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Interviewee: Lindsay Snowden

Interviewer: Liam Fuller

Date: March 22, 2015

Place: Lindsay Snowden's home

Transcriber Liam Fuller

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Abstract:

Lindsay Snowden was born in Pittsburgh on March 15, 1976. Lindsay worked a bunch of odd jobs and has had an entrepreneurial spirit since a young age. Lindsay joined the military when sirb was 17. Lindsay realized after moving to Harrisburg that sirb would not be welcome in the military due to sirb's sexuality. Coming out to sirb's family was easy because sirb grew up with gay family members. Lindsay has worked on my projects in the area like forming the first all black drag king troupe in Central Pennsylvania, House of Gains; publishing a magazine called Studs Magazine; and running a female football team. Lindsay talks about sirb's experience with sirb's drag troupe and how difficult it is to get booked as an all black group in Central Pennsylvania. Lindsay talks about sirb's evolving gender identity, the intersections of sirb's identity, and the importance of family. Lindsay has been married to Shaashawn Dial-Snowden for the past two years.

Liam Fuller: So my name is Liam Fuller, I am here interviewing, Lindsay Snowden and we're going to start with what are your preferred gender pronouns?

Lindsay Snowden: Just gender neutral.

LF: Okay. So,

LS: I just prefer Lindsay.

LF: Lindsay? Okay.

LS: Yes. However, I'm not offended if someone's like sir or it's really awkward when someone says miss.

LF: Okay.

LS: You know, I don't like jump down anyone's throat or if they want to use anything gender neutral, Lindsay, sir beauty, sirb

LF: So, we're in Lindsay's home in Harrisburg um and today is the 22nd of March, 2015 and Lindsay Snowden is spelt L-I-N-D-S-A-Y S-O-W-D-E-N.

LS: You forgot the N.

LF: What?

LS: The N.

LF: N.

LS: S-N-O-W-D-E-N.

LF: Oh sorry and do you consent to this interview?

LS: Yes.

LF: So let's start with your sort of family origin, early development.

LS: What would you like to know about that?

LF: Just sort of the context you grew up in...

LS: Basically, I grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My grandmother raised me for the first ten years of my life. Then I moved with my mother, two sisters, one brother, kinda grew up in, kind of a community, sort of a, well it was just considered town homes and then it went into projects type of thing. But pretty good childhood, you know, I had a lot of fun with it. You know, we had some, you know, battles to get through but, all in all, it turned out good. I'm here now.

LF: Okay. And how was sort of your early development in relation to your sexuality?

LS: [laughs] Well my early development was that I played games with girls, you know, show me yours, I'll show you mine, little touchy-feely things. But I just chalked it up to just experimentation nothing, nothing new. That's pretty much it. My first contact was with a girl. My first everything was with a girl. But, I guess around 10 no, no, probably closer to 11, 12, started going into the whole, you know like, girls are with boys, even though we I have gay members of my family. I didn't see anything wrong with it, just like no, you know, then I was started basically, going more towards boys, than girls.

LF: And so, we're gonna kinda proceed and could you tell me a little about your educational background?

LS: Well, I am a nurse by trade, like a practical nurse. I also have a degree in web and graphic design. A military background, was an army nurse, did that for nine years. In the military for nine years. Now I've been a nurse for 18 going on 19 years. Oh actually, 19 years I think I've been a nurse. I guess that's pretty much it. Everything else was self-taught. I do contract work on the side, just kinda self-taught, working under a contractor, so, kitchens, bathrooms, things like that.

LF: And then can you kinda sort of go more in depth in your work history?

LS: Okay more in depth in my work history...started working a job when I was ten. Cleaned a convenience store my mother worked at so I used go in and basically clean it up, stock the shelves. My mom or step-dad would pay me, my mom got married when I was ten also. Her or my step-dad would pay me. Did that for awhile, my mom taught me the value of a dollar, and how you need to always learn how to stretch your money because we didn't have a whole lot of money. So, she always taught me that it's better to, when you get money, to be able to flip your money over, so that you have more money, as opposed to taking it and spending it. So, what that means is, start off with, basically, she got me a dollar box of like jelly rolls, little cakes, stuff like that, told me how, you know, pull em out, sell em, quarter each, basically, triple your money. So, I did that for years, went into ice cream, and kept on doing things like that. Until, I was actually able to get a job where, I actually get a pay check, so been getting a paycheck since I was fourteen, started working in school work program where I cleaned schools through the summer. Sixteen, worked at fast food. Seventeen, joined the military. Went from the military into nursing.

LF: Okay, you're a little tycoon.

LS: Yeah, I mean, nursing, contract work, entrepreneur stuff. I mean, I always had my entrepreneurial spirit because it's been embedded, embedded in me since I was a kid. So, also came here to work at a stand at one of the markets, selling oils and some lotions, soaps, creams, all types of stuff like that. Did a few of the what would they be called pre-paid legal and services like that and associates. So, did some things with that, Equinox, Amway, like, I've pretty much done it all. As I grew up, do I just learned how to do a lot of different things. So, a few years ago, I decided, we decided to start a magazine. I'm probably skipping ahead, but we decided to start the magazine and stuff like you know, I think I can do this. So, I started messing with computers and I decided, well, why not get a degree in web and graphic design be able to build my own websites, lay out my own magazines, do it all myself. So, I went to school got a degree in web and graphic design, to control both of our, my wife's website, as well as, our business website. Then, I was like, I'm always building stuff around the house, build a lot, why not see if I could work in houses and build stuff? Found a contractor, basically got underneath him, started putting in kitchens and bathrooms and revamping houses and putting all the new stuff in new buildings, stuff like that, all the while, I'm still getting in nursing.

LF: Wow.

LS: That's what I do.

LF: So, did you mention something about like, legal?

LS: It's pre-paid, it was called pre-paid legal, it's now called legal shield, I was an independent associate. I was an associate for them, which basically was, you, you offer,

it's basically insurance, like you know how you have car insurance, in case you get into an accident? Well basically, you have legal, lawyers, in case you need one, you know, which most of us do, we just don't know we do. I mean, it's something as simple as just kinda, signing a lease, signing a rental agreement, buying a car. Most of us just do it, we read it, we sign it, because it's, it's very expensive. But, with them, with the company I was I would like to get to people who, you know, basically in my community, like, look, you do have access to an attorney, you don't have to have all this money, pay a monthly fee, you have the best lawyers there are like, it's not just Joe Schmo, it's like the best attorneys. For just like a monthly fee. So I think for that, that I was real passionate about, you know, so, still am. But that was pretty much it. That's legal.

LF: That's really cool. So can you kinda talk about sort of your coming out experience?

LS: My coming out experience was I, I was 19, 20, I was 20. I really didn't know, that's it, I had my feel ups with girls. I found I was attracted to girls, but I thought it was just friendship, I was like, I just want to be her friend, you know this, I never saw it as anything other, as anything other than that until I was like 20. I was working off something else I did, I was kinda bored, didn't have anything to do, didn't want to really hang out, as much, so I took a job with a detective agency, which is basically, they provide security for colleges. And so I was doing that, but I was, no, that's a lie, that was shortly after that, I lied, it was, I was actually recruiting still for the army because right after this, I went into that. I was actually recruiting, in Pittsburgh, for the army, working at a recruitment station and, I saw this female in a store, we were getting lunch or something, and I don't know, something, I looked at her, I was like she, I like her boots, guys were like, basically, why won't do you tell her you like her boots? I'm like, oh no, she might think I'm gay or I like her, I'm not gonna do that and they're like well you kinda jumped to that conclusion real fast, why would she think you're gay cause you said you like her boots? I'm like, I don't know, (____?) look at her, I don't know, she might. Anyway, we go back to the office. She, I get her phone card, or like, sergeant's note there's a call on the line for you, I get on, and girl says, "hey, I just saw you at, I can't remember where it was, I just saw you wherever we were and, wanted to know if I could take you out." I'm like, "excuse me? I'm like, oh you're the girl who had that red eagle." She's like, "oh so you noticed me." I'm like "oh no no, I liked your car and I liked your boots, I mean." She's like, "well I wanted to know if I could take you out?" And I'm like" no, I'm not gay, I'm engaged, I'm getting married." She's like, "no, you really are". I'm like, "no, I'm really not." So the guys say, "go out with her." No she says, "Well, you go have drinks with me, I have some names I could give you guys who are looking to go into the military." Guys say, "go out and get the names." I'm like, "really, you guys? You're like, you pimp me to the guys, you pimp me to the girls like, are you guys serious" They're like "Just get the names, bring em back to us." I go home, I find myself getting dressed to meet her. I'm like changing clothes, I'm like, what is wrong with you? Why are you changing your clothes so much, who cares? You don't like her. I go out with her, hang out with her for awhile. She kissed me. I liked it. The rest was history. Called off my engagement and then dating women. That's it.

LF: Can you talk about, a little bit, about your engagement that you had before then?

LS: Really nice guy, someone I dated for awhile, we broke up, got back together. Had a lot in common, we kinda just got engaged, we were gonna get married, thought it was really gonna work out and just realize I was gay. That is truly the only reason that it didn't work out. I'm just like, I do, I know I love you but, I started realizing and I think I just really love you as a person. Because once I realized that I had feelings with a girl it wasn't the same between he and I. Like, I didn't, I mean, I didn't tell him for like two days but, cause I was trying to work some things out within myself and I'm just like, let's try to go back to normal. But it wasn't the same, the intimacy, the hugging was not, it wasn't the same it just more or less felt like my buddy. And no longer was romantic and immediately, it was like a flash of my life just went across and I was like wow, this explains so much. I've always liked girls, I just never realized it until the right girl pulled me out and made me realize it. But she didn't make me, she just brought it to my attention. Like yeah, you really do...and I've been like that

LF: Yeah, and it's so interesting just the sort of, lack of language we have surrounding these identities, how do we even know if they're even a possibility?

LS: Right, I definitely agree with that. I think I was just having a talk earlier with my wife and I'm like, you know, I think the reason why I was with guys was because it felt like that was what I was supposed to be doing, even though my family do, I'm in a, I was brought up in a very open family. Like, they don't really care what you do. But, with seeing, oh okay my mom's married to a guy, I know I have gay cousins, but everybody else seems to have, you know, guys and girls go together. My religious background always said do not, you know, date the same sex, homosexuality is a sin. I was brought up Baptist. And I would always challenge it, like, I don't believe that. I said I don't believe and I was just, because of my cousin, I don't believe my cousin's gonna go to hell because she's gay. I was like, I'm not, however, I don't think she's going to. But it still sits in your mind like it's still there, like what if you're wrong? What if it is wrong? So, I don't think I just ever thought about being with women. You know, it just was like, it was an experimental thing when you were a kid. That's it. You like guys, you date guys. Part of the challenge when I called off my, my engagement was I asked myself a question after, being with a woman, because, you know, kisses lead to other things but never the less. After being with a woman, I said to myself, I'm like, okay, what is it about this like is it just an experimentation things? Did you just want to know? And I said, like, I could really say, with all honesty, I could go without ever being with another man but I couldn't do it, I couldn't not after, crossing this line, go without ever being with a woman. And it helped me with my decision.

LF: So could you talk about how, sort of, your family reacted?

LS: I went to my mother first. Told my mom, "like hey, I met this girl, I like her, no, I kinda like her, like her. Like, I'm kind of dating her." My mom's like, "oh, well I just want you to know it's a hard life." I'm like, "what?" She's like, "it's a hard life and I thought you were gay since you were five so, it's not like I have thought that". I was like, "well, you say it's a hard life, how do you know?" And she looked over. And I said,

“I’ve kinda had a hunch that you’ve messed with women before too”, said to my mom, as well. So, that’s how that went. Rest of my family just kept saying we’re kinda glad you came out of the closet. I’m like, I was never in the closet, I said, I didn’t, I wasn’t hiding around, I wasn’t sneaking, dating girls, I didn’t know and I’m telling you guys. And they’re like, no, we’ve kind of known you’re gay for a long time, they’re like, we knew, we were just waiting on you to know. That was my coming out experience is everybody, I was like trying like come out to shock they like, hey. I called some friend from high school like this one guy who I was really good friends with who I thought was gay. But he was dating a girl and I’m sure he may have thought I was gay. So, I call him, I’m like hey you’re not gonna believe this, I’m gay, I just realized I like girls. And he’s like, oh cool, I have a boyfriend and I’m like, oh wow. So, this is what I’ve done. Every time I told someone they’re like yeah, we knew. All but my best friend. And she was just like, I thought you had big news to tell me, like that kinda could’ve happened after I got done. I rushed over her house. She’s taking a bath and I’m like, I gotta tell you something, hurry up, get out the tub, get dressed, we need to go for a drive. She’s like what’s wrong? I’m like, it’s really important, I just really and I tell her and she’s like you could’ve told me that after my bath. She tells her family, she says her family all said, seriously, you didn’t know? So, it wasn’t as exciting as I wanted it to be. I wanted to hear like, I wanted some of them stories, something like, oh, guess what, everybody be shocked. No one was.

LF: So just sort of rolling back to clarify, did you say your mom knew you messed around with girls or did she mess around with girls?

LS: My mom did. My mom, my mom goes in and out of the life. Like, she goes in and out of the life. Pretty much that’s all I can say, she’s in and out the life. I mean, everybody in my family, I just mentioned just does.

LF: And you mentioned how it’s turns out your best friend in high school was also, or good friend in high school, was also gay, it’s so interesting how we sort of find each other.

LS: Right, and it’s crazy because I was so interested. He worked at a clothing store, and he taught me how to tie ties. I don’t know I was just very interested in tying ties. So I was like, how do you tie ties? Which is so great now cause I can tie a tie. Cause I wear a lot of them. But yeah he was and people used to say and I was like no, he has a girlfriend, he’s not, he’s not gay, like, no. Turns out we both were. Go figure.

LF: And can you sort of talk about sort of the adult family that you’ve formed today marriage, children, grandchildren, current family?

LS: You mean as far as what I see for me?

LF: You know, just right now, maybe the future.

LS: Well, I'm married, I hope to have kids in the future. Just don't know whether they're to be biological, adopted, I don't know, I don't know yet. And everybody else, just my friends, they're all my family. But, I see like just a small (____??) my wife, couple kids, and then all of the friends that have now become our family. That's pretty much it and our godchildren. That's the gist of it.

LF: Okay so how long have you been married?

LS: It'll be two years in August. I feel like my face being burnt on one side when you get asked a question like that. Like, it should be real quick. [laughs] Yeah, it'll be two years in August. We got married in London, Ontario.

LF: So can you talk about sort of your experience in the military?

LS: Oh, yeah, that's, well, I would say I would still be in to this day, had it not been for my sexuality. What happened was I didn't actually have any problems per say like people, some people who knew me, they knew, wasn't that big a deal. They hung out with me afterwards, no one really cared. When I was in Pittsburgh no one really cared. It didn't actually become an issue until I was up here. I was in Harrisburg for let me see, about three years in, yeah. Kinda, I guess people just, I don't know, kind of get attracted to other people, you just get, it's just people you know. You're like, okay, I wanna hang with this group of people. So we had that in, my unit, I was a reservist. So, in my unit, my medical unit, this, there was a few of us that used to sit together, hang together, go to lunch together. And, we were all, lesbians and, people started leaving the unit, slowly but surely. And I'm like, there's, why are all the people I'm like cool with? They're like yeah, this units not right, you know, it's not cool, I'm not going to another unit. And I'm like why? And they're like cause I think they're picking with me simply because of my sexuality, even though it's Don't Ask, Don't Tell. So no one really actually kinda asked you, but you could just tell, you could feel a sense of things. I'm like well I don't know, I'm not having any problems, no one's said anything to me, I was training, some of the new troops that was coming in, that were pretty basic like, I don't know I'm pretty good. So everybody was gone, there was just me left. And I'm like, okay, it's different, and, I came into drill one day and the lieutenant said to me, I notice you have this little rainbow swirl on your car, does that mean you're gay? And I said, I thought it was Don't Ask, Don't Tell? Like, why are you asking me? And she was like, I'm not, I was just asking about the swirl. I never answered her. So, and I started noticing things, I was like, you know what, I can't afford that the last nine years of my life be wiped out behind a dishonorable discharge because someone wants to investigate whether I'm a, lesbian or not, I was like, which it's very easy to find I lived with my partner at the time, like, it's, I can't do it. So, I asked to be released and, be discharged. Basically, I got my discharge papers. Never wanted to, wanted to be in the military since I was twelve. But, couldn't risk a dishonorable discharge. That was in 2002.

LF: So, the unit was based here?

LS: Mhm.

LF: So, do you think it has anything to do with the context of the area?

LS: I do. I do, cause out in Pittsburgh, no one, it just, no one really asked, they didn't care. You kinda just sensed for like who is, who isn't. Some people you may see out it but, no one really cared. It just wasn't that big of a deal in that unit. It wasn't that big of a deal when I was in New Jersey, when I was stationed down there, you know. I was just cool, me and the guys, we hung out, Fort Indiantown, even Fort Indiantown Gap [Lebanon County, Pennsylvania]. It was simply here, right smack in Harrisburg.

LF: And, so, is there anything more you'd like to say about Don't Ask, Don't Tell or have you gotten everything?

LS: I just think it was ridiculous. It's Don't Ask, Don't Tell, but it's, that's not true because, the thing about that is that I glad it's godd, let me just put it that way. The flip side of that is that it's Don't Ask, Don't Tell but, if somebody suspects you may be, you can have some proof they can launch an investigation, if you, if you were shown to be, you could be dishonorably discharged. So, there's really no protection in that, there you go, like, I won't ask you, but I'm gonna assume, to get you investigated, you know.

LF: Do you think the sort of aftermath of Don't Ask, Don't Tell is positive?

LS: You mean with it being gone?

LF: Yeah, with it being gone.

LS: Oh, one hundred percent, one hundred percent. So much so that I went to try to re-enlist. Problem is, I've been out so long that I'd have to drop a rank. And I was just like, I put in time for my rank and I'm not dropping back down. So, that was it. That, then, I talked to other military people who were ecstatic about it being gone. Could just live free, get all the benefits, just the same as everyone else. Like, why shouldn't you? You're married, why shouldn't you get housing too? But not only did you not get the housing, couldn't even tell you were married. So, there was the fear of losing your job. But not just losing a job, but getting a dishonorable discharge, which kinda puts a black mark on you forever. So, yes, it's very positive, with it being gone.

LF: And, can you sort of talk about your sort of organizational affiliation, so maybe, let me just see, any sort of, yeah, things like that?

LS: Well, I'm a member of the LGBT Center.

LF: Yeah.

LS: Down in Harrisburg. I had a drag king troupe which, was great. It was one of, the first all-black drag king troupes here in Harrisburg there weren't any. I wanted to do, basically do drag king stuff and I found it was really hard no one would like book me. I

couldn't get in, and I know, I'm like how do you break into this industry if no one will let you? So, there was a pageant coming in up, which anyone could be a part of. I decided well, I'm gonna go ahead and be in the pageant and everyday during I remembered it, being in the pageant, got a response, got the club to let me go, like, a couple times and come perform a couple times. But while I'm like, there's no, like where are all the black drag kings? I know they're in other cities. I've seen em, like where are they? And I've seen that it was some of the same problems. So, I was like, well, if you can't get in, make your own. So, I made my own troupe. We, we, my wife, myself, and this was close to like the, my magazine and stuff came over it, but, we decided like, what we'll do is, we'll get the club. Through the shows, bring the performers, no one can tell us no. And that's what we did and we made it a point to allow any king who wanted to, whether you've never performed or been performing for years, had the opportunity to perform. We didn't turn anyone away. And, my troupe formed out of that, from different women and like, there's a lot of white troupes, there's a lot of troupes with like, maybe one black king, all the rest are like white or one latina king or one. Like there was, there was just never like anything here in central PA. So, that's central. No, actually not even in central PA, when I was going out to Philly, it was still the same problem. So, gotta few of my other, friends together, and we performed, we became a drag king troupe. Traveled around, performed here, Pittsburgh, Philly, DC, Baltimore, anywhere. We just traveled around, performed, it was really taken in but that's one of the things I'm affiliated with. I did a magazine, we, my wife and I, we did that for approximately three years I guess. Just gets hard because print is very hard to keep up and going. The magazine, digital, we're trying figure out if we want to take another route. So, we did that for awhile, uh, what else am I, well I'll just, well I think that's it. Did I miss anything? Oh, sorry, my drag king troupe, I forgot, anyway we had, it was called House of Gain, just figured that was kinda catchy. And, myself and a friend of mine, a friend of mine's, we were, doing a female football team here. Was having some problems, struggling, the owner basically took flight. Left the team hanging. No money, no anything. A friend of, I went to a friend of mine who would kinda do business stuff and, used to promote bands and things like that and asked her to help out. We decided to buy the team. We ended up buying the team from The National Women's Football Association. And then so we had a team here called The Vipers, The Central Pennsylvania Vipers. We did that for a few years. Found that it was very hard to get a lot of support for, from the area. To keep the team afloat, you know, it's very, very expensive to run a football team, you know, because we're travelling across from, basically here we could go as far as South Carolina, and as far as Maine. So, we're trying to get all that together and the girls would get sponsorships. It's really hard to get people to support in this area, it was women's full-contact. It was straight up same as the men's football, except for it was women, that's the only difference. So, we did that and, we had to let it go cause we just real taxing just too much. After awhile, but did that for awhile, it was kinda fun.

LF: And can you talk about sort of the drag king troupe, was sort of act you did?

LS: We did anything, like there was no, no limits. There was not much we wouldn't do. We'd do everything from R&B to Rock to Rap. Whatever we thought we liked we would do.

LF: So all sorts of different characters and things like that?

LS: Yeah, well, we didn't so much get into the whole dressing like the people in the song like we might some aspect of it, like, you know, I might have on, I don't know, a low chain if I was doing somebody that had a low chain but I wouldn't like try to like get their whole look. And it was same with us, we would just put our own point, our own, thing into it. Just, brought ourselves. Just had their music with us. We made up our own dance routine, our own steps, we might infuse a little stepping, say one of the frats that we saw, mixed with a move from another group back in the day that we seen, just infuse it all together and come up with our, with what we were gonna do.

LF: That's so interesting to think of the politics that go into reinterpreting the sort of the frat's routine.

LS: Yeah, it is, it is, it's hard to do but, if you look at a lot of steps now, it's all mixed up. If you just really look at like lot of the dance steps, you get like you might have Michael Jackson, you might have James Brown, you might have, like just put together. We just added a little bit of this stepping to it without taking the frat's moves you know we might see something like oh, we like the idea of this hand move motion, we might take that. And we might see something else like oh, we like the way they did a dip, so we might go dip. Dip and then do a hand, you know. That's how we would do it.

LF: And then, sort of, in sort of the greater drag king community in central PA, what made you feel like, that there wasn't a really a space for you, that you needed to make your own space?

LS: One, not being able to even start to perform when I wanted to. Two, when I finally did get in, I didn't see many other people who looked like me. If I had to say, if I seen fifteen kings, maybe one was of color. And I'm just like, wow, cause there's so many of us around and I'm just like where are they? And then we started talking, I'm just like it doesn't seem like, I don't know, like I'm as welcome as I'd like to be, until the crowd, liked me, the audience, liked me. Cause you get into, cause you, it's the club owners that decide whether or not you're gonna perform. But do you make it unless you do as we did and take over the club? And say hey, this is what we're gonna do, we're gonna throw a show at your club and basically you're like, they get the money, for the most part, people thought we were, that's the crazy part, people thought that we were making out. They're like oh my goodness you guys have got to be making so much money because we were pack the clubs. But, we, the, it was, I guess it was originally Beetle but when we started going it was Pink Lizard. We were up there and, I'll never forget, the owner came to us after our first show and said, I've never seen so many black lesbians, were did they come from? What were you giving them to come out for? You didn't give them anything to come out for. They hear, what? Black kings? Oh I gotta see what this is, I've never seen

that here, like, a whole group of them, you mean a whole show, like, and granted, we had a white king, latina kings, but it was the majority was, were black or you know, mixed or something. So, they would come out in drones and we would have at least 250 in a club, 250 people and people basically you know everybody's all excited first and people's minds go, straight counting like, 250 of us and we paid, we all paid ten dollars admission, oh my goodness, they must be making out. We weren't, weren't making that money. And, shortly after, I think, well yeah, we did a couple shows there, it switched over to Liquid and while the switch, the transition was happening, we started doing some shows at Stallion. And the women's bar was too small, I mean we still got a lot of people. It was small, it was crowded, it was hard to do. But we had all the crowd and the owners of Liquid asked us if we would bring our show to their club because they didn't have anyone. Like they had opened up and they weren't getting a crowd, they couldn't pull a crowd. We say fine, we come up with it this time, we're like let's do a contract. You know what I mean, we're working hard for this plus, we pay our kings, not a lot, but we pay em a decent amount. We pay our headliners a lot because they're traveling. We're bringing headliners in from North Carolina, D.C., New York, everywhere we had a headliner, every show. But, we were like we paid for like traveled, some lodge, you know, travel, lodging, and then just let them perform. Because everyone wants to feel like they're worth something. You know, nobody wants to just do keep doing stuff for free and spend all this money. So, we did that, we came up with a contract. And the owners began to do other things, like, tell us, oh well only this amount of people came and I'm like, no, actually count it. Like, I count it, I know, I just stopped because after that we were capped out at a certain amount like we made a certain amount. That was the end and then they made all the rest. So, I count it, once I get to our cap, I'm cool, no problem, but then by the end of the night the count would come in and it would be well under the cap. And I'm like, wow, so there's nights were we're paying out and we've literally gone to the ATM and pulled money out of our business accounts or (___?) magazine accounts and finish paying people because we didn't make enough at the door because, you know, like, we didn't have that many people come in. So, after awhile, we just stopped. We were like it's becoming too much like it's crazy, the industry, and like wow. So, we backed out. Then we just started doing shows everywhere else. And up here another reason that we didn't feel so welcome is because even though we're running a magazine, we have like one of the top troupes now, even in all black king troupes, we have one of the top troupes in the area, people really like and are enjoying who's performing. We never once got asked to Pride [Pride Festival of Central PA] here, to perform, to do anything. I called them once and I'm like, why are we not, but then I see other troupes and maybe I see two black people out of all the performers, two black kings. I'm like, really? I'm like, it's so interesting how this it works around here, you know, and then, that doesn't make you feel very welcome. So, and we used vend there too, we paid to vend, vendors there. Still never asked. Finally, we get a call from Pittsburgh Black Pride, who actually asked us to not only come to Pittsburgh Black Pride and with our troupe to perform but also if the two of us, being as we're magazine owners, would judge one of their pageants. It we, we've been to take part in everything. They call us for everything and I'm like, it's so, we've been here for all these years, doing all we have, and they won't get us yet, we're getting calls from Pittsburgh. We've been in DC where people been open to us I'm like it's just a very interesting scene and no sooner

we left, it went, it kinda went back to the way it was. We had a few more black kings performing which was a few of them who were in my troupe and things like that but that's it....

[battery runs out]

LF: So, could you tell us your birthdate?

LS: March 15, 1976. I am a pisces. Nice.

LF: And then could you tell me the original name of the Pink Lizard?

LS: I think it was Beetle's. And I think that was right, I got here in '98 in Harrisburg and I think right in '98 is when she was switching over in '98, '99, she switched over because I remembered it because my mom came here to see me and she was hanging out with me at the top of Stallion, used to be Twin Peaks or Twin's, something like that. And we were at the top, Marcia was passing out flyers, and my mom like said something slick like to Marcia when she was passing out the flyers, that's how I can remember the date. I was like, mom seriously stop?

LF: And so who were sort of the founding members of your troupe?

LS: The original members of the troupe were Misty who goes by, her name's Misty Brown, who goes by Big Daddy, but she's the smallest one in the troupe, she's like 5'2", then you have, Rhoda Bird who would go by Choca Latte, really smooth, dark complected drag king, you had, Rici, Mauricia Radford, went by Silk, cause she just thought she was just too smooth for everyone, and you had, let me see we got, Bird, Misty, Rici, oh, and then we have one other member, Jackie, went by Panama Jack, yeah, Panama, she went by Panama Jack, and me that's us right here [pointing to a shirt with their silhouettes] that would be Bird, Rici, Misty, me, and Jackie, which became the Studs Magazine logo, our silhouettes, to show, because we wanted to do something like is it girls? Is it guys? Really not sure what it is, you know. So, after that, yeah, we did that and, we did calendars and started highlighting other, masculine identified women. So, we were thinking like when you go get a calendar, you see one of two things, really sexy women, like all nice build, or really built men. Like there's no in between. Like, what about the masculine identified women? Like what about us? We're cute, we're sexy, we want to be highlighted. So, I went around and I put out a, this was when, facebook, not facebook, come on, myspace was still big. So, threw the link out on myspace, started getting all these responses. It was just crazy like people would just come in, left and right that they wanted to be in the calendar. So, we decided that we would throw a calendar, we made a calendar like each year and highlight different people. And it worked out well. So, we liked it, I don't know if I ever said why I started the magazine, one of the reasons I started it is because I like what people would say and I, it's really weird because I don't like to conform to people, like guy clothes, girl clothes. But, what everyone would say is guy's clothes, is what I would like. I just felt like they were clothes that I liked on me, just most times I'd have to look at a guys magazine, find em like GQ, things like that and too just see like the stuff that I liked. I don't know, stuff

about cars, stuff about whatever. So I was like, I like looking at magazines where I see more people like me. And, I was having a talk with, a good, a friend of mine then, now my wife, who I married in 2007. So, I was talking to her and she's like, you know, that sounds like a good idea. If you ever want to make it happen, um, talk to me, we should sit down, have a business meeting. And I did, and, we decided that we'd do that. So, upon starting this magazine, we realized that there were actual women out there, masculine identified women who were starting their own clothing lines, for the same reason. So, then we ended up with a whole, like, basically if you look at any magazine, whatever they have, like a fashion issue or this little blurb in it like do's and don't's or what's the hottest thing that's out. We had the same thing but it was actually masculine identified women who had made the clothing and then would kinda make it like unisex or like this was for whoever. And didn't have to go to, like to a men's section to buy it, you just order it and it's yours. And, just amazing, at how many people were out there, one of the first people to take a chance on us and I always have to say it's because it's hard to give something to people when they don't know who they are. Like, we're just starting this magazine. We started on a borrowed laptop and a credit card. That's all we had and we designed it, went and charged a printer, made the magazine, our first magazine ourself. Which, well one of the first ones and just had it bound, that's why it was bound and, cause we were just trying to figure out something to make. We printed it, we printed ourselves and bind it, and then we moved into finding other ways to do it, you know. So anyway, called her and was just like, listen we have this magazine that's coming out, we're putting a fashion issue in it, and we'd like to highlight you and I see, you know, you're doing a clothing and what not. And she was married, she was like I talked to my wife, she's like, you know don't do it. Somebody before said they were going to do a magazine, I sent them stuff, they didn't do shit, you know, I feel like I have a really good feeling, that you wanna send it, I'll send you stuff. So, she sent me like a box of t-shirts, hats, everything, it was Studville clothing out of Atlanta. Melissa Boles was her name, the owner of it. And she took that chance and people took to it. To this day, I still, I wear one of her little shirts. I have people ask me where I got it from. It was, half gray, it's like a checkmark, and it's half gray, but then the other side, there's like the colors of the rainbow. And, the gray was for just neutral, you know, everybody in there's the rainbow colors and to this day I still have people who ask me. It kinda looks like a v. It's great, so I did that, and upon that, more people started coming in and sending me stuff, to, do it. So, we're figuring out how are we gonna give them the best for their money? Like they're standing up. So, taking from inventory, we know it's hard, you know, you're not out there. So we added, fashion edition to our magazine releases, we already had it in the magazine. But every time, we did it, we would release quarterly, our magazine. We'd do our quarterly releases, we filled a big release show, we'd throw, we've actually thrown one in Pittsburg [Pennsylvania]. But we've done a big release show and what we would do is, as a part of the drag king's performanc and we started having a couple females perform like, feminine female perform. And then we'd have, in between, a fashion show. Kinda like Rip the Runway and we'd have the models model that magazine's clothing designer's clothing line. Let me give out their information. Pretty cool. And, we started finding people wanted to see it more, so, we started recording it. Which is the dvd we're actually gonna give to you all. Which is right here.

So, we're gonna donate that to the center. It's one of the DVDs, but it's one that you can look at, you see, it's kinda fun to show.

LF: Definitely. Yeah, and speaking from sort of my own personal experience, I know how much anxiety can go into going into a store or shopping in many different sections with being in many different sizes...

LS: Yes.

LF: in different sections in different stores. So, it's so great that you make it through the mall or something like that because it's so difficult for some people to find the clothes they want.

LS: It is. It is. I found that out and people were just, you get happy when you find something, you're like, oh, this is just what I want, like, you may see something in the women's section you like, that you just like the way it might be cut. Like, oh those pants might fit a little better for whatever reason. Or you might see something in the men's section and like that might fit. But why should you have to worry about feeling like oh these are girl's shoes or oh these are guy's shoes, if you're a girl, you know. Why? Why can't you just buy the clothes cause you like the way they fit? And that's what they've done.

LF: And then like the environment of a store, everyone watching you.

LS: And it is, especially if you have to try it on.

LF: Yeah.

LS: And I think that is harder for males if they're trying to try on, you know, something that is in a female's section, as opposed to a female that's trying on something in a male's section. As opposed to, the only time I find it's like really weird when I go and try to get like a suit and tie. Then they're like, is this for your husband? And I'm like no it's for me for me...So, I do, so, I do appreciate, you know. Wish there were more people out there. I wish stores would become kind of neutral, just clothes, just put them on and this is what it is, does it fit you, do you like the way it fits, buy it. That's it.

LF: Then how do you think your sort of, LGBTQ identity and issues sort of influence family, social, religious, civil, political, spiritual aspects of things?

LS: Hm. I think family-wise it's just it's more generations and my family, since I'm out, I think they get to see more of the freedom in it, like, like I said we both have, you know, the gay cousin. But now, with me and being married, they get to see like, wow, it's like a whole life. Now I don't think, any of us quite understood that growing up but now I get to look at my nieces growing up and it's just the norm for them now. Like, it's not, it's not that big of a deal, you know, they asked me a couple times, they're like, oh so you guys are married. Then it comes to the point where my, even my and I know it's

affecting them cause my niece at one point says to my mom, she, my niece was probably about five at the time so like, oh when I grow up, I'll get a girlfriend. Just, out of the blue, my mom was like, oh, okay, your choice. Like go out with whoever you want. And I'm like, I don't think that that could happen if you just can't see the normalcy of it. It's like, yeah I had a gay cousin but the normalcy I'd seen was a guy and a girl together, now we're seeing and then our friends hang around us a lot, they hang around everybody. All of my family and they're like this is normal. Whatever you're attracted to is normal whether you're attracted to the same sex or the opposite sex, or both. It's normal. So I think it's how it affects that. Political views I look at their agenda. If they don't have my agenda, my, meaning LGBTQIA, black, and women rights, I can't. I can't. I have to look at all the best, as a whole, can't just take out one, you gotta, they all have to be together. It has to be. So, that's for my, political, what's the other ones?

LF: Social, religious, spiritual.

LS: Spiritual, I find myself saying I'm more spiritual, than I am religious. Yeah, well, I used to be, now I'm, I'm very spiritual. I believe in God. I have a connection to God. All of that stuff. I'm just not very religious because from what I've seen is, the way people are using religion to further their agenda and not for the purpose of which it should be used or for the good and I'm, I'm just not okay with that. So, I find myself doing spiritual and looking for a spiritual home that can help me with that, that could give a good message and not tell me, you're going to hell. You know, so it's things like that. It kinda guides everything I do socially, I tend, tend to lean more to people who are LGBTQ and A, you know, so I and I, so I like people who are all inclusive. Yeah, before, I could hang around people who liked gays, who didn't like gays, who, you know, prior to me realizing. Now I can't. If you're not all inclusive then I really would prefer not to be around you. I can tolerate you and deal with you if I have to and in my life because everybody has their opinions. So I could tolerate you too, but I'm not, I don't want you in my inner social circle. I think that's pretty much it kinda guides me, it's not the end all be all because it might sound weird but, I'm black first and I say that as an aspect because when you see me, you see my skin color first. Then you go into everything else I am, you know, you're first like, black, woman, lesbian. That tends to be how it goes, it's, woman doesn't even come first. Like, it's, it's, it's black, woman, lesbian. So, I'm guided by all those things and they, I'm always looking for, how can I do more for community, how can I help the community, how, you know, what is there I could do, like my biggest thing that I want to do, at some point when I'm able to and I'm trying to get there, is open a home for displaced LGBTQI teens because there's so many and I just just doing a magazine and seeing different people and stuff like that, I'm like, my heart I just so wanna do that, like, a safe space, like, you don't have to be out there. You don't have to be on the streets. Just to know that there is a safe place for you and then a second, funnier, for me, part but, it had a little fun with it. There's a lot of younger lesbians who are being mentored by videos and TV. Like, they may not be around other lesbians or especially, I'm talking masculine identified, those who feel like masculine identified. They may not be around like other masculine identified lesbians so, they then, they then find themselves drawn to males in videos and it's so strange cause I'm looking at em and I'm just, I'm just like, there's so much more to it. So, I'd like to have like a grooming

school like basically, yeah, no, you don't wear Timbs and jeans to an interview because you're a masculine identified woman. Yeah like, if, if this is where you feel, this is what you need to do. I, so I actually wanna have a grooming, a school that's just like where it just grooms you into it, how to tie a tie because there's so many that may not had fathers around or men. So, as opposed to trying, they stick to t-shirts, jeans. They won't put that dress to them. So I like to do things like that and just say this is what you do, this is how you do it, this a proper way to dress, this is not a proper way to dress. There's different things for different situations. So, those are two big things that I want to do.

LF: Yeah and then, also with that because everyone's on the internet right now, you definitely could do sort of an electronic thing as well.

LS: Yeah, I've thought about that. I could do that, just kinda want some hands on too. It's just something about being personal. It is today, like everything's electronic and I think that's one of the things, is like we have no 1-on-1, face to face time. Where you could get it like all day you could tell somebody this is what you do cause we had tips in our magazine for stuff like that. But to have someone there, like, like, you could go on a website and find out how to tie a tie but to have someone there and tie a tie, for you and show you. There's a whole nother experience with that and that's what I want to give, people the experience they didn't have. You know, most people don't bring their little girls up learning how to tie a tie cause that's what a boy does. But what if that is your daughter? What do you do? So, I'd like to do that.

LF: Can you talk a little bit more about, sort of, your religious background and development?

LS: Grew up Baptist, stayed at a Baptist church for the majority of my life. As I got older, I went into a Church of God in Christ. Stayed there until I felt like I was gonna go to hell and I didn't know what I was gonna do with myself like I was literally losing my, I was losing my mind, I was like oh my goodness, like, I was born so crazy with everything was like I can't watch this, that's lust. I can't think of that, that's lust. I can't eat too much of that, that's gluttony. I can't like, I was, I, (___???) I was to the point where it was a period of my life where I only watched the Disney channel. It was the only thing I could find that didn't have some aspect that was gonna make me go to hell. So, I had to, so then from there I went to no religion, at all. I was like, screw it. I can't, I'm not gonna do any. And it seems like once I realized I was gay and I started meeting more people and looking at different spiritual things, that I realized, wait a minute, that's not truth. You just need to have a relationship with God and things of those sorts. So from that point on, I just considered myself spiritual and I actually go to whatever church I feel that I'm led to. I might go to a different church every week. You know, my wife and I, we say we church hop. We hop to churches, we might find one, we might stay there for a few months. We're like oh my goodness, we really like this. Then, all of the sudden, we may get a feeling like, ugh, I'm not feeling too great. So, we'll hop somewhere else. We'll hop somewhere else and we'll keep hopping until we find we that church where we decide that we actually want to be members. So, that's where I'm at right now. I think the last few times I've been to church, I've been to a Brotherland Christ Church. Hm, I looked up all of their, their how they feel about LGBTQ, and homosexuality, and it's the general stuff that every other church says, you know, it says in the bible homosexuality is a sin. However, and yet the Brotherland believes that, believed that we do not have the right to judge. [coughs] And that was a big deal to me. I believed it should be open and

invite all people to the lord and now I've gone there a few times and I've liked it. Well, but next week I might be at Saint Michael's. I have, I don't claim anything. I just say I'm spiritual. Might go to, it might be, I don't, well, yeah, I don't really see myself at a Catholic Church. I don't know, though, I just don't, I don't think I'd be perceived well cause I'd have to dummy down my dress cause I find that, like friends of mine, for instance, they invite us to a Baptist, I think it was a Baptist church. Can't remember, we're gonna say it was a all black church and I'm generally wear a button up, tie and I found myself like, don't put on a tie, that might go over too far, you're gonna walk in the door, people are gonna have a whole fit that you got on a tie. And I'm like, if I have to do that much, before going to worship God, that's a problem. Like my concentration should not be on whether or not I put on a tie because everyone's gonna judge me. It should just be, well, I hope the sermon's good, gonna have a good sermon today. You know, but it's not, it's so much more the people that I can't deal with. I can't be somewhere where all day I'll sit in church thinking about people staring at me and judging me. So...

LF: So can you talk sort of in your awareness of and engagement with the LGBTQ community socially, politically, civil rights in central PA or the world outside?

LS: With my awareness of it?

LF: Yeah, just awareness, involvement, things like that.

LS: Well, I'm, I'm always involved because my wife tends to be on every single, like, board, committee, anything so, if she's interested, I have to find out what's going on, so, I'll mention myself. But generally, it's just, I can't even think of anything we're not like, I'm really just sitting here tryna think, I can't think of anything we're not a part of. Like, I'm really tryna think, like, so much stuff. Uh, I'm at a loss, this is like, if it's, if it's about someone's rights or advocation, and we can be there, we're there. We're there. Simply as that, that's the best I could put it in words. Simply, if it's a good cause we're there. If the center is in need of something and we have it, we give it, you know. Whether it be time, items, money, we'll do it.

LF: So do you know any sort of important events or turning points in your life?

LS: Important events, well, when I was kissed by a woman, and realized I was a lesbian. That was kinda important for me. When, I realized that I'd have to leave the military simply because I liked women and (____??). That was heartbreaking for me because I thought that that's where I was gonna be, like, I never thought that I would not be a part of the military even though I was reserves, I volunteered most of my time active and would do medical support for field troops just cause I enjoyed the environment. So that was a big turning point that that came, I won't be able to do that anymore. When I met my wife. When I married her, that's a turning point, cause that that solidified it. You're married to a woman, you're definitely a lesbian. Like, you know but now, you know and everyone know because like, it's no longer like when you're in a relationship, you could say anything, you know, like, I love my partner, you know. It's just like to get into the

wife mode, like, there's no, there's nowhere else, you're all of that, my wife. You know, you know what I mean, I wonder if she means wife like wife-wife? Like, it's not, you know. When you say like, oh, that's my partner, wonder if she's talking about her business partner, wonder if, you know? That's all, so that was a turning point really like, like you actually did it, like you took the step. Although, it was comfortable with me but, it's just like, wow, like, it starts making you think like cause, I do home repair. So, when people say, are you married, I would say no, it's the end of discussion. You know, you don't have to deal with it. You say yes, now you're like, their like oh, so what does your husband do? Well, my wife, you know, so, it's like a lot to think about. So, that's like a huge turning point and I think when I, really thought about it, I'm like, oh man, you're getting married, like, it's just out there. Even though, I'm out with everyone, who knows me, you know, it's just, it's really out there. The start of my drag king troupe, definitely, a change. It's a, it was probably the first inclusive brotherhood with other masculine identified women, it was like a true, like brotherhood. I was like, this is great, you know, everybody's like me, we're all the same, so that was a big turning point that had that camaraderie. When I helped produce my wife's cd. That was a big changing point, especially because her cd had a lot of stuff about women loving women and that stuff, that was pretty, pretty cool. Like, it's out there in the world, and I think the, I think that's pretty much the biggest, biggest turning points for me, the biggest things in my life that stick out.

LF: Yeah, is that cd vocal, or poetry?

LS: It's poetry, but it's all original beats. There's no samples or anything. We actually had, had someone make the beats and a lot of times, we could be in the studio and, you know, get on the keyboard and bass and do it right then and there. So that was, that was a fun experience. Yeah, oh, and when I placed in a stud pageant. I came in, what was it, third, came in the third place, in, the National Nubian Stud (____??) Pageant which was cool.

LF: And, sort of, what changes have you seen sort of within the LGBT community or maybe the greater world in terms of acceptance or celebration? And, sort of, acceptance is such a passive word, what sort of challenges do you think remain as well?

LS: I think there's still racial challenges that remain because a lot of like LGBT community, in it's, (____??) it's crazy because over the last few weeks [pauses to get a glass of water]

[video cuts out]

The challenges is racial divides still, and what I end up seeing is, especially over the last few weeks with, the GSA Summit and just listen to a lot of speakers, people speak is that, (____???) there's more, a lot of black homosexual people, whom who have the same feeling that I have it's like within the community you almost have to give up some of you blackness to assimilate. And that's interesting, so I think that's a challenge that definitely needs to be passed and I think it we just have to open it up and literally just and just be inclusive of everybody and everything, not just, oh we're so inclusive because you're a homosexual, you know. We need to, we need to include everything, everybody needs to

comfortable, that's a challenge. The changes I've seen is, well, look at all the states that are getting marriage equality. That's, that's exciting. Military's now open, you can serve openly. More and more people are just seeing it as normal and that's the change I've seen that impacted me a lot, that really impacts me, that I'm like, to think like, just, I'll say ten years ago, we're at, it's, you wouldn't have even have been in Pennsylvania. You wouldn't have health insurance together. You wouldn't be married. You wouldn't, you know, people are still being, you know, more people will still look at you as something is wrong with you. Take it further back, when you're looking at when people used to try to shock the gay outta people. Look how far we've come. That's huge you know, that's huge. I think the exodus [Exodus International] program's still a challenge. Like, stop they're homosexual let em be. It's basically is teaching people, helping people through their homosexuality, to not be homosexual.

LF: So, it's like reparative therapy?

LS: Yes, like, no, you're not gay. This is what you need to do, that's, that's a challenge I think needs to go. Let me see, is there any other changes that are...you have to, I mean, there's a lot but these are the ones that I really wake up and smile about, everyday, you know. The fact that there's some parts of Pennsylvania that are now protecting from firing people for gay, not all. One of the challenges is, it needs to just go across the board, it should be a federal law. That's a challenge, the change is that they're starting to. So, I'm excited about that. I think, yeah those are the big ones for me.

LF: So can you talk about sort of the the effect your godchildren had on your life?

LS: Oh, I have one goddaughter and aw, people gonna talk about me for this, but, it made me realize that, like, I always wanted a little boy. Ended up with a goddaughter but, she's so great like, it made me think like, oh, you know, cause everybody talks about me like, if you have a girl, you're just gonna like, what are you gonna do, there's nothing you're gonna do with her, like, just, and I'm like, uh, no, I always talk to my wife and I'm like well if we have a girl, I mean, I'm gonna be her parent still but, you do all that other stuff with her. Like if she likes dolls, you play with dolls. I'm like however, I'm gonna introduce her to all the other stuff, football, and all that other stuff. And I'm like, now having a goddaughter, I just don't care. Like, I just, whatever she wants to do, I don't care, I'm like you wanna do it, let's do it, I don't really care and I don't like, I don't like being touched. I have real aversion to people in my personal space or touching me, I don't really, I'm not a big hugger. But, my friends like to hug me because I'm not a big hugger, so it's like a big game for everyone to try to hug me. It's a terrible game, it's a terrible, terrible game. I just don't like anything on me and I have my goddaughter and people getting like, when I'm with her and, say my wife sees me or even my goddaughter's mother's like, oh, oh my goodness, you let her slobber on you. You see, like it's a big, and I'm just like yeah, who cares, like it's hers. I don't care, I'll hold her up, like look at yourself at dirty and snotty up, like, you know I still love you anyway. I didn't and I thought to myself like, I wanna have a kid. Just gotta make sure to stay clean like, really clean. But I don't, and I think she's helped me with that so I, and I think she's helping me to get over my touching aversion cause I, I constantly want to hug her and

stuff like that, so I think it's helping me with, just a little bit. I don't still don't want to hug my friends too much but, it's helping me a little bit more, you know. I guess, kinda, openly show emotion. That's what it is, I think to show PDA. Oh, and, her name's Trinity, she's the cutest little thing ever. That's all I can say, she's so cute. She's nine months.

LF: And you kinda referenced earlier sort of the confluence of all the different aspects of your identity, so your black identity, your perceived as female identity, your lesbian identity, and sort of the prioritizing of that, so can you talk more of, a little bit about sort of how those identities all converge into the being that is you?

LS: Well, that's a good question. Well, it's, I mean it's first like, the blackness cause it's just, it's who I am. I think with my, masculinity, and it makes me, I kinda, it's kinda hard being black and masculine, sometimes because of sometimes our, the black community, can really have real problems with homosexuality and I'm not saying everyone, I'm just saying that sometimes it does, and me being black and masculine just adds to it because then it gets to oh, well you're trying to be a guy, oh, you wanna be a male, oh, you wanna be this. No, I'm just who I am, just masculine, which makes what I am and years ago, my, like I said, was my friend then but now my wife, she used to say, you're so handsomely beautiful. And I'm like that's such, that's like the best thing ever, like you say handsomely beautiful and I'm like because I am still physically a female, I might not like to be called she and things like that, I don't like, she, her, I just, it becomes weird for me because I have that masculine aspect of me. But to add the handsomely beautiful is pretty much accompanying with so much stuff I end up making it the, the actual slogan for our magazine, handsomely beautiful women. Because it's, it's huge and more people seeing it. So, I think that's what brings in me and it's just that one, I become a little guarded or and I don't know what the reasoning is, like I'm guarded one, because I'm like oh my goodness, this is gonna be a problem because I'm black, oh my goodness there's gonna be a problem because I'm masculine identified, oh my goodness, there's gonna be a problem because I'm a lesbian. So, it's just there's no one thing, like I'm looking at everything, like, uh. So, it, it just, I don't know, it just makes me approach every situation with I try to be open-minded but at the same time I still have that there, in the back of my mind, my mind, no matter what, I think that's how it fits into me as a whole. All in all, I'm very nice, friendly, and loving and stuff, I just don't like to be touched but other than that I'm good.

LF: And then, so can you kinda talk about sort of the, sort of the concept of your drag troupe and the community there and sort of because usually within sort of drag communities, they talk about a drag family, so how do you think that concept of brotherhood and a family sort of played into that community?

LS: I think with us all being masculine identified, you kinda wanted someone else who thought the same as you, felt the same as you, probably would have the same hurdles to get over as you, so, that's one thing that brings us together, and then, the same interests added to it that when by the time the troupe formed, we had gotten to know each other and we just seemed to sort of become a family. Like, it's what we did, you know, it's

like, so great, like, you start of like, we're just gonna be performing but then you find yourself calling each other for other things, you know. And of course like troupes are, people do, go ahead I mean, it might distance and spread but some people you do remain friends with for a very long time and you build a bigger bond. So, I think that's one thing why we just became a family. It's just spending time with each other like, what do you wanna do for the show, what are you gonna do for the show. So then, we would travel together to do it. Then, we're in the same hotels, you know, so, you kinda get thrown into it, actually like, yo, that's my bro and it becomes, I guess real, you know, you like, you start off with my drag brother, it's just my bro, then that's just how it ends like, wow, it's crazy.

LF: And then, sort of, it's so important what you mentioned, before about your wife referring to you as handsomely beautiful, sort of the ways in which language can just all of a sudden click and you finally find the right word to describe how you've been feeling for so long could you talk more about, maybe, sort of words that have had that impact on you or what sort of feelings you get when that happens?

LS: Well, let me see, other than handsomely beautiful, cause that was, that was huge because, that's it, that's me, yeah, that there is a soft side, that's it, another one is, stud. When I really started like researching and we would do, different, workshops, I guess, and we were at, IDKE, which is the International Drag King Extravaganza and it's held in different cities, states, each year. We were in Ohio at one and we were doing a, I think it was called, How Do You Identify? As far as to like different words, you got your stud, butch, ag, well, into what my wife was preparing for that, just looking at all the definitions of different things and really going into the studs, just in them, like it really impacted me and I'm like, I'm a stud. Whereas, as funny enough, that when I first, started talking to, my wife, whose name is Shaashawn, by the way. When I started talking to Shaashawn, and she was asking me, basically about me and I was like, I consider myself stud, and it was a turn-off for her, she was like, a stud, and she had this, this whole perception of what a stud was. Studs don't like to be touched, stud's don't like to receive, studs don't do this, and I'm like, yeah, no, you're more talking about like an ag. So, going into that, that's like a moment where I'm like wow, whereas we're talking now from that conversation to now we're talking eight years and I'm like now saying, I don't really like stud, like, I'll take it, like, cause I've done it. That's why I did studs magazine. I'll take it but I'm more going into a gender neutral. I just like, I'm like I don't want any of those anymore so, that's the way that's affected me now. Like I'm now transitioning out of the word stud, for myself, it just feels like, it feels like changing my name, like, when I'm trying to introduce people to, to me as a name like I'm like no I'm longer going to be called Lindsay, I'm going to be called this, that's how I feel it's with transitioning from that word stud because that was my brand, it's studs magazine, I'm a stud, I'm, you know, like now I'm transitioning like no, I'm really kind of just gender neutral because I think the words have gotten watered down and I'm sure maybe generations before me, by the time I came around, thought that we watered it down. So now I'm at that place where I'm like, this new generation is gonna, is too much, you know. I just don't want anything, you know, so...(_____)???) pretty much.

LF: Can you talk about what sort of lead you to the realization of a more gender neutral identity?

LS: After a round table discussion with, starting off with my, my, troupe brothers, my house brothers, and, then with more people I've met, over the years, more masculine identified women who I've come in contact with and we talked and there's different things that each of us would have, like, when I was late talking about something, like, oh, you know, oh I don't mind doing this for my partner and it was like, no I wouldn't do that, that's too feminine or this, this, and that and the more I kept thinking, I think I'm just gender neutral. Like, I don't want to be identified as a guy or a girl. I just want to be me, I don't want any expectations of, you consider yourself a stud, this is how you're supposed to be, you consider yourself ag, this is how you're supposed to be, you're a lesbian, this is how you should be, you're a woman, this is how you should be. I don't want it, I just want what I want, when I want it and that's what I want to be. So, it just started coming up more and more. So I started thinking best thing I could say is I'm gender neutral, you know. The more times you walk into a woman's bathroom and a little girl, true story, me, a friend of mines, and Shaashawn, and a friend's then girl were walking into a female bathroom, a woman's bathroom in Walmart. Little girl's washing her hands she steps back and says oooh. We're all looking around like what happened, we're like what's wrong, she's like boys aren't supposed to be in the girl's bathroom. We say well how many boys do you see? She points at me and my friend, one of my house brothers, you and you. Huh, we're like, oh okay and just kept on moving. And I'm just like that why I'm gender natural.

LF: So have we missed anything, anything more you'd like to address?

LS: No, I don't think, I think I've got it all.

LF: And then if you, think of any others that you think should be contacted for an interview, let us know.

LS: Yeah, probably my troupe.

LF: Your troupe? Okay. Yeah, I'll definitely pass it on to the people.

LS: At least, three of them, one's not here anymore, in this area, she's alive but she's not in this area, yeah, Rici definitely, Mauricia. She's like 50 something and she's gone through it all, adult children and everything, and, I'd say, and I'll give you the information, another friend of mines who, we keep having this conversation now I used to come to shock everyone whom Tracey is 51, 51, 52 and she's always known she was a lesbian, has never messed with a man, ever. Said no, she was like, yeah no, I like girls, not dealing with guys. I'm like that's, I wish I knew that. Oh, and she's a huge athlete here, broke records, oh yeah, everything and she's been with Amtrak 20 something years now. I think she'd have some interesting stories, she's from here like,
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