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**Interviewee: Steve Glassman**

Interviewer: Bill Burton

Date: January 4, 2018

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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**Abstract:**

Steve Glassman was born on September 20, 1954 in Chicago. He was fortunate enough to grow up in a rather liberal household with accepting parents who were involved in political activism and social justice during the Civil Rights era. Glassman's story is unique in that he utilized his privilege in both his upbringing and education to further the activism that his parent's passed down to him. Glassman graduated from Brown University with a BA in Art History and Architecture and moved on to then receive his MA in Museum Curatorial Work from Yale University. In this interview, Glassman describes what it is like as a person of the LGBT community to work for a living while simultaneously dedicating their life to LGBT rights and the rights of other marginalized communities. He has owned his own architectural firm while successfully balancing governmental positions and organizational positions.

**Bill Burke:** Okay. My name is Bill Burton and I'm here with Steve Glassman. Today's date is January 4, we're in Philadelphia. We're doing an oral history. Steve, do I have your permission to record this interview?

**Steve Glassman:** You do.

**BB:** Okay. Steve, can you say your first name and spell it for the...transcriber?

**SG:** Yes, Stephen. Stephen. Glassman. G-L-A-S-S-M-A-N. Middle initial A.

**BB:** Okay. Steve, what was your date of birth and where were you born, let's start there.  
[chuckles]

**SG:** 9, 20, 1954 in Chicago, Illinois at Michael-Reese Hospital.

**BB:** Oh, so tell me about your family first.

**SG:** So, my father was a physician. Chief of Anesthesiology at Sinar Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. My parents were both Canadian by birth. I'm a dual citizen. United States and Canada.

**BB:** Still are?

**SG:** Yeah, still am. My mother was at first a housewife but then became very active in Women's Rights as well as in politics and she ended up as a Ambassador attaché to Brazil for sports and athletics and academic subjects between Rio de Janeiro and Baltimore, Maryland. Then, she was a docent at the Baltimore Museum of Art for 40 years. A founder of the Women's Financial Network in the State of Maryland which started with three members and now has 3,000 members.

**BB:** Oh my god.

**SG:** So, my mother was quite a force. As well as my father was quite an exceptional physician and worked all over the world in pain management and anesthesiology. So, I grew up in an extremely liberal home. My parents were very involved in the desegregation/integration efforts during the racial justice movement in the 1950's and 60's, when I was five years old was my first protest march when my parents took me, holding protest signs to protest segregated restaurants and amusement parks.

**BB:** Where was it then? In Chicago?

**SG:** In Baltimore.

**BB:** Baltimore.

**SG:** When—I was born in Chicago but we moved to Baltimore two and a half months afterwards. My father was a resident in Chicago. At the time that he was a resident in Chicago the reason he came to the United States was because there was a great deal of anti-semitism and almost no Jews could get residencies in Toronto, which is where my parents are from. And so, many, many Jewish doctors ended up in the United States at that time and this was 1950. That's why...and they stayed. So, but that's why they ended up in the states. So, he did his residency for four years in Chicago and then he was offered the job of Chief of Anesthesiology in Baltimore hospital and he did that for 45 years and then founded a Surgeon Center and then did that for the next 15 years until he passed away at 84.

**BB:** Wow.

**SG:** My mother died at 87.

**BB:** Oh.

**SG:** So, I was very fortunate and I have two sisters. Both of them- whom I'm very close with. Younger.

**BB:** Older or younger?

**SG:** Younger. One two years younger, one ten years younger. I'm very very close with both and three nieces and nephews. Very close with all of them.

**BB:** So, you grew up in Baltimore then?

**SG:** Grew up outside in Baltimore. Jewish suburbs of Baltimore.

**BB:** What are the Jewish suburbs?

**SG:** Pikesville, Stevenson, Owenmills (ph)... Baltimore has over a 130,000 Jews. Sixth largest Jewish community in the country.

**BB:** I didn't realize that.

**SG:** A very prominent and influential Jewish community and my parents were both very active. My father was the head of the campaign, the philanthropic campaign for the Jewish Federation Organization in Baltimore for a number of years. My mother was head of the Women's Division for a number of years, so they were both active. On boards, Jewish Family and Children's Service. Highest in other Jewish Organizations. America Jewish Congress, etcera. So, that was part of their lives. My uncle was a very famous rabbi. Marrus Liberman [ph] who was a close friend of Martin Luther King Jr. I actually met Martin Luther King Jr. at the Civil Rights March on Washington with my uncle. We all marched together. I was eleven when I met Martin Luther King Jr. So, it was...you know, I was given a lot of opportunities to participate in social justice movements at a very young age and that really infused itself into my life and career. It was really the basis for my Civil Rights, Human Rights, LGBT rights activism for the whole rest of my life. I started at age five. So...

**BB:** Wow, that's incredible. So where did you go to school?

**SG:** So, I went to the Park School. Outside of Baltimore, it's a very progressive private, country day school. And a really exceptional opportunity for me. It was a small school. There were 53 people in my class and in the entire year. Our classes were between 6 and 12 people and virtually everyone went to an Ivy League school. So, I mean it was one of those wonderful opportunities to be able to advance in ways that people without that level of access and privilege weren't able to do. I've always been very appreciative.

**BB:** So is that private school's from elementary to high school?

**SG:** From late elementary school all the way through high school. I went to public school until fifth grade.

**BB:** So, where'd you go to college then?

**SG:** I went to Brown University first and did two undergraduate degrees in Art History and Architecture and then I went to Yale University for four years and did a graduate 3-year Master's Degree Architecture and a one-year Master's in Museum Curatorial work. Then, I went to Harvard Kennedy school mid-career and got a degree in public policy.

**BB:** It's too bad you're not educated [laughs].

**SG:** My mother used to joke and say, "You've only done three of the eight Ivy League schools. Get cracking!"

**BB:** [laughs]

**SG:** You know...I was very lucky.

**BB:** That's lucky, yeah. That's nice. So, what about the military? How did you- 'Cause you were of age when the Vietnam War...so how did that happen?

**SG:** I constantly protested the Vietnam War since...

**BB:** How did you avoid it?

**SG:** Middle school.

**BB:** Did you go?

**SG:** I did not go. I had a student deferment. Because in those days, when you were in college and graduate school, if you were full-time enrolled student you had a student deferment. Then, when the lottery came, I actually didn't draw a high number. My number was 67. But, it didn't get called. So. I was—I never had to go into the military. I was able to—

**BB:** But, you were in the first lottery?

**SG:** I was in, I believe the first lottery. I believe so. That's my best memory. So I didn't have to go.

**BB:** Oh.

**SG:** My student deferment carried me through.

**BB:** Well, good for you.

**SG:** I think I would've honestly, been a conscientious objector though because I don't believe in violence as a means of resolving conflict, I never have. I was always fully opposed to the Vietnam War. And I think I probably would have gone to Canada if I had been called. I just would've been a conscientious objector. I just don't believe in serving in the military. I admire

people that do make that choice and have great respect for their decision to do so but it would not be the right choice for me. I would go into some sort of volunteer service and Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, something like that and serve happily but not in the military.

**BB:** So, well tell me about...your awareness of your sexuality. When did that come about?

**SG:** So, I was very early aware of that.

**BB:** 'Cause it was the 50's, so...

**SG:** It was. But at age four, I knew something was really different. Because, that was the age in which—and this will obviously reveal a bit more about the level of privilege one has—that was year at which at the country club you stopped going into the women's locker room and start going to the men's locker room with your parent. So, I just remembered being completely fascinated by men's genitals at age four and that's all I could do, is stare at the men. I knew something was different at that point without understanding what that meant. But, I was always attracted to men. And not to women. So, I was very early in coming out. I actually came out—I was a year young in graduating from school. So, I was sixteen when I graduated and turned 17 in September in my freshman year of college. And I actually came out at 16 to eight really close friends in prep school and they were incredibly supportive at a time when nobody had any positive role models or influences or understood anything really about what being gay meant.

**BB:** Had you had any gay experiences prior to that?

**SG:** Oh sure. Absolutely. Starting at about 13. So, I was not without physical...experiences. But, you know with other students at school. And they all felt...*right*, somehow, to me. I knew there was nothing wrong with me. But, I didn't have any literature or anything that actually would affirm anything positive about this...*experience* or the understanding of your orientation or identity that goes a long with it. So you had to really come to this by yourself. And, it was very challenging. But I had incredible parents. So, when I started coming out to them in my freshman year of college, at 17. I came over the first vacation for Rosh Hashanah and I told them you know, that I thought that this might be who I was. My mother's very first comment was, "I hope I never said anything you inadvertently that might have hurt you or upset you while you were growing up". And my father just said, "I love you, it makes no difference to me." So the amazing good fortune in 1968, to have that kind of response from your parents is really what set the tone for my self-esteem, my self-confidence, my self-actualization and I was an activist from that point on all the way through college. I was, you know, in the gay activist alliance. I—when we went on strike along with every other school-college in the nation when Nixon invaded Cambodia, that was my junior year of college at Brown. I was the head of Strike Information Central for all 220 New England Schools. I was an activist from the get-go.

**BB:** Well, you were incredibly fortunate.

**SG:** Very fortunate.

**BB:** I mean, that's not what you normally hear. Especially, I mean, during that time period.

**SG:** I had very, very progressive, liberal thinking parents, who were always on the left side of the issues. I think it came from being Jewish, frankly. And from that all my grandparents were immigrants from Russia and Ukraine and Belarus and they had real struggles in escaping the Pogroms in Russia and fleeing to first, England and then—

**BB:** The what? The—

**SG:** Pogroms.

**BB:** Oh! Yes, yes.

**SG:** Right.

**BB:** P-R-O

**SG:** -G-R-O-M-S.

**BB:** Yes.

**SG:** So their families had suffered. I mean, I had great uncles and aunts who died as children in the pogroms. Escaping Russia. So my father was the youngest of nine siblings and three of them were killed during the pogroms while they were escaping Russia.

**BB:** Yes.

**SG:** So, I mean, it was really a very different age. But, I think that imbued them with a sense of empathy for other marginalized and discriminated against groups and also a sense of commitment to social responsibility. My father was the first one in his entire family to ever go to college, let alone medical school. And everyone in the family saved up to put him through medical school and college. He was the one person who got an advanced degree and my mother came from a much more privileged family. But they all suffered during the Depression. So my grandfather on my mother's side was an amazing individual. He came alone from Russia at age twelve, speaking not a word of English, came directly to Toronto. Within two years, he was not only completely fluent in English but at age 14, he graduated at the top of his class from high school in Toronto. Went through engineering school at the University of Toronto in two years. A four-year degree program in two years. Then, decided he didn't like engineering. Went to dental school and went through four years of dental school in one and a half years. And by 21, was practicing dentistry. Was a very prominent citizen in Toronto and when he passed away, I was eight years old but I remember the funeral. Very clearly. There was a 2,000 car cortege led by the mayor of Toronto and the city of Toronto planted a grove of 40,000 trees in Israel in his honor. Which, our family visited many years later when they were fully mature. A forest that

stretches for miles in Israel. So, it was really fairly exciting to see that that legacy lives on in another country.

**BB:** That's exciting. That's impressive. Yeah. So, after you get your degrees, take me through your early career. I mean, you got your degree in architecture, art history. Did you go to architecture, did you go to art history? How did you use...you're an activist, so take me through your career first.

**SG:** Sure. I started out thinking I was going to get a PhD in Art History instead of just a master's. And, I was a curator, an assistant curator in Princeton Drawings at the Louvre in Paris, working on the—

**BB:** Was that your first job?

**SG:** Fauton (ph) exhibition. That was the—that was, in between college and graduate school for six months. I did that. And then decided to matriculate at Yale and do an architecture degree. I mean, I love the curatorial work and it was an honor to be able to work with, you know, I worked directly for the director of the Louvre. Silvia Begat [ph] was her name. It was incredible opportunity but I decided at that point what I really wanted was to pursue a career in architecture so, I did that. I went back to Yale and graduated and then I—my first job, I was hired by the mayor of Baltimore to be the...actually, that was my second job. My very first job out of graduate school was the county executive, Ted Betoulis, of Baltimore County created a position of director of art and design for Baltimore County.

**BB:** Who was guy?

**SG:** Ted Betoulis. T-E-D B-E-T-O-U-L-I-S.

**BB:** Okay.

**SG:** And I did that for a year and a half. Creating an entire department for the Baltimore County government. Which still exists. Then, the mayor of Baltimore hired me away from the county executive and I was asked to be the director of the design for the renovation of Baltimore City Hall at age 25. 24...? 25 I guess. I did that for a year and a half as a consultant to the mayor and the city council. While the building was being renovated and I was in charge of the art and design program and working with the architects to supervise all that. Then, I started my architectural practice from there. It grew to a practice of 10 architects and designers and bought various buildings. Then, I moved my office to an over 25 year career.

**BB:** Was that in Baltimore or what?

**SG:** In Baltimore, but it was a practice that stretched from Baltimore to Florida. It was primarily focused in New York, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia.

**BB:** Were you doing residences or buildings?



**SG:** Primarily, I was—75% of the practice was high-end residential work. About 25% was high-end commercial retail and occasionally university building, restaurants, galleries. Art galleries, other boutique, practice projects. And then I did a lot of—

**BB:** My brother's an architect.

**SG:** Oh, yes, OK. So it was very fortunate. I was published over 100 times in national magazines. I never had to advertise. It was all word-of-mouth. I was always filled with clients. It was a really wonderful practice but at a certain point, I had essentially two careers simultaneously because I was an activist the entire time and I was spending at least 40 hours a week on LGBT rights work. Running organizations, chairing various organizations and boards at the same time that I was practicing architecture. So, at a certain point, probably 20 years into my practice, I realized I wasn't doing as much designing. I was overseeing a firm, and all the administration and finances of a firm where others were doing the designing. I was really missing being hands-on as an architect and designer. And so I phased out my architectural practice when I was offered a position by Governor Randell when he first came into office. I was very early an appointee as a cabinet official. I was offered the position of Chairman of Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, which I did for eight, the full eight years of his two terms.

**BB:** So you were in Baltimore then—

**SG:** I moved to—

**BB:** Harrisburg.

**SG:** Philadelphia.

**BB:** Oh.

**SG:** That's when I moved here, 16 years ago, in 2001. And I had a farm that I had purchased in 1996. No, I'm sorry- 1989. I purchased a farm near Gettysburg which was an hour from Baltimore and about two and a half hours from Philadelphia. So, I realized when this offer was you know, put forth, I realized it was too far to commute from my farm. It was not reasonable to live in another state in Baltimore. So, I bought my condominium here in Philadelphia. And I've been there for sixteen years. But I had offices all over the state of Pennsylvania and I was traveling almost every day of the week. And was often in two or three cities in the same day because I had to meet with staff and give speeches almost every night all over the state of Pennsylvania when I was in public office. But leading up to that, I was in Baltimore very active. I was asked to be one of the co-chairs of the coalition that passed the non-discrimination bill in Baltimore on which I worked for about 5 long years. And it was passed in 1986. Then, I was asked to chair the Names Project Quilt display on the very first tour of that and did that in Baltimore for a year. We were actually the only city in the country—

**BB:** The Names Project?

**SG:** Names Project. We worked with Cleve Jones directly and we were the only city in the country to get the quilt displayed in a museum. The Baltimore Museum of Art opened its doors, I was very friendly with the director of the museum and the Chief over at Contemporary Art. Both of them were very empathetic to the early AIDS epidemic and we took over—virtually—the entire museum and had almost 2,000 quilt panels throughout the entire museum for a month. It was really quite extraordinary. And there was a lot of publicity that went along with that. Then, when I moved to my farm, in Pennsylvania and went back and forth between Baltimore and New Oxford outside of Gettysburg, I ended up being invited to a meeting in Harrisburg—uh, I'm sorry, State College. That was called by a number of state leaders in Pennsylvania, LGBT leaders who wanted to form a statewide organization. And by the end of that day, I was asked to chair this statewide organization and that became the statewide Pennsylvania Rights Coalition.

**BB:** SPARC.

**SG:** S-P-A-R-C. And, did that for six and a half years and worked extremely hard with a number of individuals. It was very much a team effort, but I put in easily 2,000 hours each year on this lobbying meeting virtually every legislator in the house of the senate working repeatedly in Harrisburg and in home districts to meet with them, to educate them on why we needed non-discrimination legislation. We started with the Hate Crimes Bill. After six and a half years, and after *repeated* efforts to get Republicans as well as Democrats on board we finally got the bill passed by two-third majority in both the House and the Senate. While John Pursell (ph) was the Speaker of the House and got over 40 Republicans in the house.

**BB:** On the Hate Crimes Bill or the--?

**SG:** Hate Crimes Bill.

**BB:** Yeah.

**SG:** And we passed the bill by a two-thirds majority in the Senate, which has 50 members. And we had 37 members who voted for the bill, very bipartisan effort. And this was something that really was extraordinary because we were the first state in the country to have an inclusive Hate Crimes Bill. The first one to include gender identity...

**BB:** Right.

**SG:** ...in the bill. That bill was signed in December 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2001 by Governor Schweiker who had been the Lieutenant Governor when Tom Ridge was taken to Washington under George Bush to become the head of Homeland Security. Governor Mark Schweiker was put into place for a year and a half until Rendell was elected and I was appointed, actually to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission as a Commissioner by Mark Schweiker and then confirmed unanimously by the Senate. And then, as soon as Rendell came into office he made me the chairman of the

Commission, which, elevated to a cabinet official position. That was how this entire Pennsylvania activism really started. So, from there, I served for eight plus years, continued to serve after Rendell left office for about six months under Corbett. But, it was clearly, not only none of priority of Corbett's but something which he was hostile to and so it finally only made sense for me to resign as the chair because nothing was able to get done with a democrat as the chairperson of the Commission. And it was a number of dark years for the Commission after I left because there was simply cuts in budget and staffing and no appetite for any non-discrimination work on the part of the Republican governorship. So, I went on to become, at that point—the CEO of a non-profit in Pittsburgh. I was offered a number of different positions.

**BB:** Before you got to Pittsburg, you were in Harrisburg, you were involved in Common Roads stuff right?

**SG:** Oh, yes, for ten years, I neglected to mention. For ten years I was the co-facilitator of Common Roads.

**BB:** So, you lived in Harrisburg then? What were you doing?

**SG:** I wasn't living in Harrisburg but I came there often. Probably three days a week I was in Harrisburg because of my job and then, the other two days a week I would be in Pittsburgh, I'd be in Philadelphia, I'd be in Scranton, I'd be in Allentown, I'd be in Erie, I'd be in...y'know, lots of small boroughs throughout the state.

**BB:** So, how did you make time for Common Roads? [chuckles]

**SG:** [chuckles] Every Friday night. I never missed a Friday night for ten years. Every Friday night. I had no life. No personal life.

**BB:** Yeah.

**SG:** Every Friday night I was in Harrisburg for the co-facilitation of those meetings. And I made it a key priority. Those young people were so in need of support and mentoring.

**BB:** What years were those?

**SG:** So this was—I'm going to say 1991 to 2001. I stopped doing it when I came into public office. And Sharon Potter and Malinda East were the other co-facilitators of the group. And I was asked by Sharon Potter to do this. About six months after the group was founded they had had a...they very much realized how important it was to have an openly gay man on not just two allied women, as a role model and mentor in this group. And they had a gay man but it turned out he was compromised, shall we say, in his interaction with some of the young people of the group and immediately when in they, when finding that out, got rid of him and came and asked me if I would do this. It was a huge commitment but it was something I really believed in deeply and felt was really important and then at some point I became the President of the board of Common

Roads when it actually became a larger non-profit. It didn't start out with Common Roads as it's name. That was the name that was adopted.

**BB:** Yeah, it was like...Bi-GLYAH.

**SG:** Bi-GLYAH. The initials—Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Association of Harrisburg I think was what it was originally. A sort of neutral name that didn't call attention as much to itself. But, you know, Common Roads became the name that we've—through a facilitated series of meetings, decided on as we formed an actual board of directors and got a 501c3, as opposed to a physical sponsorship through another organization. Then, I was the first president of their board for a couple of years until I went into public office and then I needed to resign all of my board memberships in order to remain objective and neutral in the eyes of the public on all of these issues.

**BB:** So, how many kids were involved in Common Roads? How big was it back then?

**SG:** Well, there were over 300 young people at the time and it grew to actually, about 1,000 that we saw. But, the regular participants were between 10 and 40 each Friday. So, it usually hovered around the high 20's to low 30's that would be in attendance every Friday for two hours. And we had young people whose parents drove them there two hours each way from remote parts of Pennsylvania, rural area where there was obviously nothing that would give any positive support to LGBT youngsters. And the only other groups at the time were in Philadelphia, the Attic, which started about the same time as Common Roads did. Then, in Pittsburgh, it wasn't really a youth support group but PERSAD [Center] is a long-standing organization. Excellent organization in Pittsburgh and they had a youth oriented component. It's a mental health organization for LGBT people. So, it wasn't really quite what Common Roads and the Attic were. So, really the resources were very scarce for a long time in Pennsylvania for young people who were exploring their sexual orientation and gender identity.

**BB:** Do you think that—young people in Central Pennsylvania had it a more difficult time than people in urban, large urban areas?

**SG:** Yes, absolutely. No question about that. That's true all over the country. That's one of the reasons why so many LGBT people move at relatively at young ages from rural areas to large cities all over the country because there is community in large cities. There are organizations and resources and affinity groups and gay and lesbians bars and opportunities to meet other people through social interaction that is simply non-existent. As well as the fact that you have a much more generally liberal thinking environment in large cities than you do in rural areas. Pennsylvania, particularly. It happens to be the most rural state in the country by the last four censuses. That is, people who live in cities or townships under 2,500 people. So, Pennsylvania has over nine million of its 12.7 million people living in rural areas. Number one in the nation. We, out of 67 counties, 60 of them have less than 1.5% minority populations. Pennsylvania's number fifty in the country with regard to the average distance of Pennsylvanians ever traveled

from their place of birth, 25 miles. So if you conflate all of those statistics, you are not meeting anyone different from your family's religious background, ethnic background...this is a very White, Christian, heterosexual, presumably, state in all of the T of Pennsylvania. And the only places you're really going to find community and any support if you're an LGBT person, young or old, is in major cities. In the five larger cities of this state. That is also true in most states with large, rural areas and only one or two major urban areas.

**BB:** Yeah. So, when you worked for the Human Rights—

**SG:** Human Relations Commission.

**BB:** Human Relations Commission. What was—the state still doesn't have any anti-discrimination law, so what were your major tasks during that time? Dealing with discrimination claims or?

**SG:** Well, first of all, at the time that I was fortunate the chairperson of the state commission, there—we were the second largest and the fourth oldest human relations commission in the United States. That has changed since the drastic cuts made to the commission under Corbett that have not been fully restored under Governor Wolf. The commission had almost 40,000 complaints to be investigated every year. The complaints were largest in the areas of race, disability, gender—including sexual harassment claims. Then, there were certainly claims in areas related to ethnicity, to religion, all of the various protected classes. So, most of my time was spent both running the commission administratively, hearing complaints as an administrative law judge and an adjudicator, along with all the other commissioners. And those complaints and the work was primarily focused on either hate crimes activity—because we had a civil tension task force that had over 330 organizational members throughout Pennsylvania that met once a month and documented and addressed hate activity. We were focused on all the protected classes but LGBT people were not included. We did manage to pass resolutions early on in my tenure, supporting the passage of a legislation which would amend the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act to add sexual orientation and gender identity or expression as protected classes. We lobbied for—[someone coughs in the background]—one of the things that took up a far bit of my time would probably be in aggregate only 10% of my time was the work I did with Mayors and City Council and Borough Council. People throughout the state and we passed during my tenure. In 26 municipalities throughout the state, we got local laws including every one of the sexual orientation and gender identity or expression passed and local human relations commissions established so that by the time I left office, approximately 30% population of the state was covered by these laws. But it clearly was leaving the 70% in the T of Pennsylvania not covered.

**BB:** Yeah.

**SG:** And we obviously need a statewide bill. And, unfortunately that has still not happened because Republicans have been in control of the legislature in both house for many, many years. And, they continue to appoint Daryl Metcalfe as the chair of the state government committee in

the House. A man who refuses to acknowledge LGBT people, let alone allow a hearing to take place and a vote to be taken. Even though, we have done all of the lobbying and polling and we know that we have enough votes to pass this bill in both the house and the senate and Governor Woolf has pledged to sign the bill to office. Even Governor Corbett, midway through his four years in office, pledged to sign the bill if it reached his desk. And yet, it's been blocked in the House of State Government Committee because of Daryl Metcalfe. It's really a tragedy.

**BB:** Yeah.

**SG:** It's really a tragedy. But that's the political reality in this state.

**BB:** That's depressing.

**SG:** Yes, it is. Indeed

**BB:** So, after you left that, you mentioned you went to Pittsburgh—

**SG:** I was the CEO of the Design Center. Which is a very wonderful organization that promotes good planning and affordable housing throughout all the neighborhoods of Pittsburgh and the surrounding 36 municipalities. I did that and enjoyed it very much for three years and then I was asked to become the head of the ACLU of the Connecticut, which I did for a couple of years and then I decided at 65 to retire. So, I came back to Philadelphia and I thought I was retiring and just doing some consulting work for the state of Pennsylvania and was an adjunct Professor, which I still am, at Temple University. Low and behold, I got roped back in...

**BB:** Yeah.

**SG:** ...after nine months and ended up the Mizoni (ph) Center asked me if I would take on the interim CEO role for a nine month period. Which is what I'm doing now, the search firm. National Search Firm recruited me to do this and I thought about it carefully and decided this was something so important and the mission is so deeply important to me, having been a patient there for many, many years. Then I decided to take on that responsibility and it's another 13 hour a day full-time position. But at the end of nine months I believe we'll have a very good successor to take on that role. We're in the middle of the search for a new CEO now. The same search firm is doing that search. I have great faith in the search consultant. And, I think we will have a successful search and hopefully sometime in April I will be able to move on and figure out how to take some time and relax and continue to do some consulting work.

**BB:** So, what do you think—looking back now, so far, on what you've done—what were the major turning points in your life? If you were to decide...

**SG:** Major turning points. Well, there were several. I would say each of the education institutes—institutions that I was privileged enough to attend were clearly turning points for me. I had extraordinary professors and teachers who were great influences and inspirations for me.

At the Park School, at Brown, at Yale, and Harvard. All of those institutions were instrumental in allowing me to think outside of the box and to think in more creative terms and not find myself locked into one career for 45 years. I did take significant risks in leaving one field and moving into another, but it has turned out to be the most exciting, and rewarding, and rich experience professionally for me. It allowed me to make contributions. Whatever I'd be able to do that's supportive in advancing social justice in the state for people of color, for people with disabilities—I forgot to mention that I was also the vice chair of the Governor's Cabinet for Disability Rights, under Randell. For LGBT people, particularly involved with trans advocacy work. I was a founding board member of the National Center for Transgender Equality. For nine years I served on their board, from 2002 until 2011. I think all those things happened because I had individuals as mentors and as teachers in my life who allowed me the freedom to think about ways in which I could use my skills, experience, and education to make a contribution that would be significant and not only in one field. The ability to move from field to field is what has made my life far more rewarding and gratifying and allowed me an opportunity to reexamine ways in which I could work with other people to make some significant contributions to improving the way we view the role of LGBT people, people of color, trans-people, people with disabilities in this society. Particularly, as I'm thinking about it, I did a significant amount of work with Immigrant Rights for many years when I was in public office and I continue to do that as well.

**BB:** Yeah. What do you think...are the biggest challenges that remain?

**SG:** Well, given the political landscape under an extremely regressive right-wing conservative congress and someone who does not belong to the White House, who has no judgement, leadership skills, maturity or ability to manage the office of President, I think that we have a lot of recovery to do once the Congress is no longer run by people who have no interest in advancing LGBT rights, immigrant rights, women's right, the rights of people with disabilities, et cetera. I think that we clearly need to focus on LGBT non-discrimination laws at both the federal and state levels. We have been able to overturn some negative laws like Don't Ask, Don't Tell under President Obama. We were able to pass the National Hate Crimes Law under President Obama. We were never able to get to a final successful vote in the Congress on what was then an employment non-discrimination act. Now [it] is a more non-discrimination law that will protect people on the basis of employment, housing, public accommodations. But that has no chance of moving forward under a Republican Congress and under President Trump. So, those are the most important things that we have to do. But, we also have to deal with the fact that judiciary, at the federal and state and local levels is changing markedly under these, this administration and this congress in ways that effect for the next 30+ years our ability to move legislation forward and legal opinion and precedent.

**BB:** Sounds so scary.

**SG:** Very frightening. And also very challenging and intimidating. But, we fortunately have strong LGBT organizations at the national level in place. The Legal National Center for Lesbian

Rights, G.L.A.D, both 1E G.L.A.D and 2E G.L.A.D in New England. And Human Rights Campaign and the National LGBT Task Force and the National Black Justice Coalition, et cetera. We have a lot of organizations, NCTE is critically important. National Center on Transgender Law Center. I could keep going.

**BB:** Yeah.

**SG:** There are thirty plus national organizations who are able to continue fighting vigorously for our rights. But if you're asking about the challenges, it's more significant now than it was before the Congress was Republican and Trump gained the White House. Because, at that point, we had very strong positive track of legal decisions that were going in our favor. Now, we're already seeing a mixed bag of legal decisions and are likely to see more negative legal decisions as the U.S. Supreme Court since the appointment of Gorsuch. If Trump gets the opportunity to appoint additional Supreme Court justices, that will be a negative game changer for literally thirty years. If there is a five, four or six-three majority with conservative republicans dominating the court, we will not see progress. We could even see regression on the way in which same-sex marriage is being regarded. As we've seen in Texas, in the Texas Supreme Court which has just ruled against equal rights for LGBT married couples in the state of Texas. We have significant challenges ahead of us.

**BB:** Yeah.

**SG:** But, it's the non-discrimination front that is continuing to present the greatest difficulty in seeing federal laws that will protect our people and will allow for court decisions to support those laws.

**BB:** Right. So, no I agree with you. The thing that's scary is that if Trump got out, then we have Pence. The horror still continues.

**SG:** Yeah. And in fact, there's really no good solution because currently, in the administration, every single cabinet official has two things in common—one, their voracious appetite for denigrating LGBT people and appealing any rights, let alone advancing any rights for us. Number two, they're all...*committed* to undoing the very mission of the cabinet organization that they are supposed to be leading. So, the regressive politics that are in place to undo every progressive...

**BB:** Right.

**SG:** ...act that has been achieved under Clinton that remained to some extent, under Bush and that was advanced farther than ever before under President Obama, all of that is being undone as we speak and it's going to be a challenge to get many of these things back in place again. Let alone, make further advancements. Then, you have the Republican Congress.

**BB:** So, we have to wait and see.



**SG:** Yeah. Hopefully, 2018 will flip both the House and the Senate in a Democratic wave and that will stop any further erosion of our rights and appointment of justices at the federal court level and Supreme Court level that will alter the nature of those courts. But, we have to win those elections first and have to have voter turnout succeed first in order to see those changes and we need to see them in the state legislatures and governorships all across the country. Which are dominated two-thirds percentage by Republicans at the current time.

**BB:** Right.

**SG:** All very significant challenges.

**BB:** I think you're right. So, is there anything else you think that we've missed here?

**SG:** No, I appreciate the opportunity to share these thoughts and my career with you. But, thank you so much for asking.

**BB:** You certainly have had...a distinguished career and a varied career.

**SG:** I feel really honored—particularly to have been the first openly gay cabinet official in the nation to be confirmed by a senate. That was a real honor. And I felt a real responsibility to use that given authority to promote and advance civil rights, LGBT rights for everyone in the commonwealth. I had a national stage. I hope that I utilized it responsibly and productively.

**BB:** There's been a few, I mean you were the first openly gay cabinet member to be approved and Jeanine Rusham was the first transgender cabinet appointee...and Pennsylvania has had a couple breakthroughs.

**SG:** Oh and Rachel Levine, we cannot forget.

**BB:** Yeah, yeah, that's why I said... Rachel Levine and then you know, Governor Shatt's executive order. I mean in this red state's, there's been a few breakthroughs. You know?  
[chuckles]

**SG:** They have been, but they've all come under Democrats who are politically progressive and yet they were fought by republicans all across the state.

**BB:** Yeah.

**SG:** Plus, blue dog Democrats throughout the state. It's not that the Democratic Party was entirely united in support of these efforts. But they're—that's why one leader, one person can make a huge difference when you have a governor who's democratic and who's progressive, they can make history. When you have the ability to have an openly LGBT person in public office as I was able to do, as Rachel Levine is able to do, you can make a huge difference. It takes one person in a leadership position to help educate and then use their given authority responsibly and turn the tide with regard to issues that make a difference in social justice.

**BB:** Right. So, alright well thank you, Steve.

**SG:** Thank you, Bill.

**BB:** It was a good interview, so...

**SG:** I'm delighted, thank you so much.

**BB:** Thank you.

TAPE ENDS.