

Kristyn Scorsone (KS): Hello and welcome to the Queer Newark Oral History podcast. I'm Kristyn Scorsone, your host and a PhD student in American Studies at Rutgers University in Newark. This podcast is a part of the Queer Newark Oral History Project, a community-based and community-driven initiative supported by Rutgers Newark and dedicated to preserving the history of Newark's LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming community. This week's theme song is Black Glove by Two Tears and it's dedicated to the life and memory of Ray Rivas.

KS: Hey, so I wanted to record this episode to honor the life of Ray Rivas, who sadly passed away earlier this year and I'm joined here with—with our friend Aleix Martinez to do that.

Aleix Martinez (AM): Thank you so much. I'm so excited to, you know, let everyone know about Ray. I really appreciate this opportunity.

KS: Me too. Me too. And—and so Ray is or was of—of Newark. He's Newark-born. He was a radical activist and artist and trans revolutionary, pretty much all his life and I was supposed to interview him for the Queer Newark Oral History Project in February. You know, he was a friend of mine and we went to the same high school and have hung out, you know, off and on over the years and I was trying to think of, like, my first memory of Ray and I think it was that he used to call me "Sleater-Kinney Girl" back in the, like, high school, like, so this was like, probably '97, '98. And—and I just really loved that. I never said that to anybody, but I loved it because that was my favorite band and it was the first band that—that gave me a sense of pride in being queer because I just didn't have any queer friends, and I didn't, you know, so I just felt really isolated and, you know, not normal, so to speak. And so I felt like him saying that, calling me that, was like a gesture of, like, love or, like, being seen and I just really appreciated it. And so the day before our interview for Queer Newark is the day that I found out that he passed away and it, you know, broke my heart because we were supposed to do this interview a few times and something always came up. And you know, that happens, like, often people have to reschedule cause life is hectic and totally, totally understand it. But I regret that we didn't get to sit down and preserve his history for his family and his daughter, his friends and for queer history at large, and I think this really also, like, underscores why we need to record our stories as LGBTQ people because, you know, mainstream history largely has not and, you know, in the blink of an eye a whole piece of our legacy can be gone and we lose those around us, you know, and those who have come before us and if we don't get this down somewhere, it's—it's gone. And so in lieu of not being able to have Ray here sit with me, I have the next best thing. I've invited his longtime best friend, which probably isn't even an adequate way of describing what you meant to each other, but I've invited Aleix Martinez to come here and—and—and—and—and tell us about Ray and, you know, do you want to start off by saying a little bit about who—who you are and also, like, how you would describe your relationship with Ray?

AM: Sure. So my name is Aleix Martinez, and I'm a longtime Newark resident. I'm a music publicist who, you know, champions LGBT artists that's kind of made a career of it, but also someone, you know, who makes my own art and has always tried to push our people forward. And Ray was my first encounter with anyone who was at all like me with another queer person. We were, I think, the first out queer people the other one met, at least to each other, and although he—he was heterosexual, he was trans and—and I was the only gay person that either of us knew, so we just really bonded on—on subculture and on—and kind of these identities and—and just figuring that out, you know, as a—a pre-Internet world. We were friends from 1993 until the present day, and kind of inseparable friends where we never lost touch, never lived in different places, spoke to each other constantly, and we made paintings together, and drawings. We were in punk bands together. We went on auditions together, like, made improvisational movies together. We just created a large body of art together and, you know, kind of came into our own side by side, so we were always like a—like a two-headed dragon or something, you know, taking on the world.

KS: Yeah, that's awesome. Do you know when—could you tell us, like, when and where Ray was born?

AM: Yeah. So Ray was born in December of '78 on, you know, around Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, that's debatable, but I believe it's Christmas Eve, but we always celebrated his birthday around midnight from Christmas Eve to Christmas Day.

KS: That's awesome.

AM: And he grew up in Ivy Hill in Newark, in Ivy Hill Apartments and he went to Mount Vernon School in Newark until I think he was about 14 when he moved to Kearney, which is where he went to high school part of the time.

KS: How did Ray identify in terms of his—in terms of his gender and sexuality?

AM: Well, in terms of the sexuality, he always identified as—as heterosexual. His gender identity, just because of the time that we're from and I guess to an extent a social class, is we are—like I said, we were, you know, 13, 14 years old in 1993. So it really predates a lot of discussion, serious discussion, of, like queer academics and trans issues. Like, most of the terminology we use now either wasn't existing or at least hadn't come down to us where it was in regular vernacular, so his initial identity was as a—a revolutionary gender evolutionary. So, you know, nonbinary without saying that. But that was his—his term for it because he's—he's part of that generation of—of nonbinary people that kind of invented and improvised a lot of it as it went along, you know, with—with no language or no kind of access to other people like you, no—no studies. And as he got deeper into theory and—and exploring himself, he identified as a

male woman and he really, you know, believed in the—he separation of—of sex and gender expression and during—during a time, he even identified as a—as a male lesbian because he loved women, although, you know, he was—he was born male, so.

KS: That's amazing. I—like, we were talking about before we started recording, I listened to—you had sent me an episode of this, like, podcast called Web Radio and I just jotted down, it was hosted by Nancy Nangeroni—I have no idea if I'm butchering these people's names—and Gordene O. MacKenzie. But they interviewed Ray, which is really cool. So, like, if you're listening to this and you want to listen to Ray himself talk, it's on gendertalk.com and it's program, like, number 398 from February 10th. This is from 2003.

AM: Right.

KS: And so they were talking about—the thing that jumped out at me when I was listening to it was that they were talking about trans self-esteem and Ray was saying that some, you know, transgender individuals feel like they can't claim their gender identity because their genitals maybe don't match and so I guess they don't feel like they can, like, have permission or something. And so Ray said he used to suffer from this and then in the sense of, like, when men would harass him, like, say, on the street and call him ugly because—or, like, say he was a man and he's dressed like a woman or very feminine, it—it—it used to upset him and he explained that even though he doesn't try to directly pass, like, for example he said, you know, "my voice is low and I don't have, like, breasts, you know, like a—like a woman would have." But still, he wanted people to see him as female and—and that's how he felt beautiful. And then he came to terms with realizing that instead of feeling ugly when things like that would happen to him, instead, he should feel beautiful because men's bodies are also beautiful and he is trans, and ultimately he realized that—that he is and—and these were his, like, exact profound words. And I just love this, he said he was "a—a specific beautiful type of human possibility." And that was just, like, I—I couldn't—you know, that was just amazing and—and so instead of feeling, like, ugly, he would think this to himself, "like, wow, this person realizes how beautiful I am and—and they see all of me." And I was just like, "that's amazing." That's such a great outlook, you know, especially coming from 2003 when, you know, this—there was not, you know, the language so much and—and—and—and—and even, you know, people just generally weren't talking about it like they are even now, you know, say online, you know.

AM: Yeah, he was really disinterested in the idea of passing as—as he—as his self esteem grew and he felt a power in the people on the street being able to tell of, you know, cause there's always that moment where people are like, "I—I—that—that's a man" or, you know, "I can tell that you're gay or know something about you" and his—his way to subvert that is to say, "I'm glad that you can tell that I'm not a woman. I'm making no attempt to pass. Like, I'm—his is exactly what I am and I'm very proud that you know that because what I am is beautiful and I'm

happy for anyone on the street to know it. As a matter of fact, I'm not making any attempt for them not to."

KS: Right.

AM: Which was the radical part of him is that there wasn't this, you know, we're from a time in social class where passing is a survival mechanism for a lot of people, not even just a choice. You know, when I say raised from Ivy Hill, make no mistake, he, you know, came up in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in this country. Newark was very, very, very dangerous in the late 80s and early 90s and he expressed this on the—on—on these streets, not just—not just any street, so.

KS: Yeah.

AM: It was a very—a very radical position and—and very brave and he certainly paid the price for it.

KS: Yeah.

AM: And was—and was very willing to, consciously.

KS: Yeah, it's only to, like, for myself, like, I consider myself nonbinary and I just, like, only very recently, like, not 2003, like, just, like, this year stopped caring what pronouns people say when they meet me. You know what I mean? Like—

AM: Yeah.

KS: Because who cares? Like, as long as it's respectful.

AM: I do. Like, you know, I'm—I'm of the thought where I want to respect anyone and I love people to be comfortable around me and I respect everyone. So if you tell me this is how I feel comfortable, I'm happy to address it that way. Now that being said, from, again, from a time before queer academics, Ray was happy to be called he or she or anything. He didn't—he wasn't particularly offended by any of that, and he also believed throughout his life that just gay slang's usage of making everything she, of everything as female, inanimate objects, women, men, every expression, everything is just she. He already felt like that that had already subverted the gender binary in a—in a way that made pronouns insignificant to him.

KS: Yeah, that's so interesting. You know, it's like—this morning I was at—I do CrossFit now in the morning and, like, my trainer was like—I forget what it was in reference to, but she goes,

"kill 'em with confidence." And I was like, that's awesome, like, because kindness is great too but, like, you—not every situation calls for kindness but, like, confidence? Yeah.

AM: Oh, yeah, and—and I would even say, more so than that, I would even say a defiant conceit, like, a—a very outward love of yourself where you are making it obvious to the whole world how much you love yourself, how great you feel about yourself and people like you. Someone who I just want to mention briefly me and—me and Ray grew up with also from this area was Freddie Fernandez who's also, you know, was a—a—a trans warrior on the streets of Newark and very, very, very dangerous parts of the city. He used to live on Mount Prospect and 2nd Avenue and on Summer Avenue. And there was this moment where he had gone on the Richard Bey show, on the Richard Bey talk show.

KS: Wow.

AM: In the 90s, and they gave the, you know, the "make over my freak teenager," you know, gave him this makeover. And before the makeover, you know, he was in—in—in latex and vinyl and, you know, full—full face of makeup and platinum hair and they said, they asked him, like, "what do you think of yourself when you see that?" He goes, "look at me. Don't you wish, like, don't you wish?" And to say that on television and to America—

KS: Yeah.

AM: Really kind of encapsulates what him and Ray were really like. It's like, don't you wish—

KS: Yeah.

AM: You were this fascinating, this interesting? Don't you wish you were this brave to be this true to yourself?

KS: Yeah, that's so fucking awesome. Was—when he—what was he like as a—as a little kid? Do you know?

AM: I do. I mean, I—I've met Ray when we were 13, but I know that before that, we bonded instantly because we had very similar childhoods where we're from working-class, immigrant families, both matriarchal, and we were both latchkey kids. So we spent just a lot of time at home and we both had, like, I had my mom and he had his—his sister and his mom who he really looked up to. And we were pop culture obsessed. We were about six years old in 1984, which is when, you know, Culture Club and Tina Turner and Cyndi Lauper and Michael Jackson Thriller and—and most importantly for us, Madonna, come into prominence and—and, you know, this time of outlandish styling and colors and this way of presenting yourself as this

hyper-real star of, you know, and—and—and—and fashion outlaw had a—a profound effect that he took to really fast. Like, he, I know, had Madonna airbrushed down the side of his jeans as a little kid and he had his ear pierced and there was always something, you know, feminine about him that the outside world could read. And so I think he was, you know, just, like, pop culture obsessed, both with 80s pop and—and with hip hop and freestyle and—and things from this area and the shift—a big shift happens, I guess it's like 1989 or '90 when Deee-Lite Groove Is in the Heart becomes a big hit and we see Lady Miss Kier and that had a profound impact on him, of seeing New York club culture for the first time and seeing, you know, you see that video and you see the way people present in it and—and the styling, it was, I think a lot of people's gateway into that. So I think it—it went from super fan of 80s pop to this deep interest in New York club, like, club culture and subculture, which—this is already the—the beginning of the club kid era where people are—are, you know, wearing whatever clothes they want to and presenting how and—and that's the—the profound change. So I think he was—he would sleep with the radio, we both would, and at night he would pray for the safety of—of his mother, his sister, and his radio.

KS: So cute.

AM: So, you know, like pop culture obsessed.

KS: Yeah. So do you think he had a sense of his gender identity before then and that just sort of, like, validated it or he came, you know, it all kind of coalesced at the same time?

AM: He—he definitely had some idea of it. I just don't think it had, like, fully developed, but I think that there is a—that line from where you love female pop stars to where you want to be them or emulate them. And he's definitely wanted to emulate Madonna from an early age.

KS: Yeah.

AM: And it wasn't, you know, about—even though like I said, he was heterosexual, it wasn't—it wasn't about having a crush on her. It was about presenting yourself or like, a Cyndi Lauper of "look, look at her. She has red hair and it's shaved and she has these bracelets and these dresses." Of—of wanting to do that, you know, whereas the part of you thinks that's what fame looks like, but then you realize it's more—it's more than that. It's about being that defiant.

KS: Yeah.

AM: About being that brave of, like, I'm coming across exactly how I want to and wearing whatever I want. And he learned pretty early on for him that that was, you know, very feminine.

KS: That's awesome. Do you remember, like, the first time you met him?

AM: I remember the first time I saw him.

KS: Yeah.

AM: Which is right before I first met him. But there used to be a firehouse in North Arlington where on—on weekend nights in the—the upper floor of it, they would have punk concerts or Rocky Horror.

KS: Oh, I didn't know that.

AM: And it was called the Hut.

KS: Oh, right, yes. I have heard of that. Yeah, yeah.

AM: So we would go—I would go to the Hut, you know, to see Teenage Misfits cover bands or whatever at that time and I remember seeing someone sitting on the pool table in—in an old women's printed polyester floral shirt and these, like, brown bell bottoms and like a raspberry blue bindi, you know, long before cultural appropriation was a discussion as well, and just thinking to myself, "who is that?" Because, you know, you're in a room full of people with, like, Mohawks and leather and studs and everything and even amongst them, you're like, "that person. There is no one—no one like that person," but I didn't speak to him. And for a couple of weeks I kept hearing about that there were these other two people who liked the Cure in town, and I was, you know, just known for just liking that, those kind of bands. And so a—a friend who went to Kearney High introduced us because of our—our shared interest and him and our friend Irene, I guess were, like, the—the Cure fans there and the very first day we met, we just hit it off. I slept over his house and we played records all night. He—we—he lived in the General Kearney Apartments in Kearney and he's—he first asked me my—my favorite Cure B-sides and quizzing me and then he said, "oh, you're not going to know what this is." And he put on this tape and it was Lush's album Spooky. And I'm like, "oh, that's Lush, Spooky. Like, I have that at my house" and both of our minds were blown that someone else anywhere near us, you know, had this taste and we were just—spent the whole night, you know, talking about our childhoods, playing each other records, just, it was—you know, just, like, this instant connection of the impossibility of finding someone who, you know, checks off so many of the boxes that you do.

KS: Yeah, that's awesome. So what else did you guys do for fun at that time?

AM: I mean, at first, it really was just music obsession, of just—we just traded tapes and everything and then it had only been about a year or two since we had both learned how to take the PATH train and go to New York City together. So—and so, no, I mean, then we started going

to New York together. We had been going separately beforehand. So we would get off at 9th Street and, you know, walk around 8th Street in that whole neighborhood just trying to look for things and—and find things because, you know, in a pre-Internet world. And sadly for us, I think the generation of queer people right before us were being decimated by AIDS and taking care of people they needed to, so they weren't very visible or around. So it really had this Wild West feeling of "I'm going to walk the streets of the Village and—and see what places and people I can find and—and what they can tell me." So I say we spent almost all of our time on culture discovery, on finding art spaces, concerts, bands, trying to find other queer people, and then just doing dumb things like prank calling the 700 Club, you know, making camcorder movies, having parody joke bands, which we eventually, you know, started learning, you know, started trying to learn to play instruments and start punk bands, which is another pop culture shift for us, like I said. So it's, you know, Madonna is this big moment in childhood and then towards the end of it, Lady Miss Kier is this other big one. But then riot grrrl had this monumental impact on both of our lives that really just opened us to theory and ideas and subculture, and with him, he identified as a riot grrrl. And—and particularly Bratmobile's Potty Mouth.

KS: Yeah.

AM: Was a record—

KS: Oh yeah.

AM: That we listened to constantly.

KS: Love that.

AM: And the first time either of us had a guitar in our hands, the first thing we did was try to play things from Potty Mouth.

KS: Yeah.

AM: Because we thought maybe we could. It's—it's—it's a lot harder than it sounds, but it just—it still invites you to try and participate and, you know, through, you know, through, like, Heavens to Betsy records and the—the liner notes to those, we found out who bell hooks was and we started reading bell hooks books and we started looking for fanzines, so that's when, for us, I guess, like, queerness and subculture and critical theory comes into the picture.

KS: Right.

AM: Before that, it was just about finding anything queer and trying to look as cool as—as you imagine yourself to be. And, you know, with—with no money.

KS: Right.

AM: Which—which is, like, you know, how do you do that? So we—another thing we'd spend a lot of time doing is putting together outfits, you know, making chokers out of Jiffy Pop containers, fishing clothes bags out of donation bins, and then dying them black in my bathtub. There was a—a club kids magazine called Project X, which was, like, a style Bible to us of, like, you know, trying to recreate things and he very quickly became very, very, very extreme with his looks, like, kind of went into it headfirst in a way that was, you know, totally nonbinary and challenging and this mishmash of—of club kid and goth and punk and riot grrrl and—

KS: That's really cool. How—

AM: Developing that, a singular aesthetic for himself.

KS: How did people in high school react to him?

AM: I mean, he's someone who caused outrage on the street just by walking out of his house, to be very honest with you. We didn't have to walk very far for someone to start, like, screaming at us, harassing us, throw bottles at us. Adults, children younger and our own age. His life was made impossible in high school. He was harassed daily and he was strong enough to ignore it for a long time, but eventually just made him so miserable that he had to leave high school in Kearney and go to this school called the—the Milton School, which is, you know, just a more special school and was a much better environment for him, but we were denied entry into many places. I mean, you know, like a barbecue place, a regular retail store, just because of—of the way that he presented.

KS: How would they—like, they would just ask you to leave?

AM: Yeah, absolutely. I would name a bunch of places by name.

KS: Yeah.

AM: If they still have the same owners, but it's, you know, 27 years ago.

KS: Right.

AM: But—but yeah, they would say "no, you can't be here. You need to go." I remember the—the police telling him they would lock him in a dog cage, us being accused by the police of prostitution for waiting for a bus that was 20 minutes late. Like, "what are you doing on the corner?" People constantly pointing out the fact that that was a man.

KS: Right. Was this mainly in Kearney?

AM: It was in Kearney. It was in Newark. It was on the PATH train. It was pretty much anywhere we went outside of Manhattan, which is why we, you know, were always running there.

KS: So did you start going to clubs at this time?

AM: He started going to clubs before I did. So I would say that he started going to the Limelight at about 15 years old, so 1994.

KS: Wow.

AM: Or so. He was going on Wednesday to Disco 2000, which was their, you know, their iconic club kid night with Richie Rich and, you know, there are people like Amanda Lepore there, who he would enter the hot body contest with and things. So it's—it was definitely his first real life exposure to, you know, queer people, trans people, people all over the spectrum and—and manifesting it in different ways because they were all kind of inventing and improvising it as they went along.

KS: Yeah.

AM: And they were, I would say, roughly about 10 years older than him, but because of how Ray presented and, you know, who he was, there was—he was very favored, you know, like, they would let him write in and people love speaking to him and engaging with him and I wouldn't necessarily say anyone was elders cause most of these people aren't the best role models, but they certainly were giving you access to making you feel valued.

KS: Yeah.

AM: And then he saw that there was also a side of life where he±where he was valued over other people and the fact that he was who he—his authentic self and willing to be that brave, that there were people who would reward him and celebrate him and champion him for it. And that's—that's the, I think, the first place that that happens and roughly, not long after but I do think it is a little after the club kids, we started going to a lot of feminist punk shows, at first,

particularly, to see any of Allison Wolfe from Bratmobile and Cold Cold Hearts bands and befriended her, which was a—another monumental thing, cause, you know, someone whose, you know, records we had tried to emulate and love so much and who's so supportive and welcoming and—and celebratory of Ray and who he was that it just gave him this really big boost of, you know, "this is what my life is really about and it doesn't matter what my schoolmates or teachers or—or these other people have to say because I'm starting to get recognition from people I respect."

KS: Right. Do you know what he—did he have, like, certain dreams about what he wanted to do when he got older at that point?

AM: Oh, I—I mean, I can't even call it a dream.

KS: Right.

AM: What—what—what we shared was a delusion of grandeur and a revenge fantasy for the ages. You know, it was like, to us, like, we were going to be Madonna. Like, it was like, you know that classic Madonna interview where she's—where they ask her, "what do you want?" She said, "to rule the world."

KS: Right.

AM: And that was—that was loud and clear with us. So we always had this revenge fantasy that one day someone would be cleaning the PATH station and a magazine would fall to the ground and we'd be on the cover and they'd have to pick it up. How all the people who harassed you would, you know, one day be forced to realize, you know, how—how amazing you really were and unrecognized and I think as we got more mature, that dream of fame became more a want for recognition and, like I said, for the people that you respect to respect you and to be given an opportunity to take part in that cultural conversation and to share your art and ideas and have—have them be considered. Have them be considered seriously regardless of, you know, like I said, the intersection of—of our social class and identity is—is a big deal because there are a lot of people who have that identity but who, you know, maybe had a liberal arts education or just lived in safer places and had these opportunities, and that is another barrier from you being taken seriously when you are self-educated.

KS: Right.

AM: And—and which is very different than uneducated. And Ray was largely a self-educated person. Like, he had this—by the time I met him at 13, he already had, like, a deep knowledge of the blues.

KS: Wow.

AM: But we were 14 when he started reading bell hooks, and he's not someone who would regurgitate the theory that he read. He was very generative.

KS: Yeah.

AM: So he would, you know, have his own philosophies and ideas that, you know, oftentimes were in opposition to, I guess, a lot of the theory of the day.

KS: Right. Do you have any favorite memories from, like, high school?

AM: I mean, I have—I mean, for—for me, a great memory is that he's the first person that took me to a gay bar and he's the first person who told me—who said internalized homophobia to me.

KS: Cool.

AM: And he loved me enough to tell me that part of me hated myself because I was gay and that I was scared of feminine things or try to distance myself from them because of this. And he really confronted me. But it was my—my best friend, like, we loved each other unconditionally and it meant so much to me because he was right. And it took a long time to accept it, but I remember this one day we went to go see the Lunachicks at Tramps on 21st Street and then he took me to Splash, and then we walked out on the pier and just hung out on the pier into the night and it—it was a monumental day for me because I think it's the first day that I did, like, you know, so many queer things and inhabited so many queer spaces.

KS: Yeah.

AM: In one day, and to have my—my best friend kind of be my shepherd, like, shepherd, me into the life and—

KS: Yeah.

AM: Is—is something that really touches me and—and I would put up there with the, like, the day—the first day that we met Allison Wolfe, which was a really big deal to us, especially as teenagers who were despised by pretty much everyone around us.

KS: That's awesome. What happened after high school? Where did he go?

AM: Well, you know, in high school, we kind of had, at the beginning of it, there was this Manhattan escape fantasy of "I need to be smart enough and I need to study enough to, where at the end of high school, I will be in Manhattan, like, by the time I'm 18 years old, I am living in Manhattan." That was the dream. Neither one of us knew the financial reality of that, of what it takes and how far it was from us, and how hard it would be for either of us to generate the kind of money that it took. So at the end of high school, like, he, you know, was forced to switch schools just because of all the problems.

KS: Right.

AM: Being his real self caused him or caused other people really. It was—it wasn't his problem.

KS: Yeah.

AM: But—and, you know, reality was kind of like a—a cold, hard slap at that time, of "no, there's this, you know, academia, this is going to NYU and living in the Village, like, that's not going to happen for you. That's not how it's going to be." And for me, you know, I just had a lot of low-level jobs to try and—and finish college and do something, of—of what are you going to do? And I think around that time, we decided to be very, very serious about making art and—and writing songs and getting better at it and just pursuing those dreams. You know, auditioning for movies, auditioning for jobs on television, because more—obviously more so for him than for me, his—he was not an easily employable person because of his identity. Like, you know, you could work at Patricia Fields or as a street prostitute, pretty much, and any other—like, the only—like, Freddie Fernandez, again, the only other trans person in our area that was visible that I can think of, I know always had, you know, like, a job at Taco Bell. Like, a very entry-level job and was also someone who, the way he presented scared people, but there was always—and he was aware of the sexual aspect of it, which—from early on, which me and Ray weren't, and he could manipulate that. He was strong enough to say "I can do this" and get people to charm them. But without that, it's—it—even the lowest of low-level jobs seemed very inaccessible, so a career in entertainment, actually, you know, seemed like a very, very viable option to him, and we threw ourselves headfirst into that.

KS: So you started writing music? And did you—did you start a band at that point?

AM: Yeah, we did start a band and, you know, we'd play places around here, like Connections where punk bands would play or at the Cake Shop in Manhattan. We used to play this club on 23rd Street called True that no longer exists. But—

KS: What kind of music was it?

AM: It was—it was punk. It was definitely, like, derived from riot grrrl, but we started off with a drum machine because initially we didn't know anyone who played drums. So we, like, learned how to program a drum machine. But even then, even just getting instruments, Ray comes from a very, very supportive family who always helped him and supported his career in art. But getting equipment, getting the things that you need, to a working-class person, that is a big struggle. Like, I remember I was—I had to take a—a job as the snowman at Macy's in Herald Square to buy, like, the first guitar that we used and then, you know, you just squirrel money away from here and there for each one single piece.

KS: Right.

AM: And—which is already outdated and second, third, fourth hand and so—but, you know, we're making very punk DIY music, so it—it served it, but neither one of us knew the financial realities of the music business or how hard it—it is to exist on it or break into it in any way that is sustainable. And so through that process, of course, you also learn of "oh, this—this is not only very unlikely, but if it does happen, I'm probably not gonna be able to support myself from this anyway." And we would do things like try to audition for John Waters movies, like, we'd harassed John Waters and gave him our reel and audition to be MTV V-jays and do—so any—any thing that we thought we could possibly do or when someone would let us through the door, to, like, present yourself as, like, a showbiz kid, right? But without the show mom. That—we were each other's showbiz mom, of just, like, you know, "here's my best friend Ray. You gotta see him. He can tap, he can sing, he can rap, he can—"

KS: That's great. Then he—so he was in, like, Bright Eyes videos. Is this around this time and Shortbus?

AM: No. So it's—it's, you know, and—and in a few short years, just a lot of big changes happened to us. So through riot grrrl, we started hanging out at a space in Dumbo in Brooklyn called Dumba that was an alternative queer space that would put on punk shows, but also have speakers and do things like gay shame, where they would speak about issues inside of the gay community that we should be talking to each other about and how we were acting, so exposed us to these ideas and gave us this—this platform or this space to meet other people. And that's the first place I met JD Samson before she was Le Tigre and Ray met John Cameron Mitchell, the director and the creator of Hedwig, John Cameron Mitchell there, who—he became, you know, just, I guess, a fan of his and wrote a character in his—his film after Hedwig, Shortbus, that was based on Ray, that—that's played by Ray and cast him in a Bright Eyes video. So we started to meet other people who maybe had a little bit more of a platform than us and were willing to share it. Like, bands that would let us play with them or a director who would put you in things.

KS: That's—

AM: And that very much came, like, through riot grrrl and through that connection to, like the queer and punk connection.

KS: That's amazing. Do you know, like, some other, like, artistic projects he was doing at that time?

AM: Well, he was, you know, he always made visual art. So he—there's tons of paintings and collages from throughout his life, and illustrations. But at that time, he was most focused on making music and also his performance art. We would do these performances that kind of, like, explored the randomness of violence and body modification and noise collage, and I think at the heart of it, a lot of it was the—the tension that society—or the—I guess the anxiety that society creates in—in trans people that leads to, sometimes, you know, self-mutilation or despising your body and these things, so interested in—in exploring those topics and—and fighting against them. So he was already writing about them. He participated in one of the very first conferences on trans identity at Brown University.

KS: Was that what he was talking about in the podcast? You said he was at a conference?

AM: Yeah. Yeah. So it was a conference at Brown University, which was one of the very first about trans identity. So he was already speaking out about trans issues and doing performance art and playing in bands and helping other people realize their projects. So very much pursuing a—a career in art that also served as activism for trans people.

KS: Did he go to college at all?

AM: He did. He went to college later on for practical reasons, to learn a trade and—and became a radiographer.

KS: That's awesome.

AM: You know, which he was able, like, years later, I feel like there was a little more opportunity to get sustainable jobs and it pretty much was like that for—for survival. But in terms of—of, you know, theory or art and everything, he's largely a self-educated person and just, like, deeply read, could quote so many poets from memory and, you know, critical texts and, like, Angela Davis, bell hooks, just this very, very wide knowledge that he had acquired on his own.

KS: That's really cool. And you said he was, like, writing a lot at this time, too. Is there anything from his writings that you remember that maybe, like, struck you particularly?

AM: Well, we touched on the accepting yourself even if, you know, without giving any concern to passing or attempting to pass, and that when you see yourself as beautiful. But his writing is very, very radical, especially—and—and—and time has actually made it more radical, not less, which is wild, but one of his big points was that the origins or the beginnings of trans liberation were really about getting gender identity disorder out of the DSM. And it got to a point where gender identity disorder—he felt gender identity disorder became very central to trans identities and that people used it to get medical treatment or to do these things and he really was against it and—nad writing about it of, you know, we don't need to conform ourselves or our bodies for society to accept us. Society needs to accept us on our terms as what we are, which is, you know, male women, female men, intersex people. He was already writing about not co-opting the—he's like, "you know, as a male woman, I wasn't socialized the same way as a female woman so I don't have to pretend that I am one or co-opt their experience. I have a different body, a different history. I've experienced a different kind of oppression and it's insulting to pretend that it's the same thing and it denies me and my own history."

KS: Right.

AM: Which I think is still a radical position.

KS: Yeah.

AM: At this moment. And he really was about this radical acceptance of yourself and of making society conform to you.

KS: Right.

AM: Like—like, non-conformist to the bone, of never shying away from making the room just uncomfortable. But he was—he was very charming and warm and—and funny and an amazing dancer and he loved to compliment people and he could, you know, start a conversation with anyone, so it never came across as threatening from him because he was so warm, so something that was very special about Ray is that he could package these really radical and confrontational ideas in a way that I think you were more receptive to them because of—of the way he expressed them and—and—and because of how he was and that it was so obvious that it came from this place of love and this place of wanting what's best for people. He was—he was really conscious that he was—from an early age, that he was part of a lineage that extended before him, and I would say, from his mid-20s on, very conscious of doing something for people younger than him and wanted to be connected to them.

KS: Did he—how—how—like you said, so he also identified as heterosexual. Did he have a lot of relationships at this point or grow, like, throughout his life or was he—did he find love, you know?

AM: Yeah, no. He found love. He found love before I did as a gay man, believe it or not. But—but again, I think a lot of that is just how charismatic he was, that he's just someone who is just a very magnetic person who would draw people to him that I think sometimes might even find themselves surprised by how drawn they were to him. You know, I always looked at him like he was on a movie screen, like he was, like, a fully realized Andy Warhol superstar in my eyes, like, the second that I met him, he was already everything. And I think it was very hard for him because not everyone could—I don't want to say be that open-minded but, you know, there's a point of attraction where it—it does become about bodies to a lot of people and for safety reasons and interest, he inhabited a lot of lesbian spaces, which I did a lot with him as well. Again, it's—I think we were a lot less—we weren't really thinking about, "do you belong in this space" at that time or any—any weirdo, even, forget about queer person, anything, like, that was just a revelation and you were welcome, but we—and he particularly would inhabit a lot of—of Black lesbian spaces. And that had mixed results. You know, sometimes he—he met people who, you know, were attracted and got that and then other time, people who were just resistant and honestly just as transphobic as—as straight people, that would just remind him that he's a man or—or do those things. But he always drew people to him, whether or not he wanted their attention. He always had the attention of men since childhood and absolutely never wanted it, or was interested in it. And, you know, because he was so social, he—he—he would find girlfriends.

KS: Yeah.

AM: And they usually last years, so.

KS: That's cool. I—I—like, when—when I—I guess, like, after high school, I didn't see him for a long time, but then we all started hanging out again, he met Sylvia.

AM: Yeah.

KS: Who became his partner. And do you know, like, how they met?

AM: Yeah. So one thing that happened, I guess to a lot of people and queer people in particular, is that on the—the Internet changed your life.

KS: Oh yeah.

AM: And to us it took a few more years because it's—there's, again, that intersection of class, so it's like, okay, the Internet is out there, but I don't have it in my house.

KS: Right.

AM: So by the time it got into our house, it changed both of our lives and he met Sylvia online because he was able—

KS: What year was this? What year was this? When he met her. Do you know?

AM: Wow, I don't know. I don't. But I want to say it's—it must be, like, 2004, 5. Like, it's— it's relatively, you know, early on in terms of him dating people, they were together for many years.

KS: Wow.

AM: And, you know, it gives you that opportunity to present yourself as your authentic self.

KS: Yeah.

AM: Without being worried of rejection, of you're already putting it out there. "This is exactly what I am and if you're interested, you can let me know and if you're not, then I will never hear from you and that's fantastic." So, you know, they met and, you know, Sylvia was also someone who just knew so much about, like, the Brontë sisters and, you know, British female writers and—and poets and just a very, very cultured person living in the—the Booker T projects in Jersey City who, you know, really had that parallel with Ray, who was widely read and largely self-educated and had been marginalized for a lot of reasons throughout her life, and they just bonded instantly and—and could really relate to each other on that level.

KS: Was she from Jersey City originally?

AM: She's from Jersey City. Yeah.

KS: Yeah. And then sadly, she passed away, was it 2009? Am I remembering that correctly?

AM: I—no, I believe Sylvia passed away in 2015, but it might have been—

KS: Right, cause it was after we came back from California.

AM: Right, it was like 14 or 15.

KS: Right. How was that for him, losing her?

AM: Oh, it was—it was devastating. It was devastating, I guess, to anyone who knew her because Sylvia was—was, like Ray—a—a singular person, just as rare, beautiful, intelligent, funny. She was incredibly witty. Just they—they—they both were, but they would just crack jokes on you for—for so long. And, you know, Sylvia, again, because of social class, like, oh, we struggled to get the care that she needed. She was born with a—a very extreme form, and rare form, of epilepsy. And so, you know, losing Sylvia also makes you lose kind of faith in our system here in America of healthcare, of anyone's real intent to protect the most vulnerable because, you know, it's—she, like, she was an innocent, someone who, you know, had a—a condition that she was just born with and had no fault of her own and, you know, born into the social class that she was and just had to really, really fight to get basic things that I think the average person in this country just has handed to them, so it was—it was particularly heartbreaking for Ray because, you know, they had a 5, 6 year old daughter at the time and he became a single father. And—but again, you know, he has this amazing family and—and so does Sylvia, who were all, like, very involved and very, very present, but it is one of those things as you get older where fighting bitterness becomes very real, and when you're—when you're that smart and you realize how the world really works and that it's a joke and that there's no good reason why you don't have certain things or aren't being treated a certain way when you've paid the extreme consequences of it, like, the loss of—of one of your loved ones, and it wasn't the first time that happened either because Freddie, who I referred to before, we also lost because of what we consider to be medical negligence.

KS: Really?

AM: Yes. It just, you know, kind of lights this fire in you of, what am I going to do against this world? What am I going to do to change this or make this different? And he became a a very, very devoted father and just, you know, like, very single-minded about giving the best parts of him and Sylvia to his daughter.

KS: Yeah, I loved the two of them together.

AM: Yeah.

KS: And she was such a light and you could tell how much he loved her, likel it was just really beautiful to see.

AM: It was really beautiful. Yeah. When you see that, you know, like, I was having this conversation recently because some family members had alluded to the fact of—of queer relationships as—as not being as real, I guess, quote-unquote.

KS: Really?

AM: As straight ones. That's not the word that they use.

KS: Right.

AM: But it was the allusion. You know, it's like, I got it. And—and I—my—my answer to the room was that you're right, it's not the same thing. It's more beautiful.

KS: Yeah.

AM: Because these relationships exist and flourish and continue even though this world isn't made for them to happen to begin with, and they're in defiance of—of everything else and they defy every convention and—and no one makes it easy for you. It's so hard. So when they last for years and you make beautiful things happen, you've done it in spite of what this world is trying to do to you, and that's so strong and so beautiful. And that was absolutely Ray and Sylvia, where they were just this—just singular, like, gorgeous couple and—and—and parents of—that just were very inspiring to be around and very warm to be around.

KS: Were you there when his daughter was born and do you know what that was like for him?

AM: Yeah, I was there and it was one of those things where I don't think he realized how in love he was going to be until she was born. And, you know, when—when his daughter Martine came into the world, he just had, like, a—like a new lease on life and was so excited, I guess, to—to pass on what he knew, and because he had, you know, come from a feminist punk scene and things, he had—had thought very deeply about how he wanted to raise his daughter and with what ideas and what culture she would be exposed to and not, and of creating these opportunities for her and—and of, you know, of her having all these things in the world that he didn't. And I think one of his greatest successes is that she really does.

KS: Yeah. She's, like, so much of them, like.

AM: Yeah, she is so much of them. She's so smart and so funny, but so fun. You know, Ray was always the first person to dance, the person who would make any ridiculous face to make you laugh, who would do the most ludicrous thing to get a reaction. Like, if I told him, you know, let's dance in the middle of street, let's do the butterfly in the middle of the street, he would already be doing it before I was—I was done. Like, just daring.

KS: Yeah.

AM: Like, so unafraid, so tough, but so fun.

KS: That's so cool. So this weekend, it was the 11th, right, you had, like, a retrospective and a dance party.

AM: Right.

KS: In honor of Ray. So how was that? What was it like?

AM: It was very healing because to me, I—I'm 40 years old. I've been best friends with him since I was 13. I remember very little of my life before him, so the—personally, t, you know, selfishly for me, it's just been a monumental shift in my life because I've—to me, I feel like I've lost the—one of, if not the only, person outside of my family who loves me unconditionally. My biggest supporter, my number one cheerleader, my big inspiration, like you know, he was—he was everything. He was my role model, my cheerleader, my co-conspirator, my protector. And—and I was his biggest fan, always. So to me, I felt so proud to be able to show people, like, pieces that he had made throughout his life, like, he had this one poster of him that—of him standing over a school with his foot on a school building and his—and his fist raised and a flag with a T on it and it says "I'm a transgender warrior."

KS: Nice.

AM: And that was on his bedroom door for many, many years when we were growing up and we had taken inspiration—we were obsessed with kind of, like, Iranian propaganda at that time of, you know, these rulers over this Middle Eastern landscape with elephants thing and depicting yourself on the—on the larger than life scale, like a 50 foot woman thing. And that—him presenting, like, trans bodies and trans ideas as—as elevated, as all-powerful, as—as overpowering society and overpowering school and—and done in propaganda style on purpose, like, purposely done as propaganda posters. I was so proud to see that, but just the breadth of his work. Just collages about the intersection of race and identity and violence. So many abstract works made on the scanner. A lot of self-portraits that were part of self acceptance and loving yourself as a trans person, of painting himself with—with lipstick and facial hair and a lot of depictions of himself as Jesus, which is—kind of like runs throughout his work, from—from us being teenagers to the present day, especially with his birthday on Christmas Day. He had a big identification with—with him, with Jesus, and—and also, you know, again, Madonna's children. We always love some sacrilege. And it was very healing and it was very powerful to me to show everyone the art that he made, which reveals his ideas and his love for himself and—and queer people and his daughter and that—to be in a space that was—that was celebratory because, like, one of the things I love so much about—about this podcast or the Queer Newark Oral History

Project is—is that you said, that no one else is going to document our histories. No one else is going to preserve this. And—and I want everyone who listens to this to know that Ray was a pioneer, was a true radical out on the streets. There were no textbooks. There was no school. There was no support system. He is one of the generation and of people who—who forge these nonbinary and trans identities out on the streets and on very, very, very dangerous streets. Like, e had been shot twice and survived it. Like, when I say danger, I mean danger. At Freddy's house one day, we were all sitting around singing We Are the World cause we were just 80s trash, and the person upstairs got beat to death with a hammer and thrown out of the window.

KS: Oh my god.

AM: Like, these kind of things happened fairly—not every day or every month, but not once or twice, you know, regularly. So to be that brave and to be that fearless, where you can be that 24/7, you know, even in the most threatening of circumstances is, you know, it's kind of like the person who goes through the jungle and machetes down that path that then other people just—just walk down and as much as he admired, you know, Marsha P. Johnson and—and even people like Valerie Solanas, like, just radical feminists and queer people and that he is just as worthy of that admiration because he—he very much forged a path that people take for granted and—and paid very, very real prices for it.

KS: Yeah. One of the, like, the last, you know, we were talking back and forth on Facebook Messenger figuring out this±this interview for the Queer Newark Oral History project and the, like, one of the last things he sent to me was the Bust article he wrote for Debi Martini.

AM: Right.

KS: Of the Red Aunts and I read it at the time and I was like, "this is amazing" and I shared it and, you know, and then after he passed, I went back and I looked at it again and I was, you know, he—he wrote this about her, but it, like, also reads like about him in a lot of ways.

AM: Yeah.

KS: And I was just blown away. Like, this one—like he wrote, you know, "in a—in a world lousy with superficial, phony social media profiles, Debi Martini presented a fully-actualized ideal version of herself in real walking, talking flesh and in a boring world where there are few characters left, you know, losing Debi is an especially cruel blow." But I, you know, and I'm sure it's a fitting, fitting tribute to her and it's beautiful, but I feel like you could easily say that about him too, it's just—

AM: Yeah, absolutely. But that's actually like what drew him to Debi. You know, the Red Aunts, while not a riot grrrl band, was something that he found in the 90s and exposed to me to in the mid 90s. And they really, you know, they were like a Los Angeles-based band and they would switch names on every record and obscure their faces on purpose and—and do these things where it was really about just being powerful and unhinged and authentic, and the fact that you could take and put on identities and play with them also had this monumental effect. Like, we listened to the Red Aunts constantly, and when we were the most scared we would play a lot of Red Aunts records, even on headphones walking down the street, cause it would make us feel tough and it would make you less scared to walk down the street at night, cause you're like, "I'm listening to the Red Aunts. I'm gonna beat the shit out of somebody if hey say something to me" cause they made you feel that way.

KS: Right.

AM: By a twist of fate, in—when I started working the music business, one of my coworkers invited me out for drinks one day with her friends, and it happened to be two of the Red Aunts.

KS: Wow.

Am: So me and Ray befriended teenage heroes of ours. Kerry and Debi were just, like, just the most inspirational people and absolutely people who do things on their own terms and—and I—I think that's why it came so easy to Ray to write about Debi cause he saw so much of—of himself in her and she really presented this actualized version of herself that was non-conformist. She was this, you know, just wildly intelligent and funny and witty and she could be so warm, but also she was so tough, just like Ray. They both really had that in common. And—and it's true, you know, but they do come from a time before social media, and it never affected them and this—and none of it was performative for other people. It wasn't for likes or followers. They both did it for their own pleasure and satisfaction, because it was, you know, it was authenticity.

KS: Right.

AM: Which is—which is—which is I would say what Ray fought for the most in this world, is your right to be authentic. And if your authentic self, like to him, is a male body and—and a woman's identity, then that's you. It's not about—for him it wasn't about fighting for the right to be perceived as a—just as much of a woman as a female woman. It was for his right to be, "no, I'm a woman. I'm a male woman and you're gonna accept me just the way that I am. I'm gonna have the opportunities that everybody else has, and I'm going to have access to all the jobs and schooling and, you know, healthcare and all these things that the rest of the world has as my authentic self."

KS: Yeah, he—yeah, he was such a force. It's just awesome. And I should say his tribute was—was held in Newark, and it was cool to see that Two Tears played.

AM: Yes, so I mean, to me personally, it was—it was—it was so touching because I know what—I know what—what Kerry's music meant to Ray and—and the Red Aunts and the Two Tears. Like, they—like I said, when we were terrified, we were trying our hardest not to look terrified on terrifying streets, we found so much inspiration and fun and adventure, but confidence in them. And then, like, you know, when—when you meet your heroes or befriend your heroes and people that you've admired and not only do they live up to what you thought of them, but they exceed it and you have so much fun with them and they're your friends and, you know, you get older and it's—it's different than when you're a, you know, a teenager with records. It was just one of the most, like, beautiful things. And, you know, while he was with us, she actually let us open up for the Two Tears once.

KS: Oh, that's so cool.

AM: Which was one of our bands, which was such an amazing moment for us. And that's what I mean about the people who you love and admire recognizing you and treating you as an equal and sharing their platform. You know, I—neither one of us could ever be—could ever be thankful enough for that. So to have those songs and—and his friend and an artist that he loved and drew real inspiration from, not just someone who, you know, he thought was cool and—and could sing along to, meant the world to me and—and I think to everyone who knew him because it's—they know how he loved about the Red Aunts, but but also because of Debi. Like, it was very healing for me to be in a space with Ray's art, to be in a space with, you know, Two Tears songs and think about him and Debi and—and our life.

KS: Yeah. Well, thank you for doing this. And I just wanted to, before we close out, I just wanted to ask you if, like, there's any favorite memories that if you want to share, or anything at all about Ray or something you want people to take away, you know, about his life or anything, you know, really anything that you want to say.

AM: Oh god. What I most hope people can take away from Ray, what I tried to take away from Ray to this day and I'm still working on it and I'll probably never get there because he was, you know, to me a legend, is that—is that fearlessness to be who you really are and that when you do that, you're doing so much for other people and for society, and that it's worth all the prices that you pay for it, you know, and that you can have a lot of fun, that it's also—he also showed me that that struggle is a fun struggle. It's not just about having bottles thrown at you. It's also about, you know, wearing Daisy Dukes and a full face of makeup and bruises and crazy eyelashes to the Limelight. It's about, you know, jumping up and down to punk bands in basements and photocopying zines with people and, you know, getting people together and—and improvised,

you know, just improvised gatherings of "we're just going to do this right now and do it in that moment," that urgency. I—and—and also his—his message of—of radical self-acceptance, of making society conform to you, not conform to society, and really, and particularly, I guess, for—for trans people, of really thinking to yourself about your body and—and your ideas and—and—and questioning whether or not you're being made to feel like you have to change because society accepts you this way or that way. You know, to always keep in mind that society should just accept you and it's—and society is what's backwards, like, not queer people. That it's—it's still fighting to get up to our level and I would really urge anyone who hasn't seen the film *Shortbus* to watch it and he really steal—in—in, you know, 5 minutes, he—he steals the entire movie. And since it was based on him, it—it really is an expression of who he really is and someone who loved femininity and worshipped the feminine and with a lot of humor and—and—and—oh, like, you know, like, I guess that the art was always dead serious, but there was always a lot of—of humor in it. And there's also a Ray Rivas SoundCloud that people can visit.

KS: Oh yeah?

AM: And hear some of his compositions. And I just would, yeah, would just encourage you to—to spend some time with that and—and take a look at it and, you know, like, much like Jayne County or Andy Warhol or Madonna, of, you know, these people who invented themselves and created this—this amazing life with—with no resources and—and really forged the path no one has before, that Ray is very much one of those people.

KS: Yeah, I—that's beautiful. And I think it's, like, such a—that idea of, like, this struggle is a struggle but it's—there's always these points of complete ecstasy and amazing moments in being yourself and not compromising for other people that, like, queer people, we can always—it's always good to hear that, you know, and—and think about someone who—who—who embodies that.

AM: Yeah. And that you can have fun challenging things. Like, you know, as—as much as no one wants to be harassed when you're waiting for the bus or—or doing regular tasks, we go looking for it sometimes. I remember when in East Newark, they first installed security cameras on every corner and which—which I think was a pilot program for policing, and we said to ourselves, "are they really seeing them? What's going to happen?" and we had, like, a full blown queer dance party out on the corner, like, with people making out and dancing and a boom box of, you know, "are you really, you know, are you really policing us and what are you going to do about this?" And—and—and also that, another thing that I want to say, which goes in line with the punk thing, is that his resistance wasn't always just protest. I remember in the—someone being gay bashed at a bar that used to exist in Harrison, called Fluffheads, by off duty police officers.

KS Ugh, forgot about that place.

AM: And no one did anything about it. They didn't—no—no suspension, nothing. And when we found out about it, we were livid because it was fairly common for gay bashing to happen with impunity, and especially if law enforcement is involved, you know, even if it was off duty. And Ray went and spray painted home—like, "homophobe," right outside of the offenders' homes. And when it was painted over, he went back and did it a second time.

KS: Awesome.

AM: Like, he was that person, he was—it was very, very, very confrontational. He would dance all night, but he would also spray paint the outside of your house if you—if—if no one else was going to stick up for queer people. So like I said, be fearless, be fun.

KS: Yeah.

AM: And yeah, that—I guess that's the most thing I—I can sum him up with is the funnest, most fearless, and most brilliant person I've ever come across, and I love him like crazy, and whenever I feel shy or like I'm censoring myself or like I'm not strong enough to do something, I channel him. Like, I—I think about Ray to myself and I think about what he would say to me or what he would do and it gives me that push, you know, to say no, like, I—I can forge the path. No one has to do it for me. I am—we're all strong enough to demand that space for ourselves.

KS: That's awesome. Thank you, Aleix. And rest in power, Ray. We'll miss you.

AM: Thank you so much. Rest in pride, Ray. We all love you so much.

KS: The Queer Newark Oral History podcast is produced by me, Kristyn Scorsone. This episode was recorded in the Queer Newark office located in Conklin Hall at Rutgers University Newark. You can find the Queer Newark Oral History Project online at queer.newark.rutgers.edu as well as on Facebook and Twitter @QueerNewark. Thank you so much for listening.