

Need Input: A Panel for Cosplay Research  
Written Transcript  
Sakura Con 2013  
Friday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013  
12:15-1:45

Katelyn (pre-panel): *All right here we go. I think we're ready, it's 12:14, we'll start early. Microphones are scary. I'm just going to keep it right here, like I'm a radio broadcaster, because I don't want to stand the whole time.*

Katelyn: Ok, so if you're in 4C-4, which is this panel right now, this is the Need Input panel, a Panel for Cosplay Research. My name is Katelyn Redinger, or Kat the Red. I am the sole artist and founder of Red Leaf Cosplay and I specialize in cosplay and prop crafting for the stage and for cosplay purposes. So, about this panel, I'm just going to give you a brief intro as to who I am and my history with cosplay and what kind of research I am going to be doing here today. This isn't necessarily a panel on how to do research for a cosplay. This is research about why we cosplay, what makes you want to cosplay, why you choose certain characters over other characters, how you feel when you do it, how do you feel when you walk into a convention space wearing a costume no one has ever seen before – that's the kind of stuff we're going to be talking about today. So once I talk for about ten minutes, I promise, ten minutes, not too long, and then I'm gonna get down to the Q&A. I have a whole series of questions – I want your feedback. So, if you do get a chance to speak, you know, we're gonna do the hand thing, (Raises hand) Merrick over here is gonna give you the microphone. So if you do intend to contribute, please move closer to the front and raise your hand and we'll make sure you get the mic. Speak clearly, speak loudly, again this is for science. I'm actually recording this for dissertation purposes. If you don't want to be recorded, James is doing a survey, so you can still contribute even if you don't want to talk. So, but make sure you don't put your name on it. This isn't your homework. If this was your homework I'm super jealous of wherever you went to school because it's about cosplay.

So basically, I started cosplaying about ten years ago. I graduated from Portland State University in Oregon (go Vikings) with a theater degree, and I was doing theater for a really long time. I was mostly a prop master, I make all my own props for my cosplays, but I wasn't really happy with the theater scene in Portland because a lot of designers get a certain level of underappreciation for the work they do. It's like, oh you want 80 props for this show, well I'm really excited about this one prop I did. No it's the wrong color, trash it, make something else. So I didn't like the fact that I was doing a lot of work that I felt really good about it and I had people telling me no, it's wrong, do it again. So that's when I kind of decided that cosplay is my theater. I come here, you are my audience, you are my critics, and I've just figured out I'm a solo artist as far as my own theater goes. So like I said, I have a theater degree, and I have been dedicating a cosplay to a convention every year, but now that I have realized I am more passionate about cosplay than just doing one cosplay a year, I'm going to be doing significantly more cosplays. I'm planning on

getting a masters degree in anthropology. Anthropology is the study of people in cultures and communities, how they interact with one another, and basically we are a community. Cosplayers in a convention, we are a community. We interact one another, we hate one another, we judge one another, we love one another, we are a community, so this would be called sociocultural anthropology because cosplay is a cultural community, we interact in one another, we're a social group, so it's sociocultural anthropology. So I'm studying cosplay from an academic perspective, which I think is awesome because when I go on to get my Ph. D, I'll be like "I have to go do field research, so I need funding to go eight cons. Including the World Cosplay Summit in Japan."

*(Audience: That would be awesome.)*

Katelyn: That would be pretty awesome. I want to go to Anime Expo! So in the past ten years I have done eight cosplays. I did Winry from Fullmetal Alchemist, Asuka Langley Sohryu from Neon Genesis Evangelion, Princess Ashelia from Final Fantasy XII, Misty from Pokémon, Little Sister from Bioshock, Horo from Spice and Wolf, the Absolution Regalia in an undead priest from World of Warcraft, and this year I am doing Megumi from Burst Angel. So, I'm just going to give you a quick rundown on some of my cosplays for the sake of time, and because not all my cosplays were good so I don't want to talk about all of them. At my first con, which was a Sakura Con, we were still at the Seattle Airport Hilton in 2005. If you've been going to con for a long time you know how bad that space was, but that was a long time ago, and we've moved on. We're in the Washington Convention Center now. So I was supposed to be in a big group with a bunch of Fullmetal Alchemist Cosplayers and they were like, "You can be Winry!" and I was like, "Ok, I'll be Winry! I'm going to make a costume I don't know what I'm doing." So I made a costume, and no one else did, so I went by myself. Only person cosplaying, really good experience, good cosplay, broke a lot. Cosplays often do. That next year, I decided I was going to do something more complicated. I was going to do Asuka, the plugsuit from EVA. Everyone loves a plugsuit! Who doesn't love a plugsuit? And since I'm fiery redheaded German girl, I really felt like I really related with the character, so I made a plugsuit. It was a huge success as a second cosplay, and I was really happy with it, lots of photos. But the next few years, I decided I wasn't all about making cosplays that were sexy. I saw these two cosplayers, they were two girls doing nurses from Silent Hill and they were incredible. They were scary, great make-up, they were tripping all over the place, people would bump into them and they would fall and then they would pick themselves back up. They were so scary, so I was like you know what? I want to do something scary, so I did a Little Sister from Bioshock. If you happen to go to Cosplay Chess tomorrow afternoon or the Late Night Cosplay Chess, you will see my Little Sister. Let's just say, before people were being like "Oh my gosh, you're so hot. You have boobs." Instead they're like "Don't look at her. Don't look at her. Is she following us? Is she right around the corner? Don't look at her." It was awesome, this whole new way for people to receive me, instead of "Oh my gosh, you're hot," it's like "Oh my gosh, you're scary, you're freaking me out, go away." So, that next year, I

realized I wanted to keep going with that and so I did Little Sister again – this is Frank the Bearded Man.

*(My friend, Frank Barbera, joins me, a.k.a. Frank the Bearded Man.)*

Katelyn: He's at my panel now.

Frank: Hi!

Katelyn: He's filling out the survey. If you're just coming into the panel, please fill out the survey, this is for science. What's this for, people?

Audience: Science!

Katelyn: So, last year, I was sick. You're going to laugh, but I was sick. I am a recovering World of Warcraft addict. I have been sober for three years.

*(Applause)*

Katelyn: Thank you, thank you. I survived two expansions. We went back to Azeroth and I didn't go back with everyone else, and then you know, Mists of Pandaria came out and panda people. Who doesn't want to play a panda? But I didn't go back, instead I spent six months working on a World of Warcraft cosplay to show that I could do better things with my time than playing WoW. I can make an awesome cosplay. I learned a lot about sewing, I did more of the scary rather than sexy aspect and I realized I really love cosplay. I spent six months on a costume. I must really love this. But why? Why did I spend six months on a costume that I wore for like, eight hours? Why do we do that? Why did I just totally lose it seeing another World of Warcraft cosplay saying, "You worked really hard on your costume too, didn't you? Well, why did you?" "I don't know, I liked it." No, there was more to it than that wasn't there? So in my years of cosplay and perceiving people at a convention that there are deeper, meatier, fuller reasons as to why we are doing this. So from wearing an Adventure Time hat to wearing a head to toe Totoro costume and those poofy animal tails from the exhibition hall and animatronic cat ears and kigurumi pajamas and replica jewelry and from Naruto to Oron and Hetalia and Final Fantasy and Sailor Moon and Bleach and Kingdom Hearts and men dressed as women and women dressed as cats, everyone is cosplaying! Why? Why are we doing this? What attracts us to it? And that's why I'm here today, that's what I'm hoping you, the con-goers, can tell me why. This is for science, people. So now I'm going to ask you guys some questions about cosplay. You know who I am; I want to know who you are! This panel is about sharing personal anecdotes, we're going to get personal, really personal. But we're going to set some ground rules first, because no one wants to be that guy at the panel that didn't shut up.

*(Frank points to himself.)*

Katelyn: Thank you, Frank. I don't want anybody to be that guy and I don't want anyone else be like "That guy. THAT guy." So, for starters, we're going to stick to the questions. We're going to be brief. Try not to take more than a couple minutes when responding to the questions. To think about what you might say, I'll give a really brief response and I'll call on a few people in the audience to get your feedback. Try to think in a deep context in regards to the question. It's not just because it's fun, I really want the meaty stuff. Don't give your life story unless you can do that in two minutes. In that case, go live life more. Give me the essence of your feedback in the prompt. If you don't get a chance to speak, because we're going to keep this really brief for each question, I will be available on Sunday. I'll be doing field research on Sunday and available after the panel, but we'll move out into the hallway so whoever is after us has some time to set up. So as far as detail go, if you're citing a particular cosplay, please say who you were from what anime, manga, video game, comic book – whatever it was from, and refrain from addressing yourself by a name. This is anonymous, confidential field research. If you want to refer to yourself as anything, use your character name, or your gamer tag or your nickname. Those are all elements of the cosplay community, and that's part of about who you are. That's the kind of information I want. So we're going to get going with the questions. First question: When cosplaying, what is the most important physical attribute for you to fulfill in your quest to be character? i.e. having the right hair color, being the right height, being the right gender, whatever. What is most important to you in fulfilling your cosplay accurately? Go.

Frank: Boobs.

Katelyn: Boobs is not an answer.

A1: I'll throw my hat in.

Katelyn: Ok, we're going to bring the mic out. Please remember to speak clearly; it's being recorded for cosplay research.

A1: Ok, first of all, I'm the Chaos Ninja on Deviant Art. You're free to look me up. I do commissions. For me, I found body shape helps a lot. I've done crossplay, I'm doing an itty-bitty little schoolgirl uniform tomorrow and I realized I actually have to pad this year and I have a large bust to begin with.

Katelyn: So you need more bust?

A1: Yes. She Himeji from Baka no Test. She's very busty, and I realized I don't have enough bust for her.

Katelyn: So having the right body shape is most important for you?

A1: It is, and also knowing how you can change your body. Padding on the sides if you happen to have a little tiny waist can give you a square figure, or shoulder pads

if you happen to have slipping shoulders like my sister does. I had to get the really thick ones because she has really bad shoulders and she needs squares ones. Other than that, make up can help with facial shape.

Katelyn: The right shadowing, the right angles.

A1: If you have the right shadowing, you can pull anything off. And don't be afraid to test!

Katelyn: Always test things before you come to con. You'll be much less stressed. What is the most important physical attribute for you to fulfill?

A2: So for me, I would say it's similar, getting that right shape and, I want to say more proportions. And for me, that's actually a really good challenge with all the textiles work I do in my cosplays. I am doing Squid Girl from Ika Musume or Ika Musume Squid Girl. I've also been a Marie Persian of Miku Hatsune, which is this really unpopular music video. For both of those cosplays, I really did have to take this costume and really look for the right patterns and the right alterations and the thing with Squid Girl is I found this perfect fabric and you'll probably see me wearing it tomorrow and it lays perfectly and I've seen other Squid Girls and I think "Yeah, but you don't have the skirt right." You know, it's always really interesting when I see another version of the same costume, but I think, I'm really proud of my Squid Girl because the fabric is amazing and the skirt just lays as perfectly as the anime character's skirt would.

Katelyn: Sure! Well that actually leads into my next question: If physicality isn't important, then what else is? Details, as far as costumes go, need the really little details, like getting the stitching right, or this leather bag I have right here? I added some jean grommets that give it that extra touch to make it look like its actually leather, even though it's vinyl. So if physicality isn't important, what do you value the most when you cosplay? What is important to you when you choose cosplay?

A3: For me it would have to simply be making sure the cosplay actually looks good. Making sure the cosplay doesn't look, if you'll excuse the phrase, half-assed.

Katelyn: Crappy.

A3: My first year here at Sakura-Con I cosplayed as Shiki. Granted it was kind of *ehhh*, but I have seen some people who made the tabard out of a towel. And something crappy and handmade is at least better than a towel. Because at least you actually tried to work on it instead of "Oh, here's a towel, let's just put some paint on it."

Katelyn: This is why I didn't talk about all of my cosplays because my Princess Ashe cosplay – stuff was falling off all over the place, there were some inappropriate moments with the little pink skirt I'm not proud of, but that's why I didn't talk about

all of my cosplays because some of them was like “Oh, I’ll just stick it right there and it looks great, doesn’t it?” No, it doesn’t. Well, oh! Chun-Li. You can really stick your hand up there unless you’re restricted via cosplay to stick your hand up there.

A4: For me – I’m crossplaying as Chun-Li by the way.

*(Applause)*

Katelyn: Very nice legs, by the way.

A4: For me, I’ve done both really good and really bad cosplays in my years, but for me the most important part other than physicality and shape and hair color is whether or not someone has put effort into it. Because a lot of time I can respect someone more if they have a mediocre to really bad cosplay that they’ve put many, many hours into versus someone that bought it from a store or a hoodie or even like a pajama suit. I see a lot of those around here, and I think, “Yes, that’s a pajama suit.”

Katelyn: That’s great for when you’re in the manga library at 1:30 in the morning.

A4: But it’s a pajama suit, not a full cosplay.

Katelyn: Absolutely, well, thank you! Well, we’re just going to teeter away from cosplay a little bit and talk about us as a community here at the convention. So this actually a really controversial question, but remember, this is for science. Based on my research, I have concluded that we are a sociocultural anthropological group, and I’m studying present day peoples in a social setting, and that setting is the world and community of cosplay. As part of the cosplay community, whether or not you cosplay - you’re here; you take pictures of people, if you said you actually do take pictures of people in the survey, but you’re a part of this community – what are some things that annoy and embarrass you about belonging to a culture like this? Believe me, we’ve all got something that embarrasses and annoys, for me; I’m not going to say it, but (Coughs, ‘Naruto’).

*(Audience laughs)*

Katelyn: I’ve gotten it out of the way; no one else can say it now.

A5: My name is Jersey. I’m not really implemented anywhere by Tumblr. Jerseytosanfran.tumblr.com. I think the most embarrassing thing about the cosplay community it sometimes the fans. Sometimes the fans can be just a little embarrassing because depending on the fandom...

Katelyn: Yes, definitely.

A5: Yeah.

Katelyn: There are some groups, and I'm not knocking the group itself, the people in it, but there are notably some communities in cosplay that I think have a bad rap, like, Naruto, unfortunately. They're so many of them and no one in particular, but I've been disrespected by a lot of Naruto people. Homestuck –

*(Audience: Homestuck is the new Naruto.)*

Katelyn: Homestuck is the new Naruto. Unfortunately, I was criticized and followed around by a lot of Homestuck people that it made it hard for me to enjoy my con. No offense, Homestuck's great, Naruto's great. Unfortunately it just takes those few people to give a group a bad rap. I'm sure there's some nice Homestuckers out there. Chun-Li, did have something else?

A6: Mine's really quick.

Katelyn: What embarrasses you about this culture?

A6: The only thing is only really gets me about the Homestuck group, and it's not specifically them, it's the ones with the chipping grey face paint.

Katelyn: So, again, physicality and quality of cosplay. Chipping face paint.

A6: I've done chipping face paint, it's not fun, it's not good.

Katelyn: It can be embarrassing, well; it's embarrassing like "My face is falling off". Personally embarrassing. What embarrasses you about being a part of this culture? Let's get someone new on the floor, for research. If you want to speak, move closer, the microphone won't reach that far out. Go ahead.

A7: Two things. The first is people who smell – they haven't showered.

Katelyn: Personal hygiene is important at con. You will feel better, I guarantee it. Frank's good right now. Day 1, already doing good. Personal hygiene.

A7: The other thing is other people, or other cosplayers or cosplay fans who ask too much, like they're unreasonably picky or worse, they get on peoples' cases about their body type...

Katelyn: Absolutely.

A7: ...Or making a stink about other peoples' cosplays not looking good enough, even if they did put effort into them.

Katelyn: If you didn't have a lot of time to put into your cosplay, but you feel like you worked really hard on it, nobody can ever take that away from you.

*(Audience: My opinion is if you're not wearing it, and you're not going to help me fix it, don't diss it!)*

Katelyn: Exactly. I've already had to fix my cosplay twice and it's like "You're not wearing it! Don't worry about my cleavage." It's all good.

*(Merrick: Everyone worries about your cleavage, dear.)*

Katelyn: Ok one more, what annoys you or embarrasses you?

A8: This is also going into a little bit what the person before me said, and that is occasionally, not too often, but I know there's a lot more out there based on people on the Internet and so on when I say "Hey, I'm going to do this cosplay," people saying, "No, that's stupid!"

Katelyn: Yeah, it's like, "people won't know who you are." It doesn't matter!

A8: Yeah I'm doing a cosplay and I worry that maybe only one other person at this convention probably knows what it is.

Katelyn: But do you love it?

A8: I adore it, I love this cosplay because it means quite a bit to me and the other thing that bothers me is when someone says "Oh you can't do that cosplay because you're too fat, you're too busty" or so on and so forth.

Katelyn: Or, you're a girl, you can't be a guy.

A8: Yeah it's like, c'mon on!

*(Audience: Watch me!)*

A8: The person that I cosplaying today pretty much has a Korean thirteen-year-old body, and I think I look great.

Katelyn: Congratulations!

*(Applause)*

Katelyn: All right, so, next question. Give three descriptive adjectives that explain how you feel when you cosplay. If you don't know what an adjective is, just pick a word. You'll probably do fine. How do you feel when you cosplay, in three words? We could get lots of feedback from this, everyone's got three words about how they feel, and don't just say fun, I know it's fun- Oh, hi, Frank.

Frank: Sexy.



Katelyn: It is pretty sexy. How do you feel when you cosplay? Me, my first one is stressed. I love this more than anything else in the world and I am always stressed. Are things falling out? Is everything in place? Is that ripping apart? So, stressed is definitely one thing I feel. Um, what's that one word...liberated. I'm not me today. I'm something better than myself, which is working retail and food service, working two jobs, 60 hours a week, but that's not me today! Today, I'm Megumi from Burst Angel, probably going to get kidnapped by the end of the day. Three words, how do you feel?

A9: Epic, badass and vindicated.

Katelyn: Bravo. You should always feel epic, badass and vindicated. Three words, everyone's got three words.

A10: Sassy, tall...what's not 'fun'?

Katelyn: Not fun.

A10: Ecstatic.

Katelyn: Ecstatic, yeah. C'mon good descriptive words, I know you've got them!

A11: Proud, horribly confused, and right before con, extremely panicked, because it's not done, it's not ready, it's not going to be ready, all that fun stuff.

Katelyn: Let's get some more of the cosplayers, and then I'm going to put a twist on this question.

A12: I'm-on-vacation.

*(Applause and cheers)*

Katelyn: We're all on vacation!

A13: Frazzled, incognito and social.

Katelyn: Good, very good...it's ok, this is a big question.

A14: Physically uncomfortable, and hurried.

Katelyn: Ok, good. I'm going to put a little twist on this question. I noticed there are some people in here that aren't necessarily cosplaying – Also, if you want to talk into the mic, you'll have to move closer to the front. The cord doesn't reach that far. – So, for people that don't cosplay, or you're not cosplaying right now, how do you feel, in three words, when you see cosplayers? This could be anyone – this could be a fluffy

Totoro, this could be like a Tira from Soul Caliber and you're like "Are her boobs really hanging out like that? Wow..." So, if you're not a cosplayer, three words, how you feel when you see people cosplay?

A15: Frantic, like wondering how they keep everything in the right place, and critical, and excited when I see something I really like!

Katelyn: You're like "That's from that! Ermahgerd!" We missed the Goosebumps cosplayer, like "Ermahgerd Gersberps!" He was in here and I wanted to be like, LOOK! I'm not going to pinpoint people, but now I can't help it - Ermahgerd, Kerspleh! (*Translation, oh my god, cosplay!*) We're gonna make it, Merrick! We're gonna make it! That is the extent of the reach - oh my god, everything's falling apart. Three words!

A16: I would say amazed, yeah, amazed, um, astounded and kind of intimidated because this is my first time cosplaying...

Katelyn: Welcome!

*(Applause and cheers "One of us!")*

A16: So, whenever I see really good cosplays I'm always thinking, "How do they do it that?"

*(Audience: Time, magic, good sewing, natural luck, persistence, hard work, blood, sweat and tears)*

Katelyn: Yes, lots of sweat.

A16: Actually, last night I was sewing and it was very late, and I was going to wear a hat and it doesn't quite fit right so I was trying to figure out, what can I do to pull this off?

Katelyn: Sure! Look at Merrick! Merrick, how long did it take you to do your cosplay? How much time did you have? Give Merrick the mic really quick. Merrick, how long did it take you?

Merrick: I started this cosplay two days ago. I finished last night.

*(Applause and cheers)*

Katelyn: Merrick is in grad school, so Merrick doesn't have a lot of time, so Merrick's like "Spring Break! Oh my god, cosplay! Must put together the cosplay!" Anyone else, adjectives? Especially people that aren't cosplaying, I want to know how you feel when you see people like us. We're a strange group.

A17: I would say the first two are excited and anticipatory, like I really love con. I always love walking up to check in on Thursday to pre-register or check in as staff and seeing everybody out and about downtown in costumes, and then one word is jealous. I've always wanted to cosplay, but it's often- I'm not a grad student but I'm a physics and mathematics student and I'm really short on time too. I get these ideas and I never seem to have the time to get them together.

Katelyn: We'll put some fox ears and a tail on you and you'll do fine.

Frank: Get other people to do it for you.

Katelyn: Absolutely, that always works.

A18: At this con, this is my first time cosplaying.

*(Cheers and applause)*

A18: This is Black Knight from Code Geass. I only have two words to describe, when I was just being a photographer, I would be both amazed and jealous.

Katelyn: It seems like jealousy is common. Even with as long as I have been cosplaying, I'm always like "Oh my God! Do you have any other hobbies?" Which is why I don't want any other hobbies; I want this to be my hobby forever.

A18: It's kind of like, if I was to do cosplay in that moment, would I be able to live up to the expectations?

Katelyn: Well, since we've opened the floor to people who don't cosplay, if you don't cosplay, then why not? We've already heard that time is a factor, but if you haven't cosplayed, have you ever wanted to, and if you don't want to, then why not? If you don't want to cosplay, why not? How many people in here aren't cosplayers, like you've never cosplayed, you have no interest in it?... Do you have any feedback? Do you have any reasons that you would give? For science?

*(Audience: For science!)*

Katelyn: For an eventual dissertation that will be about cosplay? Do you have any feedback?

*(Audience: Keep testing!)*

Katelyn: Do you have anything you want to say? It's ok, you don't have to if you don't want to, and I don't want to pinpoint you or anything.

A19: Well, mostly, the first thing is I don't know where to get most of the stuff for cosplay.

*(Audience: Jo-Ann's)*

Katelyn: Jo-Ann's! Coupons!

*(Audience continues to produce ideas)*

Katelyn: Ok, guys, c'mon, slow down. Stop trying to convert.

A19: Also, money, I don't really have a job right now so being able to get stuff at the right price, not buying something that's too expensive that I probably won't need later.

Frank: Goodwill.

Katelyn: Yes, Goodwill. Goodwill!

*(Frank begins pointing at his various Mario costume items listing off prices)*

Frank: Three dollars, two dollars, one dollar, sister sewed it on, old boots.

Katelyn: Really, Goodwill is a great place to find something, and if you can't find something in the right color, you can always dye it. Jo-Ann's has amazing deals on fabrics, I mean this isn't a how-to cosplay panel, but there are ways to get it done. And you can always do research in the mean time, get ideas and dreams and fulfill them someday when you do have a job. So thank you for contributing! Are there any other non-cosplayers in here? You don't cosplay? Would you like to contribute? This is for science!

*(Audience: For science!)*

Katelyn: Absolutely. I never knew this was going to be some big slogan for my panel. "This is for science!"

A20: This is my second time coming to a con. I actually meant to cosplay, but I think it's a genetic disposition in my family because it's just full of procrastinators and I just have that gene.

Katelyn: So procrastination is why you don't cosplay?

A20: It's all about the procrastination. Also, I have like ten different costumes going through my mind and I just can't pick one and make enough time to dedicate myself to one costume. I'll get half way through it and I'll be like "Oh, I could make it to do this and this and this" and then I just don't finish. And then you see all these different costumes and you think, "Oh, I want to do that and that and that." Being able to make up your mind and sticking to it and to dedicate to your costume and

see it through until it's beautiful. Even no one else finds it beautiful, you find it beautiful.

Katelyn: Absolutely! That's what's most important - how you feel about your costume.

A21: I think it's also lack of motivation. From where I live, family and friends, they don't cosplay or wear costumes for the most part, so there's not much to encourage you to make a costume.

Katelyn: Friends! They'll always make sure you get your costume done!

*(Audience: Oh yes!)*

A22: I'm not speaking for myself, I'm speaking for people I know because this prevents her from going to conventions at all, but lack of transportation, like if you're stuck in the middle of nowhere Ohio.

*(Audience: Friends!)*

Katelyn: Yeah, it's hard to be able to meet up and make sure you're going to get to con, and then when you get to con, you have to find some place to stay, and that person isn't going to steal your stuff...

A22: Yeah, accommodations, that can be more expensive than the traveling.

Katelyn: Absolutely, yes, hotels are the most important part of con.

A22: You can't count on having friends there so you can crash on their couch.

Katelyn: Yeah, I don't have any friends in Seattle.

Merrick: You have my brother.

Katelyn: I have your brother - that doesn't count.

Frank: Can I have your brother too?

Katelyn: There's a couple more, this guy, who's not cosplaying.

A23: I'm not cosplaying today, but hopefully tomorrow. If I can actually get off my lazy ass and finish it then I can.

Katelyn: Remember, this panel is a Sakura-Con All Audiences, so make sure you watch the language. I don't wanna get my panel shut down.

A23: Point taken. For the longest time I didn't cosplay because there was a huge intimidation factor. You go online and you go to a convention and there's so many amazing cosplayers. You see that over there and "Oh man that is so great!...But I don't know how I could do that."

Katelyn: I feel that way. When I do cosplay research, I say. "Oh I should do that cosplay!" and I go on Cosplay.com and there's someone in China, Canada, Japan or Korea that has done it and it can't be done again because it's too perfect.

A23: Exactly, like how can you top that?

Katelyn: It's just too good. Ok, one more and then we're gonna move on to the next question. I'm excited about this next question.

A24: This, what I've notice a lot from acquaintances I have online and or friends is they don't cosplay period is because they're scared. They're very intimidated or scared – they don't want people to look at them, they don't want people to talk to them.

Katelyn: They don't want to be judged.

A24: They don't want to be judged, they're just flat out 'no I don't want any attention' because of a self-esteem issue or they're overly shy. Very shy.

*(Audience: Or some kind of anxiety disorder.)*

Katelyn: It can be liberating. I have chronic anxiety, I've had it since I was 13 and let's just say I'm not anxious at all right now and I have a ton of skin exposed and I'm not anxious. I don't know how that works, but it does. So, this is a fun question, this is the good versus evil question: Do you like cosplaying as the good guy or the bad guy? If you like to cosplay villains, why? What attracts you to the dark side of the force? Why do we like to cosplay bad guys?

A25: I like to cosplay as both good guys and bad. The good - it depends on the character, it depends on their personality, it depends on how much I actually like the character. The bad, the bad are just so much fun!

Katelyn: We love to be villains!

A25: They are just so much fun and you can get away with so much hyper behavior and you can flip people so much crud and nobody will take it seriously because they know, "Oh, you're this character, you're this villain, you're supposed to be a pain in the butt."

Katelyn: Yeah, the protagonist is usually pretty annoying. It's kind of the Cloud vs. Sephiroth deal – why do we love Sephiroth so much? It's not the sword...

Merrick: It's the hair.

Katelyn: It could be the hair. It could be, I have a huge wall scroll of Sephiroth, he looks so beautiful, and my fiancé won't let me put it up because he's like, "...No. Because you're gonna roll over in the morning and be like "Good morning, Sephy!"

A26: I mainly like cosplaying as the good guys maybe because the bad guys, they're costumes tend to be very intricate and hard. And I don't have time for that, but continuing on with what you said – Why do we love Sephiroth? He's the sort of guy that you love to hate. Kefka is the guy for me. He's the bad guy I absolutely love to hate.

Katelyn: He's a good example. Does anyone else have an example of a villain that they love to hate that's in cosplay, anime, video games, anything like that? Love to hate?

A27: Well, I was gonna say in general, Tim Curry?

Katelyn: Yeah! Alan Rickman. Trust Snape. Trust him.

A28: I like a specific kind of character that's not evil or bad or good – the insane. Normally it's the bad ones because I love characters, I love personality that's big and you can sell it.

*(Indiscernible audience chatter)*

Katelyn: I love insane characters. Ok, the mic is moving on somehow. Thanks Merrick. Dropping your job.

A29: (Indiscernible) – pedophile. He is so pretty, it's kind of like, you have perfect skin and we all know it's fake but it's perfect.

Katelyn: I love Muttslini from Baka no Test.

A29: We almost had our own Muttslini for tomorrow!

Katelyn: I'm in love with Muttslini, and it's bad.

A29: Muttslini is awesome!

Katelyn: It's bad, he takes pictures of girls, ninja panty shots and we should hate people like that.

*(Audience: How is that different from photographers at Japanese conventions?)*

Katelyn: I don't know what you're talking about. No one has tried to take pictures of anything like that. No one. That doesn't happen here. Sakura-Con is a family convention, ok? Family.

A30: I like the anti-hero, like, you know, they're trying to do good but they're not entirely...

Katelyn: Kind of like a lone wolf kind of thing?

*(Audience: Or they just screw it up.)*

A30: You like Lelouch from Code Geass, he just wants to do good but he has to get his hands dirty, like really dirty in order to do it.

A31: Really quick, I'm more of a neutral character but I tend to choose characters that I cosplay with characters based on a personality that I sympathize with. And so technically, my typical character is somebody that doesn't take sides and that's something I do when my friends get into arguments – I don't take sides.

Katelyn: Neutral. Switzerland. Be Switzerland, you can be now, thanks to Hetalia.

A32: I'm haven't actually cosplayed yet but I always keep meaning to, most of the idea of characters I have like character that have a lot of nuances that might be changing sides a lot. Take like Zechs Merquise from Gundam Wing, yeah, those sets of characters who are not quite on one side or the other, but they're kind of working for something better.

Katelyn: Yeah, like on the fence, you're not stuck in one part of a group or another, which leads us into our next question. Do you prefer to cosplay alone or in a group? I came with two people and they're cosplaying, but we've never really done a group cosplay where we're all from the same thing. So, in a roundabout way, I would say I like to cosplay alone, because then I actually have to go out there and find those people. So do you cosplay alone or in a group, which do you prefer?

A33: This year for Sakura-Con friends of mine we're trying to do Assassin's Creed. My friend who was talking about trying to finish her costume, we're hopefully going to do our cosplay tomorrow, possibly, and I think that's just awesome because it's more fun with friends and family, it's just more meaningful. Massive.

Katelyn: I think it's great when you think no one's cosplaying the same thing you are and then you find someone that's in the same anime or video game as you and you go "Oh crap", and then everyone wants to take your pictures because you have suddenly formed a group.

A34: I like to think that I more likely to cosplay alone or with my partner here, but it always tends to be in a group no matter what because we go to conventions and



hotels and it always tends to be a group, but I know that a lot will pick a group, like an anime like Fullmetal Alchemist and they'll all cosplay from that specific anime because they get more attention that way.

Katelyn: Being in a group. Like traveling in a gang?

A34: It's like a whole sea of people in blue uniforms. Like "Oh look, Fullmetal Alchemist".

Katelyn: Yeah, State Alchemists.

*(Audience references other potential cosplay groups.)*

Katelyn: When people cosplay in groups you tend to get a lot more attention. Like a Shaolin Soccer team, you actually have to have enough people to make up that soccer team, so, groups! Ok, a couple more people, and then we'll move on to the next question.

A35: I like the idea of cosplaying with group of people but I've never actually done it because it's a lot of coordination and I tend to be kind of a space cadet so that I often miss the planning or I'm out on the communication network. Also, I rarely have friends that go to the same conventions as me so I end up cosplaying alone pretty much all the time, even when I am going to a convention with friends we cannot do cosplays from the same series.

Katelyn: Yeah that happen a lot. I travel with a couple people that usually do crossplays so it hard for me to be the only chick in the group and be like, "Ok, what can we? You're both dudes right now. Don't make me be the chick. I don't wanna be the chick this year."

A36: I'm sort of the same, I've only done individuals cosplays because – ha, ha, I'm a freshmen in college and I just recently moved.

Katelyn: Welcome! Welcome to the Pacific Northwest!

A36: My high school friends weren't much focused on cosplay. They went to the same con over and over again. I was 18 years old and now I'm 19 and I'm meeting new people in university. There's actually some people down the hall that want to get together for my first group cosplay and I'm really excited for it!

Katelyn: Sure, yeah! Couple more people then we're gonna move on to the next fun question!

A37: Going on what she said, I like sometimes I cosplay by myself but when I find people who are in the same fandom as my character...that kind of make me happy because I have found people in common with my interests.

Katelyn: Yeah, sure! It usually helps when it's something a little more ambiguous. Like something that's not very common. Like if you cosplay something from Naruto you're going to see about 50 other people that love to cosplay from Naruto

A37: One of my favorite cosplays that goes under that description is Nice Hollystone from Baccano! I have a friend who is cosplaying as Grand Spector, and going off the last question, she loves to be insane, she loves to be insane characters. And so I find it really enjoyable with this friend that I met like 5-6 years ago at a friends birthday party and she's like "We should cosplay together!" and I'm like, "I totally agree, but what should we do?" Well, this, this and this!

Katelyn: Mmhmm, well good! Making connections. Chun-Li, and then we're gonna move on to the next question.

A38: Ok, so this one has a little bit of a backstory. Every single year, I go to Dragon Con and I go with a batch of my friends and I'm the cosplaying vet of the group, I've done it at every single convention I've gone to. I have a few years under my belt, so they'll all be like "Alright! Let's form a cosplay group!" and I'm like "Ok, here's a good cosplay that you can do really well." One year, I decided we would do Minecraft and we would all go as building blocks and they're like "Yeah that's a good idea," so I'm like, "Ok, let's set it up! All you guys have to do is come over and paint the pixel-work." I am the only one who does it. Every single year I've gone to conventions, Dragon Con, Sakura-Con, Aki-Con, any convention I've gone to I'm doing it as a soloite because everyone says "Yeah let's do it!" and they never come through!

Katelyn: Yeah, when you're in a group, you've got to keep that energy level high and make sure everyone sticks with it, everyone contributes.

A38: And the funny thing is the year that I did Minecraft, I dressed up as a meteor cube dress block and everyone loved it! Everyone was like "Why didn't we go as cobblestones!?" "Because you didn't paint your cardboard!"

Katelyn: Well, here's a question that I think applies, especially to Merrick and James right now, - Have you ever considered crossplaying or dressing as a character of a different gender? Why is this appealing? Why do you want to crossplay?

A39: I'm actually going to be crossplaying tomorrow.

Katelyn: There's a surprising amount of crossplayers in the panel. It's very appropriate, good feedback.

A39: I do crossplay because I like male characters more than female characters. Also I don't really have a chest for female characters but I have somewhat of a chest for male characters so it's not that hard to do, even without binding.

Katelyn: Alright, good feedback! Why do you cosplay as characters of an opposite gender? Or another gender since there's more than two now.

A40: I'm a third gender, so technically no matter what I'm wearing, I'm crossplaying or cross-dressing. And if I'm known to be cross-dressing no matter what I'm doing, why bother even caring?

Katelyn: Ok, can I ask you a questions really quick?

A40: Go ahead.

Katelyn: On my survey, because it's going to be used for statistical information that can actually be used for a dissertation, so like in a field study of 125 cosplayers, I was having difficulty with the gender questions, asking are you male, female, transgender or other? Did I word it appropriately?

A40: Yeah, you did.

Katelyn: Thank you, I was paranoid about that. I don't want someone to feel left out, like they're not gonna get recognized, so thank you for reaffirming for me.

A40: I'm really glad you did put an 'other' category. I appreciate the blank so people can clarify for themselves.

Katelyn: Good, thank you for that feedback. It's important to make sure the survey is working.

A41: I'm an individual that's mysterious to gender myself, I found that I was sort of uncomfortable in female costumes a lot of the time. I didn't actually in get in one or anything, but I sort of felt like it might happen and be uncomfortable. I find plenty of male characters that I want to cosplay, so it's just sort of "Why not?"

Katelyn: Sure! Let's get a couple more people and then we're gonna move on to a question that's very similar to this question but with a twist. I like twists. Chun-li! You are obviously crossplaying.

A42: No, I'm totally not. *(humor)*

Katelyn: No, totally a chick. *(humor)*

A42: So, mine actually happened on accident, my first crossplay ever was Sailor Jupiter. I had a messy break up, girlfriend said, "Oh why don't you cosplay as Sailor Jupiter, for crying out loud?" And I said, "Well fine!" Turns out I'm actually good at it.

*(Laughter and applause.)*

Katelyn: You are very good at it. Do you ever actually cosplay as men? Or do you just prefer to cosplay as women?

A42: I don't think I've actually done any male specific cosplays. Pedobear is ambiguous?

Katelyn: This is a great segway into the next question!

A42: In terms of your survey, on gender, I put in other "I don't really care."

Katelyn: That's why I put the 'other' in there because I wanna make sure everyone gets a chance. You want to write 'meat popsicle', write 'meat popsicle'. I don't care. That's what the 'other' note is for. Actually, saying Pedobear segways into the next question, which is Have you ever considered dressing as an animal, from the basic ears and tail all the way to the 'furry' suit? And again, why is this appealing? Why do we dress up as animals? I mean, they are androgynous, but why? Why are we dressing up as animals?

*(Audience: Can I answer as to say why I wouldn't?)*

Katelyn: That works too! But let's start with why we would. Why would you dress up as an animal? What appeals to you about dressing as an animals?

A43: Well, one distinctive thing would be if the cosplay of an animal would be like if they were a good guy or a bad guy, just really awesome.

Katelyn: Everyone loves Kuroneko-sama, PenPen, Pedobear, why? These animal celebrities, why do people like to cosplay as animals? Nyan-Cat, which I think is part animal, part pop-tart?

A44: Part of it is the ambiguity of it...

Katelyn: Not gender specific? That's good!

A44: Yeah, I've never done specifically...Oh, I think having ears counts. But I think that people like to cosplay as furies because it kind of gives this ambiguity to it. The character...You don't know if the character is male or female.

Katelyn: You could be anyone in that furry suit!

A44: Exactly!

Katelyn: When we say 'furry', I'm using it in the context that you are covered head to toe in an animal costume. None of the culture connotations that go with 'furry' are being implied right now. Just furry, I'm using it as a definition, you are covered from

head to toe in an animal costume. Why would you do that? And I think that's a really good reason – because you want to be ambiguous.

A45: Aside from the fact that they're cute...

Katelyn: Yes!

A45: I happen to be friends with a bunch of furrries. I've been asked if I can make fur suits. I think one of the primary interests of wearing a fur suit or dressing as an animal, whether is be a *gijinka* from Pokémon or going full head to toe, even as an aside, armor, going as a transformer, going as something not human – it's that change. You're not yourself, you're someone else. It's that freedom to not be yourself.

Katelyn: Which I think is the essence of cosplay overall.

A45: It's those people going that one step further. I've seen some awesome ones, I've seen some not so awesome ones. I've seen Alphonse Elric made out of cardboard and it was awesome! There was a seven year old boy inside operating the entire thing!

Katelyn: Let's just say that little kid cosplays are awesome. We all want to have babies so we can dress them up as Pokémon. I do!

A46: I actually love Pokémon. I did a *gijinka* many years ago and it was pretty kick ass. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to use that word.

Katelyn: Oh, it's ok, we'll blur it out for science.

A46: I don't dress as a furry, it's not my thing, and I'm from the Midwest and there seem to be a lot of furrries out there. I've seen the furrries in the furry costume where they actually have the animal correct, with mastered legs.

Katelyn: Like anatomically?

A46: And I was just like, whoa! Whoa, I don't even know how to do that!

Katelyn: How!?

A46: It's incredible, I mean, that's the reason why I cosplay. I cosplay for the challenge. Figuring out how to become a cute little girl in a lamb costume is totally my thing. I love being a lamb and I'm gonna be a lamb on Easter Sunday.

Katelyn: Yay for Easter cosplays that aren't Jesus!

A46: So, it's just, I will say that I'm a little scared off by cosplaying somewhat with animal features because there do seem to be a few people at the conventions that aren't able not to keep it in their pants and come off a little too strongly...

Katelyn: Sure, sure.

A46: And that's actually one of the only things that I'm embarrassed about our community is there are fans that are, you know, that's their main focus and their sexuality, but family friendly convention! Hold it until after hours. I understand you wanna take pictures, but obviously ogling be is just a little uncomfortable and self centered.

Katelyn: Sure, sure. We're gonna get a little bit more serious now. I think this is a subject that anybody at an anime convention can relate to, whether you cosplay or you don't. Just based on what you look like, what you're wearing, like I said, if you cosplay or you don't, walking into a convention to be seen by over 20,000 people, last year we had 21,000 people, over 21,000 people at this convention, it can stir up all sorts of feelings. So, specifically, when you cosplay, do you worry about being judged? For the quality of your cosplay, or who you're cosplaying as? I know a lot of villains get a bad rap, people pick on them, call them names, harass them, criticize them, and it's like, "I just like the character. I'm not that person, so back off." So, do you worry about being judged when you cosplay? How does it make you feel?

A47: I sometimes worry about being judged because sometimes I forget bits and pieces at my home, but then I meet some people who like today, I met Kylee Henke at the Artist's Alley and it was like, I was saying to her that I forgot a symbol on my shirt, and she was like "Ahh, it's fine." And that made me feel really happy to hear her say that.

Katelyn: Accepted, so not necessarily judged, but accepted. Which is great feedback initially, not feeling judged, feeling accepted.

A48: This goes back to your question about what makes you feel annoyed about the culture. Well, when I cosplay I feel like I'm afraid of being judged for the color of my skin, because you don't really see a lot of black cosplayers. This hasn't happened to me personally...

*(Audience: That's sad.)*

Katelyn: It is really sad.

*(Audience: I see it on the internet.)*

A48: I see it a lot on the internet. Even this girl who had an article on her about it, so that's what I mean. I'm afraid.

Katelyn: That's a really interesting subject if someone says "No, you can't be Sailor Moon because of how you look." Which is bull. I'm sure you all know this, but it's bull.

*(Audience: Sailor Bubba. Male, black, and it's not a good cosplay but it's awesome because he feels comfortable enough to wear it.)*

A48: So that's kind of along the lines why I'm afraid to be judged. When I see other, I guess a little bit of a darker skin crowd do it, it gives me confidence to be a good cosplayer.

Katelyn: Good. Do you mind if I ask you another question?

A48: Sure.

Katelyn: How do you feel when you see Caucasian people cosplaying black characters? This could be a little personal so if you don't wanna to answer, I totally understand.

A48: Well, it depends on what they're doing, because I see people like paint themselves trying to make them that skin color, it's just not right does not even look right, it's wrong. Like black face.

Katelyn: Black face.

A48: It's like, really? When we're cosplaying, you don't see us painting ourselves white unless it's like an outrageous color, like say, Homestuck.

Katelyn: Homestuck, yeah.

A48: But if you don't see us painting ourselves white, why would you paint yourself black?

Katelyn: It's like, you can be whoever you want to be. Like I could be a black character, I'm not necessarily gonna paint myself black, though. Probably not because that's a lot of work. I think fulfilling the essence of the character is what is most important, not how you look. Anything else? I really appreciate you giving your feedback. A couple more people, and then we'll move on to the next question. Chun-Li, again.

A49: So this one has a little bit to do with the last person who talked. The only people well who I've seen do the white Caucasian to black is the people dressing up as drow from Dungeons and Dragons because their skin color is actually black, like completely black, as in absence of pigment.

Katelyn: Absence of pigment black.

A49: Black is where I'm not sure if you're African American or white.

Katelyn: It doesn't matter, you're black. Black blackity black.

A49: When it comes to judgments that I stick out, there's two kinds of reactions that stick out, either "Oh you did that really well," or "Oh you did that – oh god, you're a guy!"

Katelyn: We all love that about crossplay, like "Oh, oh, hey, WHOA, WHOA. You're a dude. Good job!" I saw a Kakashi one year, And I was trying to look one year "Oh, oh my gosh, you're so beautiful. There's a chick in there. She has perfect eyebrows. You're so hot – ok, now I must get away, ok." Go ahead, Merrick.

A50: This also ties into what we have been talking about. I have a friend that lives in the Dominican Republic and she has tannish skin and she feels so self conscious in her skin tone when she cosplays. That's one her main things when she post up a picture of herself online that her skin tone isn't right, that's all that she talks about. "Oh I'm sorry it doesn't look right. I'm sorry that my skin is so dark."

Katelyn: I'm sorry that I have the wrong color? That's horrible.

A50: It's really sad, and what really kind of made me want to cry is that she tried to bleach her skin, and it actually blistered her skin, trying to become a whiter color, so that she could cosplay and have the right skin tone.

Katelyn: There is a good panel later tonight that's about body modification for cosplay, about how far are you willing to go to fulfill the character. It's later tonight at 9pm. My friend is running that panel.

A50: It's was so sad because I saw pictures of her cosplay that she did without trying to bleach her skin and they were perfectly fine, it was beautiful. I've seen many, many darker skinned people doing cosplays as other skin toned characters and they look fine, it looks great. One of the best cosplays I've ever seen was this black lady cosplaying as Alice from the Abyss Alice in Pandora Hearts and it was gorgeous, just beautiful. Probably one of the best cosplays I ever seen.

Katelyn: I think that's what's most important is cosplay, like it is in the real world – we really gotta get past sexual orientation, gender, skin color. This is cosplay, baby, you can be whoever you want to be. Whoever.

*(Audience: Or whatever!)*

Katelyn: Or whatever! You can be a cactuar. Go be a cactuar. Don't let anyone tell you you can't be a cactuar. You can be a book, you can be a piece of toast. Look at how popular Toast is. Toast is here, Toast is here. Ok, so, again, we're gonna get a



little bit more personal with cosplay. Does cosplay fulfill something in your life that you don't get from normal day to day life? Is something missing from normal day-to-day life that you feel like you get from cosplay? If so, what is it and why did you choose cosplay as the outlet for getting whatever it is that you're trying to get?

Thank you for approaching the mic. The cord doesn't reach. Just make sure you speak loud enough, this is recording for a dissertation.

A51: Ok, as far as the 'if it fulfills anything', I don't often get a chance to dress up in a suit and have an excuse to wear it except for maybe job interviews. So when somebody asks me, "Oh are you apart of this group? Are you this character?" I'm just trying to take on a modern day necromancer, ergo the cape. But in that regard, it's just one of those "Oh, you're being a necromancer, why are you doing that?" Imagine if you were somebody that could do anything magical in modern day and nobody knew - you could do some much. It would be like most superheroes. Let's see I could be the biggest jerk possible or I could try to do something productive with it. Any sort of role playing can be like that. As you were saying, you can be anyone you want to be. My typical day-to-day life is not anything particularly glamorous.

Katelyn: I think we could all say that.

A51: But the idea of "I'm gonna play a character that can do this." Even just taking, saying "This person has the exact same situation as myself, but he knows how to turn lead into gold." What does that suddenly do to the situation? What does that suddenly do to somebody's life? It's an entertaining situational exercise if nothing else. Of course, then there's the whole self-empowerment fantasy involved which is nice.

Katelyn: Yeah. Anybody else? What cosplay fulfill that you don't get from real life?

A52: Social interaction.

Katelyn: Oh, really? Not to be like 'aww', but that's fantastic!

A52: Aside from online, I don't really have any social interaction aside from my family.

Katelyn: I'm not going to cry, but I am so happy that that's what cosplay does for you.

*(Applause and cheering)*

Katelyn: See, I'm not gonna cry, this is the kind of stuff that I want. Like I said, don't you dare use the word 'un' to describe why you cosplay because there are deeper reasons why we do this, and that's what we're here for today. So, what does cosplay fulfill that you don't get from normal life?

A53: I've cosplayed as Ryu for quite a while now, and I also am a martial artist but I started training before I even knew about the character and then when the character came about, I somehow identified with it and it became really important to me as I started training and I really enjoyed it and I really liked the energy but I also despised the competition aspect. There's so much emphasis on competition – trophies and getting attention and being on top of the crowd. And I really do identify with Ryu in that I don't care about the competition, I'm here to improve myself, it's a way to improve myself either by training hard or sweating more or being here and hearing "Hey, man! Do a dragon punch!" Ok, sure. It's just I identify with the character, I grasp what he's about, he's just trying to improve himself and I've tried to improve myself in lots of different ways whether it's being a good worker or a good friend or what have you. I identify with him and that's what I've been getting. I don't get this opportunity to say, "This is what I'm here for." I really enjoy that, and I know you don't want to hear it, but I gotta say it, but it's just plain fun.

Katelyn: Ok, the fun has been used up. No one can say fun now.

*(Audience: The fun has been doubled!)*

Katelyn: Couple more people for this question, we've got about 20 minutes left in the panel and I have a couple more questions that I still wanna ask people, so what does cosplay do for you that you don't get from regular day-to-day life?

A54: Three things – One of them is the roleplaying aspect of getting to feel like I am the character. I usually pick my character because I identify with them at some point. The second one is social interaction like she said. I don't really have any geeky friend in the offline world. I have plenty of friend online but they tend to not live anywhere near me. Third one is getting to wear something ridiculous and have an excuse for it.

*(Applause and cheering.)*

Katelyn: I'm actually gonna go off that really quick. I just got recently got engaged and I've been in a relationship for three years. Thank you. My fiancé is not a nerd, he is not a cosplayer, he is not a gamer, he hasn't watched a lot of anime, but I love him no matter what.

*(Audience: We can fix that.)*

Katelyn: But he wants to know, he's like, "Why are you wearing a cosplay that your boobs are hanging out and your butt might show at some point?" and it's like, "Baby, in about five years, when we have kids, I ain't gonna look like this anymore." I'm 26, I'm just now realizing that this is what I want to do with my life, but I'm not gonna look like this forever. So, until I have to start throwing on moo-moos and furry suits to cover how I really look, I'm gonna dress like this now. I'm gonna use it before I

lose it. So he's like "Ok, I get it. You're gonna get fat someday. Can I have my ring back?"

*(Audience: Try Gears of War!)*

Katelyn: Oh, chest high walls. We just got a second xBox controller. I'm so excited!

A55: For me, I mainly got into because it's a way to just let go. It's also a way to convey little aspects of my personality that over people don't necessarily pick up on and take that particular little aspect of my personality to an extreme measure of it.

Katelyn: Sure! Well, actually, I'm gonna deviate really quick. To the two people that just walked in – Hi! Welcome to my panel. Do you mind if I ask you guys some questions really quick?

A56: Sure!

Katelyn: Do you wanna come closer to the front? I noticed you're cosplaying as characters from Homestuck. I haven't read it, so I don't know who you are, but that's ok. This is a panel about cosplay research. We're doing research on the cosplay community and why people cosplay, so I actually just want to ask you a couple questions since you're from Homestuck and that's been a very popular topic. Can I ask why you chose to cosplay from Homestuck? With all the popularity of Homestuck, why did you choose to cosplay from Homestuck? Please use the mic, this is being recorded for dissertation, so I'm recording the audio.

*(Audience: For science!)*

Katelyn: For science. This is for science.

A56: I have to admit it's because I really like the colors.

Katelyn: You like the colors! That's completely honest! That's great! You like colors!

A56: Homestuck has a really interesting palate, even though their trolls and they have grey skin. They have really bright corresponding colors to blood color and whatnot. It's the mix with contrast.

Katelyn: That's actually not the answer I was expecting at all, but I love it.

A56: In part, it's partly that it's an easy costume and partly also one that's tricky when you get the details right, it's what holds it together.

Katelyn: These have all been elements that we've been touching on so far with the panel. Details is important.

A56: She practically made the entire outfits and everything, but it took us about two hours to do all the makeup. It took the whole morning, even though the outfits themselves aren't extremely complex, the make up and all the details take a while.

Katelyn: Well, we've talking about cosplay as a community and we had a question earlier about what annoys or embarrasses you about belonging to a culture, like the group at Sakura-Con. We have a lot of cosplayers, we have a lot of non-cosplayers, but what embarrasses you about belonging to a culture, and unfortunately, not you guys, but people have had some bad interactions with Homestuck cosplayers.

A56: We understand, we understand.

Katelyn: Oh, ok, good. Great, thank you. But actually, since you are Homestuck cosplayers and you're not necessarily gonna be like "Homestuck cosplayers is what embarrasses me", is there anything that embarrasses or makes you uncomfortable you about belonging to a cosplay culture? You can take time to think about it.

A56: I am thinking about it. What mostly I think embarrasses me is people take their, it's good to be in character, but when you take a character that's a jerk and act like that all the time to everyone who's there, it really embarrasses me that you're moving around and acting this way in a way that's not courteous to others.

Katelyn: It's sad that there is that guy and he will be at every con and you will not like him and it's sad that he doesn't know that he's actually really ticking people off. It's like "C'mon guy, just tone it down, just a little bit." But, I appreciate you being willing to come up and give me your feedback. You guys seem like really nice people and I can't say that about every Homestuck cosplayer, so thank you for contributing to science! Thank you! I know you just walked in here and were kind of like "Uhhh."

A56: We have actually answered that question a couple times already.

Katelyn: Oh really? Well, I'm glad that we've touched on the really personal stuff and I'm really appreciative of the deep answers that you guys have given me, but this last question, this is a fun question.

*(Audience: What?)*

Katelyn: Yes, I said it, it's fun. It's fun. Merrick, it's fun. Free of restrictions, budget, gender, body type, time, what is your dream cosplay? If you could be anybody, with no restrictions, you have all the money, all the skill, all the materials, all the time in the world, if you could be something, what would you be? I'm sure everybody's got something

A57: Virgilia from Umeneko. That is my dream cosplay.

Katelyn: We all have dreams, people. I know you all have dreams. Nathan, do you have a dream? Do you have a dream cosplay?

A58: I do actually. If I could have anything, I would probably cosplay as from Great A'Tuin from Discworld.

Katelyn: Good! See? We all have a cosplay dream! I actually can't think of one right now.

A59: Bayonetta.

Katelyn: Yes!

A59: And I would honestly love to get a whole entire Okami team together. Dream group cosplay.

Katelyn: We all have dream cosplays, people. What are they?

A60: I would love to cosplay as X from the Mega Man X series, but I've already done that, but I wanna do his X fate ultimate armor.

Katelyn: Doing a character you've already done, but doing it better. Dream cosplay – what is it?

A61: Garrus from Mass Effect.

A62: Everyone. Or at least, all the characters I like.

Katelyn: Absolutely. Get out there!

A63: Link. All of them.

Katelyn: All the Links! All the Links!

A63: Ocarina of Time Link and Twilight Princess Link, they've been in the works for the past couple years, but I wanna all of them. All the different outfits, be able the aquatic outfit on one day, and fire the next day, and then Skyward Sword Link the final day. Just be able to cycle through them or wear multiple Links in one day. That's what I would love to do, and that would be a little hard to do because I need to finish my chainmail.

Katelyn: Alright, more dreams, who's got dreams? We've all got dreams – what do you want to be?

A64: Jack Skellington from The Nightmare Before Christmas.

Katelyn: Yay! We've got dreams over here, Merrick. We've got dreams. Who do you want to be? You can be whoever you want to be. Who would you be if you had no restrictions?

A65: I forgot what her name is, but she's the chick from Assassin's Creed: Revelations.

Katelyn: Does anyone know that? I haven't played Assassin's Creed.

A66: Aveline, yeah. I wanna be her. It's bad ass. I think it's one of the only ones that doesn't really do that white hood.

Katelyn: The white hood. "It's a dude in a white hood! Assassin's Creed?" "No I just have a white hood on my shirt." Go ahead.

A67: Velvet from the video game, Odin Sphere and Gwendolyn.

Katelyn: Chun-Li, if you could be anyone, who would you be?

A68: One that I've been sitting on for quite a while is Vayne Solidor from Final Fantasy XII. And that particular cosplay is actually stupidly close to my body type but the metal work takes an incredible amount of shop time which I do not have.

Katelyn: That Absolution Priest cosplay I did, I planned it over six months and I barely had enough time at the end to finish my prop. Does anyone have anymore dreams? Dreams? Dream cosplay – if you could be anything, what would you be?

A69: Venom, complete with animate tentacles.

Katelyn: Whoa. Yeah, that's the thing, reach high, you could be anything, like Pikachu, with electric shock. "No, don't touch me, don't touch me! Waaah!"

*(Audience: Get a Taser!)*

Katelyn: Oh, that would go over well. That would definitely go over well.

*(Audience: It's peace bonded!)*

Katelyn: Ok, so now that we've talked in great depth in cosplay and I've gotten your guys' feedback...I'm a cosplayer, I've been doing it for a long time, I've had good days and bad days, malfunctions and great photo shoots, but I'm curious if you have any questions for me. That's why I tried to keep this restricted to the last ten minutes of the panel because I don't want to talk about myself that much.

*(Audience: Don't be that guy!)*

Katelyn: I'm not that guy! Do have any questions for me?

A70: I'm turning into that guy! Worst mistake ever in a cosplay? How you recovered from it? Did you recover from it?

Katelyn: This is one of the cosplays I didn't talk about, I did Ashe from Final Fantasy XII. I was at my community college, at my dice rolling table, and we were talking about Final Fantasy XII and how excited we were about it. I was like "Yeah I really love Ashe's costume, it's really intricate, I think I'd like to do that some day." And someone's like "You can't do that, that's impossible, there's too many details, too many pieces." And I was like "Are you serious? Are you going to tell me I can't do it?" So I did it.

*(Audience: Just to spite him!)*

Katelyn: That's the worst vibe you could go off with a cosplay is doing it because somebody tells you can't and you don't even really know what you're getting into. Well, that's the thing, I didn't know what I was getting into, there were like 20 pieces to that costume and I was still very new to cosplay, new to materials, didn't know how to keep them on my body, things were falling off all over the place. So I did recover, I did make the cosplay, there's not a lot of pictures of it, but I did recover, but that's probably the worst cosplay I ever did. Even though I got all the pieces together, it's probably the worst cosplay I ever did. Anyone else?

A71: Which cosplay required most of your time?

Katelyn: Well, I spent six months on my Absolution Priest cosplay but in reality, I think the costume that took most of my time was my Little Sister cosplay. I think it is my best cosplay. Like I said, if you came in late, you can see it tomorrow at Cosplay Chess, both the Main and the Late Night game. I had three people work on that costume, one of them is right here. I didn't know how to sew at the time, so she did most of my sewing, I had another person do distressing. Contacts, makeup, my Adam Gun, I did make myself. That one actually took a lot of time. The Adam Gun took more time than anything else. I was inspired by Volpin Props, if never looked into them before, they make awesome replica props from video games – Portal guns, Needlers, the Adam Gun, a Big Daddy suit, the guy is amazing and I'm following him on Facebook. He tweets all of his mistakes, like "I just screwed this up, how am I gonna fix it?" And then it always looks awesome. The guy does good work and he really inspired me, so I would say that even though I spent six months on my Absolution Priest cosplay, Bioshock Little Sister took the longest because of all the details that I thought were really important.

A72: Have you ever had a critical malfunction or failure where you've had to rebuild something on convention grounds?

Katelyn: Oh, yeah, my Adam Gun fell apart. My Adam Gun is actually functioning, it has red, I would say, beverage in it that I can drink at any point and the jar that holds said beverage fell off, so I had to walk back to my hotel room and try and think "What have I got? Hot glue is not doing this, so I used like, level 4400 glue or something like." But this thing fell apart, this is the essence of my costume, people love this, I need to fix this right now. That actually happened here, I like set it down, and the bottle just went 'tink' and popped right off. I was like "Are you serious? Right now? I'm trying to eat lunch!" So I had to go back to the hotel room and fix it. Of all the possible panty shots that could have happened or things that fell out, which I'm worried about today, that was probably my worst cosplay malfunction here that I had to fix and I went back to my hotel room because Cosplay Repair Station is great, but they don't have everything, so I have to go buy glue sometimes that holds mastodons to space shuttles.

A73: What has been your academic community's response to your dissertation on cosplay?

Katelyn: I'm actually really excited about this because no one's really done anything like this before. I come at it from the design perspective. I have a theater degree, I've been making costumes, I've been making props, doing make-up for a long time, but no one's really done research as to why we cosplay. It's kind of – cosplay's been around for a while. We've been doing it for decades. And I mean you could really look at it from the perspective of theater, why do we do theater, or why do people go to Ren fairs, but I'm really interested in the cosplay community because I think we have a very special, very diverse group of people that's different from all of those other scenarios. So, I actually talked with a director of an anthropology program at a university and they said, "This is sociocultural anthropology, baby. You got something. I've never heard of anybody doing research like this before." And I'm hoping that I can take this panel to other conventions because there's lots of feedback out there. You guys have given me more ideas than I ever could have thought of before and it's fantastic, and I know there's more out there. Like, if I go to a really big con, like Anime Expo...

*(Audience: Kumori-Con...Go to Dragon-Con!)*

Katelyn: I could go to Kumori-Con, I could go to Dragon-Con, well, here's the thing this is legitimate field research, anthropology field research. It's like I could get grants to do this! To be like, "Go wear your cosplay and run panels and find out why people love to do this." This is what I'm all about now, this is me for the rest of my life. And eventually, after I write a dissertation, get a PhD, I'll be going to panels and talking to people, and it's like "This is what we've found out, but there's more!" There's always more as to why we do this. I think it's fantastic and so I think it's been very well received because I don't think anyone has done anything like it yet, which is usually what you do when you try to get a PhD is break new ground.

A73: So no one's ever like, laughed at you?



Katelyn: No, not yet. No, no one's really been critical yet. I mean, my mom's kind of like "Are you serious? You're going to go back to school for cosplay?" And I'm like it's ingenuity and it's academic and it's anthropology and it's community and how we feel and I can get paid to do it and I can teach it and I would be so totally stoked to be like Lolita vs. Oron. This is class Japanese 422 and I'm gonna be teaching it next term. Seriously, I could teach classes like that, like Beneath the Frills: Lolita 101 about the book, the first half of the term could be about the book and how it gets interpreted through fashion. I have seriously thought about classes I would teach based on this level of con. I could teach this! I'm really excited. I haven't been this excited about something since I wanted to be a prop master and I realized the job sucks. Unless I'm doing it for myself. What?

*(Audience: Better be good at record keeping as a prop master.)*

Katelyn: Oh, I'm so good. I'm so good at it. I mean, I'm making records right now! *(points to laptop)*. Let's see, where are we at? Oh, another question. We have four minutes.

A74: Alright, I'll make this quick. Do you have any cosplays that you plan to do when you get old? I'm talking when you're in like your 70s and 80s.

Katelyn: Well, ok, I was talking about this with someone. When I get pregnant, I wanna be Glacier from Fullmetal Alchemist, or Osono from Kiki's Delivery Service. I'm like totally stoked about that. And then when we have kids, like Merrick wants to dress his baby up as Kirby and I want to dress my babies up as Pokémon, and when I get really old, like being Sophie from Howl's Moving Castle. What?

*(Audience: Yubaba from Spirited Away.)*

Katelyn: Oh god, that's a whole level of ugly that I'm not sure I can approach. But yes! Even though I wish I'd know I wanted to do this ten years ago, I could have a portfolio like Yaya-Han where she's done dozens and dozens of cosplays, and I've only done like ten, but I have cosplays that I want to work on. I should have like ten done by this time next year, so this is whole new level of professionalism for me that I'm willing dedicate the rest of my life to and it makes me sad that I didn't figure this out earlier. Yes, cosplay is for when I have babies, cosplay is for when I'm not skinny anymore, cosplay is for when I'm old.

*(Audience: Cosplay is for the babies!)*

Katelyn: Cosplay is for my kids, they will have the best costumes forever. Oh god, I'm so excited. Cosplay babies! I'm gonna dress you up as a Poliwag!

*(Audience: It's like the baby that's dressed up as the Hersey's Kiss.)*

Katelyn: Mmhmm. I'm excited!

*(Audience: I saw a dad and daughter as Peter Pan and Tinkerbell this morning.)*

Katelyn: She said she wanted to be the wolf, so I dressed up as Little Red Riding Hood. So, uh, well, for lack of a better finish, this completes my research panel. You have all contributed to science, to research, to a potential dissertation, to the future of being able to take awesome classes when you get in to college that are about cosplay, Lolita, anime, why we love anime villains, are video games violent? (No.) You have all contributed, so again, if you didn't get a chance to speak, I have business cards up here that have my email address on them so if you have a story that you'd like to tell in length, in extra details like a very special situation in your life surrounding a cosplay, if you've got something that you think can really contribute, you are welcome to take a business card. My website is under development currently, where my portfolio, the future dissertation will be up there, RedLeafCosplay.com, you can follow it from here on until I have kids and don't have time and I'm making Pokémon costumes for them. You even can talk to me after the panel, I really have to pee, so you might have to wait. But, if not, I'm cosplaying tomorrow, like I said, Cosplay Chess, you can find me. On Sunday, James, do we have any surveys left?

*(James: Um, yes!)*

Katelyn: Ok good, well, on Sunday I'll actually, be going out and finding cosplayers and being like "Can I have a moment of your time? I'd love to get your feedback." My phone number is on here too. I do take text messages, but oh god, please don't overwhelm my phone. So, if you've got more feedback and you didn't get a chance to talk, send an email, preferably not an eight page text message. If you've got more to talk about, I'll be available once we clean up the panel, but this was for science and ya'll did a dang good job, so thank you so much for contributing to my dissertation.

*(Applause.)*

*(Post-panel) Katelyn: Oh god, that was a lot of talking.*

*A75: So what school are you doing your PhD at?*

*Katelyn: I was considering the University of Hawaii, but then my boyfriend, I mean, my fiancée got into NYU so I'll be moving to New York and going wherever he goes.*

*A76: Can I take a picture of you?*

*Katelyn: Sure! Business cards are up here. Excuse me, that's a little panty shot. Oh, a business card!*

*A77: Hello, I come from Taiwan. Thank you for your speech.*

*Katelyn: Oh you're welcome! I love business cards, thank you!*

*A77: I am preparing a cosplay website. And sorry, I'm nervous.*

*Katelyn: No, it's ok! Here, please take a card. Wow, you're are so nice. I need ones like this.*

*(Translating)*

*A78: Can she take the content of her panel and put it on her website to like start conversations with people?*

*Katelyn: Absolutely!*