



# Survivor

[Episodes & Clips](#) [News](#) [Cast](#) [About](#) [Fantasy Tribe](#)

[< BACK](#)

## Mary Zheng On Surviving Survivor: 'I Had To Lie To Myself'

Posted By: John Powell | May 8, 2025



Mary Zheng. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

By John Powell – GlobalTV.com





ADVERTISEMENT

Mary Zheng's Survivor journey was unlike most. It was an uphill battle from the very start to the very end. As a surviving member of the doomed Vulu tribe Mary never felt fully part of any solid alliance or group during her stay on the island. More than that, Mary felt more and more hopeless, isolated even though she made it to the final seven which is an amazing feat considering her path through the game.

John Powell: It's great to be talking to you. How you doing this morning?

Mary Zheng: I'm great! So nice to be talking to you, too!

John Powell: Last night, we witnessed your departure from the show. I've got to say I don't know what was going on inside of you but outside it was probably the most joyous exit I've ever seen. It's was like, peace out, people, I'm out of here. What was going through your mind throughout that tribal council?

Mary Zheng: Oh my God, John! Honestly, I knew it was my time and I think I was ready to go home. I didn't see David at the time — that would've given me so much more joy but I didn't see him. I felt kind of out of body, out of mind. I had been at the bottom for so long and so many times that my soul was just tired.



Mary Zheng. Photo: CBS.

There were so many Tribal Councils where I'd survive and be like, 'Woohoo!' for, like, half a millisecond and then immediately my stomach would drop to my feet because I thought, Okay, how the f—k am I gonna make it through the next one? That happened with Stephanie, with Kevin, with Justin, with David, and with Star. That's a lot of times to feel like, Damn, what the f—k am I gonna do?

And I think, in the end, it was so obvious to me that everyone had such strong connections, and I didn't have a single one left. So, I knew it was my time. I even had a little swan song monologue that they cut out but I was basically just like, 'Thank you guys for the experience but I'm going home. So nice.'

John Powell: Speaking about David, I've been covering Survivor for most of its run. I've watched it from third episode of the first season. I have never seen anyone stand up and acknowledge someone's exit like that. What does that mean to you?

Mary Zheng: It made him call me 'clingy' in his exit press all right...It was really, really nice to feel appreciated, because honestly, when I was on that boat going back to Ponderosa, I thought I was going to be like Venus — like, not go to any watch parties, not have any friends — because I felt really ostracized during my last few days out there. Nobody really looked at me. And, you know, you can't tell from the edit, but I felt incredibly alone.

I also want to say that I have a lot of grace for the people I played the game with. Everybody was playing for the first time and everyone was making the moves they thought were best for them. I can't fault anyone for the way they played out there.

At the same time, I felt incredibly alone and while I knew in my head that it wasn't personal — that they probably just saw me as a threat, which people did confirm after the game — there's a lag between your head and your heart and in my heart, it just felt like nobody wanted to talk to me.



Mary Zheng and David Kinne. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

But later on, people were like, Hey, we're sorry we didn't talk to you or try to get to know you. We didn't want to sit next to you at Final Tribal Council because you survived Vula, and we saw you as a threat. We knew we wanted you out, so why get to know someone you're trying to vote out?

John Powell: I spoken to people and for some it's very, very hard when you don't have that support system that you're used to at home. You have had an especially hard since you were playing from the bottom. How difficult was it for you and despite it all you made it to the final seven.

Mary Zheng: Honestly, this experience confirmed for me the power of the mind. I think I lasted as long as I did because I kept telling myself that everything was going to be okay. On Vula, when I was being chased around the forest – let me just preface this by saying that after the game Sai called me and apologized, and I accepted her apology. We're good.

But out there on the island, when I said, 'I'm having so much fun,' I was f—g lying, okay? I was lying to myself, John. Because I knew that if I wanted to make it another day, I had to. If I didn't lie and tell myself I was having fun, that this was an amazing experience – if I let myself actually feel the hopelessness, the isolation, the antagonization that I truly felt – why would I ever get up and fight?



David Kinne, Mary Zheng, Star Toomey and Eva Erickson. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

And so, I think I'm a very resilient person. My parents – I come from an amazing family – I was really loved as a child and as an adult and I can take a beating or two.

John Powell: On the last episode, it seemed that you didn't give a crap anymore. You're eating the coconuts. You told Joe you are voting for him, right to his face. That was a big shift for you.

Mary Zheng: Yeah, I mean, I only did that because I knew I was going out. I only did it after I had tried to talk to people, follow up with them, ask, 'What are you going to do?' or 'How are you feeling?' But I couldn't even get most of them into a conversation. And when I did, they'd say things like, 'I wouldn't do that,' which made it clear they weren't talking to me because they still felt safe.

But I could tell it was going to be me. So I said, F—k it. You guys are eating, you're taking each other on rewards and I'm the only one who hasn't been picked at all, not even once. So, sorry. Sue me. Fight me. I dare you. I'm gonna eat these coconuts.

John Powell: Were you surprised that your one comment to Joe caused such chaos?

Mary Zheng: Absolutely, it really surprised me! And I love Joe. I think Joe is an amazing man! Like, if I had a son who grew up to be like Joe, I'd be so proud. But I think it really shows how much the tribe you start the game with influences you, right?



Jeff Probst, Saiounia "Sai" Hughley, Mary Zheng, and Cedrek McFadden. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

Like, Lagi's winning streak meant they didn't really know what it felt like to be on the bottom or to be in trouble. I did and so I was used to it. You know how they say the first seven years of a kid's life are the most influential? I say the first seven days of Survivor shape the kind of game you're going to play.

People on Lagi had long-term visions. They dared to dream. Bianca told Cedrek that she lost her vote because she was securing her future post-merge. She wasn't thinking, How do I survive this Tribal Council? She was thinking, What do I do after that?

Not me. I couldn't afford to think like that because of the tribe I came from. So yeah, I was completely surprised when Joe reacted the way he did but I think it's just because he wasn't used to that.

John Powell: Is there anything about your journey you wish viewers had gotten to see?

Mary Zheng: Have we already talked about David and Eva and the strong alliance?

John Powell: No, we haven't.

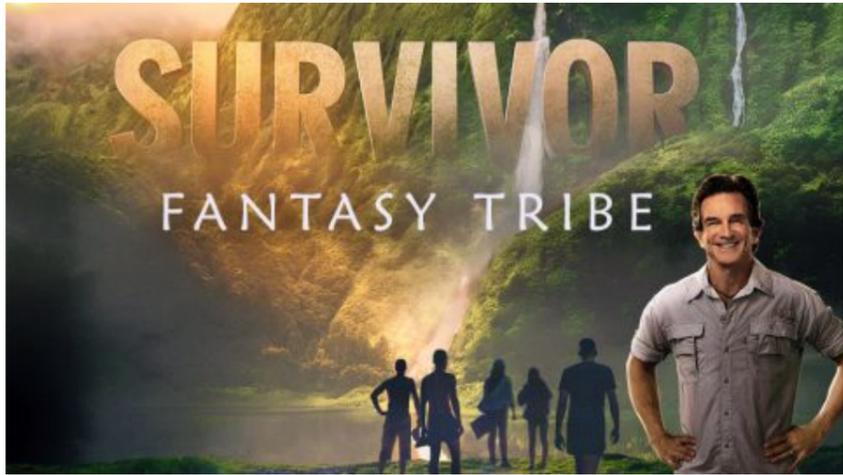
Mary Zheng: Okay, so I want people to know that David, Eva and I, from day one of new Lagi, decided we would work together. David wasn't bringing me into anything – it was a mutual decision that we'd all work as a group. I really trusted David and Eva, and I worked with them because they were the first people since Kevin on day five who wanted to work with me and who I felt I could trust. I don't think people really understand the level of desperation I felt. And I have a lot of grace for myself. Desperation isn't cute but also who could've survived a tribe like Vula and not felt desperate? Like, if you're selling, I'm buying! I'm not some crazy strategic mastermind. I'm just someone who really went through a lot in the game, someone who was just trying to be human in the moment, excited that someone actually wanted to work with her.

Also, I was pretty responsible for the Cedrek vote. I don't know why they didn't show that, because that revenge arc would've been sick! When we all got together, they were like, "What do we do?" And I said, "Guys, guys, guys, don't worry. Just because I'm from Vula doesn't mean I'm tight with Cedrek. In fact, I want him out, he's a liability. I don't trust him. I want to work with you all. Let me prove it to you." And they were like, "All right, word."

They told me, "He trusts you, so you've got to be the one to make him feel safe." And I did. That's why he didn't play his Shot in the Dark.

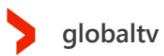
John Powell: I understand that you can't say who you voted for but when you were deciding who you wanted to win the game, what were some of the things you were thinking about? What qualities were you looking for in a Survivor winner?

Mary Zheng: I love that you asked this! On the island, everyone seemed so focused on being 'likable'. I don't know why, because I'm not voting for someone just because I like them. I'm voting for someone whose gameplay I respect. So that's what I was looking for: someone who could prove they were strategic, that they were thinking multiple steps ahead. Well, not even just that, but someone who was thinking about the ramifications of every decision they made in the moment. How the chips might fall five, six, seven moves later. I didn't care about physicality. I wasn't one of those people who came out here to play the Olympics. I didn't care about a winning streak. I just wanted to see that someone had a strong grasp of the game and truly knew what was going on.



### Survivor 48 Fantasy Tribe

RETURNING PLAYERS: Jump to the results section below to see how many points your picks racked up for the week. How to Play STEP 1: Pick TWO castaways from each tribe that you think will make it to the end of the game to be in your own 'Fantasy Tribe'. Here's a breakdown of the ... Continue reading



### News From Survivor



#### [Survivor 48 Fantasy Tribe](#)

May 22, 2025

[Survivor](#)



#### [Survivor winner overcame his past to win it all](#)

May 22, 2025

[Survivor](#)



[From Survivor to Survivor: Joe opens up about abuse, healing and fatherhood](#)

May 22, 2025

[Survivor](#)

[Eva redefines what it means to play Survivor](#)

May 22, 2025

[Survivor](#)

**You may also like**



[The Late Show with Stephen Colbert](#)

[Saturday Night Live](#)

[Free Sketches](#)



[Matlock](#)

[Stream Full Season](#)

[Family Law](#)

[Free Episodes](#)

[SEE MORE SHOWS](#)



More Channels in 1 App! Get the Global TV app FREE

## More Channels in 1 App! Get the Global TV app FREE

Top shows from Global TV, W Network, Home Network, Flavour Network, Showcase, HISTORY® Channel, Slice, and Global News are on the **Global TV App!** Stream live, on-demand, or free!

*\* Available content may vary through participating service providers.*



[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Terms Of Use](#)

[Advertising Standard Terms & Conditions](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Faq](#)

[Where To Watch](#)

[Global TV APP](#)

[Accessibility Feedback](#)

© 2025 Corus Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. Corus Television.

# CORUS.

Other Corus Websites



STACKTV

