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: So for me, it's going to be that moment where it's just like -- you know I didn't have to call on that a lot but there was times when I'd be sick. I'd have 104 flu, nobody knew it but I was like, "Ah I can beat this girl, it's nothing." Then I'd be like going in there and then I'd have to lift myself up. And then I would have a lackluster performance but I would still win. But people didn't realize I had the flu.

JORDAN: Dang.

LAILA: Like when I fought Jacqui Frazier it was -- my ex husband was promoting the card, it was his event. I wasn't going to back out. But I was that confident where I felt like, "I can beat this girl." But then I got in there and after the third round I was tired, I was ready to go. You know?

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: I was able to slug it out so --

JORDAN: You mentioned doing it for the kids in Africa --

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: -- you've got a lot of charity work as well. American Dental Association, creating oral health awareness.

LAILA: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: It -- this struck me as funny because your career --

LAILA: Knocking people's teeth out.

JORDAN: Right. Knocking people's --

LAILA: You all --

JORDAN: You're knocking people's teeth out and now you've got a charity that helps keep people's teeth --

LAILA: Well that's good, I'm going to knock your teeth out but then I'm going to send you to the dentist to get them fixed.

JORDAN: That's right.

LAILA: No.

JORDAN: And they'll be pearly white after that.

LAILA: And get your nails done.

JORDAN: That's --

LAILA: No. Well I love kids and I love anything that has to do with kids because they don't ask to be here, you know? And they come into this crazy world. So anything with health, fitness, and wellness I get involved with. So I'm involved with Feeding America. I've done some stuff with The American Heart Association, diabetes -- of course my brand is just about lifestyle and wellness. So when those organizations reached out to me and I feel like it's a good fit, then you know, it's very

natural for me to get involved. So it's not something that I do all the time but I have worked with them in the past.

JORDAN: Do you have any thoughts on the way that black culture is represented in popular culture now and the way that some figures in black cultures represent themselves? Like --

LAILA: Of course.

JORDAN: Yeah?

LAILA: Definitely. I mean, that's such a long conversation to get into --

JORDAN: Yeah it is.

LAILA: -- when you have to be but there's things that I see that I like and there's things that I see that I don't like. And there's things that I see that are part of the problem, and things that I see that can help the problem. But there's no one answer for it, you know? Taking our history into account, taking just sensationalizing certain things into account, just rolling it all up into a ball, we've come a long way but there's a whole lot more work to do, so --

JORDAN: Yeah. How often do you hit a bag or like a parking enforcement guy just to see if you've still got it.

(laugh)

LAILA: I'll hit a bag yesterday because I went to the boxing gym. And it's so funny, I was training and, you know I hadn't been in the gym probably in about five years. I went to the boxing gym with one of my trainers I used to train with here in L.A. I didn't mention to you earlier. And I said, "You know what I put on some weight. I'm working on a cookbook. I gained about 7 or 8 pounds. I need to get it off." So I was like why not just come to the boxing gym. And I was like, man four rounds in the ring and I was done. Normally I used to like ten back in the day.

JORDAN: Jeez.

LAILA: That's just in the -- on the mits. I mean I did the heavy bag I did everything.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: But I'll be back there tomorrow. I'm going back. So three days a week back boxing, love it.

JORDAN: That's -- is that your favorite fitness -- your favorite workout?

LAILA: It's something that I know will shock my body because I haven't done it in a long time. So I love all forms of working out but for me, boxing -- I think I have that muscle memory.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: So it's a full body workout so --

JORDAN: Yeah.

LAILA: I mean it's what I know. So when I say, "Okay I need to get weight off," I'll either run because I know it's going to work or I'll box. I don't physically want to get in the ring and spar anybody. But everything else that you do at the gym, I would do.

JORDAN: Is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you want to make sure you communicate?

LAILA: Yes. So right now, obviously I'm not boxing anymore but I have this passion for fitness, health, and wellness and I said to myself, "Hmm, what am I going to do that I will be confident about, love, have a passion for that I would do for free if I could?" And it's really fitness, health and wellness. Because I learned so much through my boxing career and I went to help encourage others to be strong in every area of their life and I feel a lot of that has to do with nutrition and wellness and

eating properly, feeding yourself, feeding your heart, feeding your soul, feeding your spirituality, all of that. So, that's why I've started this brand Laila Ali Lifestyle. I have a blog, Lailaalilifestyle.com. I have my own podcast, Laila Ali podcast at PodcastOne. And if you go on my Facebook page or anything that's what you'll see because that's what I'm about. I also love to cook. I've been cooking since I was very young, like nine years old.

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

LAILA: Because I taught myself how to cook because my mom didn't cook. And I've competed on Chopped and won a couple times.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

LAILA: And The Food Network so -- I said, "You know what?" A lot of people ask me about my recipes whenever I post something so I decided to come out with a cookbook which will be out in January of 2018. And I'm really excited about that because, like I said, this is something that I know I would do for free if I could. And it's great obviously as a businesswoman you want to be able to live a certain lifestyle and take care of your family but do something that you love and is so needed. Here in, you know, the United States and all over the world we have this epidemic with people being obese --

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

LAILA: -- having diabetes, heart disease, and it's because of lifestyle choices. So I think that because I can relate to the average person, I'm not going to speak over their head. I can talk their language. Especially African Americans, where we are way behind everybody else, when it comes to eating and lifestyle choices. I think that I could be the perfect person for that. So, just keep watching and see what comes of it.

JORDAN: Are you glad that you had a chance to get fired by Arnold instead of Trump?

(laugh)

LAILA: I would not have gotten fired by Trump because they asked me to do the show like four times when he was the host and I said no. And that was before everything that happened in this country. It's just I didn't think that that would be a good look for me --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

LAILA: -- because I was like me and Trump in the boardroom, it's not going to be good. They have the control over the editing. I didn't trust it. I felt more comfortable with Arnold. I was on his governor's council of physical fitness here in California. And you know they told me they were bringing it to L.A., you know, it was going to have a whole new face, so I did it. And I did really well. I made it to the semi-finals. Unfortunately with the election and everything that happened, and we shot it back in February of 2016.

JORDAN: Oh, wow, I didn't know that.

LAILA: Yeah. And then it aired and then a lot of people were boycotting the show. And it's something that we didn't even think about because he wasn't even running yet.

JORDAN: Gosh.

LAILA: So and then everyone was like, "Wow this is," -- you know, you wish like we had just put it on hold and didn't do it at that time.

JORDAN: Sure.

LAILA: So any association to him, a lot of people didn't want to watch it. So the show, I don't think did as well as it should have done but as far as my performance, I'm happy with my performance. I brought a lot of awareness to the Women's Sports Foundation, which was my charity. But you know, I'm not the type of

person that likes to have regrets. It's like, for things that I can't control, I'm like, "Hey," --

JORDAN Yeah.

LAILA: -- "whatever was meant to be is what happens, so," --

JORDAN: Yeah, it's not worth it.

LAILA: It's not going to make or break me, put it like that.

JORDAN: Laila, thank you so much.

LAILA: Thank you.

JORDAN: Great big thank you to Laila Ali. Her podcast is called Laila Ali Lifestyle. We'll link that up in the show notes of course. And if you like this one, don't forget to thank Laila on Twitter, we'll have that linked in the show notes as well. I'd love for you to tweet at me your number one takeaway from Laila here. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter. Remember you can tap your phone screen and the show notes should pop right up and that will have my Twitter and Laila's Twitter linked in there as well. Boot camps, our live program details, you can find those at theartofcharm.com/bootcamp.

Join thousands of other guys who've been through the program. They'll become your network of brothers for life. All around the world we've had guys backpacking through Europe, working at AoC, meeting up when traveling, couch surfing, guys have even gotten jobs and formed lifelong friendships. It's by far and away my favorite part of running AoC. The changes are tremendous. I would love to see you there. And remember we sell out a few months in advance so get in touch ASAP. Theartofcharm.com/bootcamp or you can email me, jordan@theartofcharm.com.

I also want to encourage you to join our AoC challenge at theartofcharm.com/challenge or you can text the word 'charmed,' C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444.

The challenge is about improving your networking and connection skills and inspiring those around you to develop a personal and professional connection with you. We'll also email you our Fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned earlier on the show, which includes some great practical stuff on reading body language, having charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm.

I also do regular videos with drills and exercises to help you move forward. It will make you a better networker, it'll make you a better connector, and it'll make you a better thinker.

That's theartofcharm.com/challenge or text 'charmed,' in the U.S. to 33444. For full show notes for this and all previous episodes, head on over to theartofcharm.com/podcast. This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo. Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor and the show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty. I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Go ahead, tell your friends. Because the greatest compliment you can give us is a referral to someone else, either in person or shared on the Web. Word of mouth really is everything. So stay charming, and leave everyone better than you found them.

