

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS TO GENDER IN QUARANTINE THROUGH DRAG

Oral History Interview
with

TANNER FRASER

By COLETTE COMBS
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY BENDER LIBRARY
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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS TO GENDER IN QUARANTINE THROUGH DRAG

NARRATOR: Tanner Fraser

DATE: October 27, 2021

INTERVIEWER: Colette Combs

PLACE: Bender Library at American University

NARRATOR'S PERSONAL DATA

Birthdate: October 1991

Occupation: Drag artist

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

In this interview, Fraser, a non-binary drag artist living in Maryland, reflects upon their life through a gendered lens. They discuss growing up as a tomboy, living in Arizona, their relationship to their parents, youth sports, family dynamics, coming out, grappling with trans identity, discovering drag, and life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fraser describes how serving in the U.S Navy, finging drag as a performance art form, and experiencing the pandemic changed their relationship to and Understanding of their own gender.

INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

There is a background journal entry for this interview submitted at the same time as this transcription.

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INDEX TERMS

Drag, PrettyBoiDrag, Gauge Razor, Non-Binary Identity, Washington DC, Arizona, Scotland, Tomboy, The L Word, One Direction, Familial Relationships, Gender, Youth and Gender, Navy, Military and Gender, Gender Roles, Catholicism, Trans Identity, COVID-19, quarantine, Youth Sports, ADHD,

UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS TO GENDER IN QUARANTINE THROUGH DRAG

Transcription of Interview with Tanner Fraser: on October 27, 2021

CC: Initials of Colette Combs

TF: Initials of Tanner Fraser

00:00:01 **CC**

All right, so we are here on October 27th, 2021 in the American University Library. I'm Colette Combs. I'm interviewing— do you want to introduce yourself?

00:00:12 **TF**

I'm Tanner Fraser, and my drag name is Gauge Razor.

00:00:17 **CC**

And my pronouns are she/they.

00:00:19 **TF**

I use they/them pronouns.

00:00:20 **CC**

They/them. Fabulous. All right, so to start off, could you just tell me a little bit about where and when you were born?

00:00:27 **TF**

So I was actually born in Scotland in 1991. I lived there until I was four and my dad got a job opportunity in Arizona. So we left Scotland in 1995 and moved to Arizona and my family has been there since. I actually moved out to Maryland in 2013. I had joined the United States Navy. They told me I was going to go see the world and then stuck me in Maryland, so— but it was a great time. So I actually came out here with the military, and then in 2018 I got out and decided to stay and go school.

00:01:08 **CC**

Got it. And do you remember much about living overseas?

00:01:15 **TF**

I remember mostly my family. I remember a little bit about, like, the house that we lived in and we grew up in and we kept a lot of our accent. So actually (Fraser switches to Scottish accent) I do have Scottish accent and it's my real accent, but I only used with my family (Fraser switches back to American accent) and then like I switch back and it's really funny, like, I can kind of call it my party trick now. But my family kept our accents, my parents still have theirs, my sister's have their's.

00:01:39 **TF**

We kept in close contact with our family. So we still had some ties, we got back every so often. My youngest sister was actually born out here and she's our American. She had a Scottish accent until she started kindergarten and then it was just gone. So we definitely still kept a lot of the, sort of, home life that my parents had, we kept in touch with our families. We got things sent over, we sent things there.

So, we still managed to have a lot of connection with Scotland. But as far as when I was four, I went to play group had a great time. That's about as much as I remember.

00:02:18 **CC**

And do you remember what the adjustment was like, coming to the United States, to Arizona, after living in Scotland?

00:02:23 **TF**

I think it was harder for my parents. I was just so young. It was super easy for me. My sisters started school. The oldest one ended up skipping a grade and my dad, you know, started work. So it was just me and my mom that first year and so we kind of just did whatever we wanted to do. But I was so young that I was just like, "yeah, this is cool. This is what I got." So I've only ever really known American culture more so, even though my family kept our own culture going on at home and even that — like Scottish culture, it's just mainly what we ate, what we watched, what we supported, you know, Scotland in the football all the way sort of thing. And I think it was just harder for them to adjust. And I remember the last time I went home, I think I was twenty-six or twenty-seven, I think I was twenty-seven, we went home to Scotland, a big family trip, my younger sister just graduated high school. And I remember it was just so different and the general consensus between me and my sisters and my parents was like, it would have been a lot different if we had actually kept you guys here. So I think there was just a lot more opportunity and just general differentness out here.

00:03:43 **TF**

And I think a lot of it just came to the way that like, parents parent and raise their children. A lot of my friends, I remember when I was younger like their parents would like thank them for emptying the dishwasher and say like, "I love you" all the time and my parents were like, "no, your job is to empty the dishwasher. You should know I love you. Why do I have to tell you?" And I think that was just like an attitude of where we come from and Scotland. It was very middle working class. It was it was definitely very— We came just from outside of Glasgow, a little place called Arjury, it was very working-class, very, you know, sort of humble. Everybody's the same. It was very homogeneous over there. You know, everyone's the same. The biggest division is, are you Catholic or a Protestant? And that was about it. And so, coming over here, you know, there's a lot of differences, but my parents were just like, "we are not going to raise you like Americans. Like, we're not American parents. I don't need to tell you I love you. You have a roof over your head. You play sports, and you have food. Why do I have to say I love you? Clearly I love you. If I didn't, you wouldn't have any of this." So it was that— I think that was the biggest adjustment was as a young kid, all the people around me and their friends— like their parents are like "you're so awesome, you're so amazing, way to go." Mine were like "you emptied he dishwasher. That is your job. I'm not thanking you for doing what you were expected to do." So, I think that was the biggest difference just growing up was that sort of disconnect of how American parenting is stylized versus my family, which was not like that at all.

00:05:14 **CC**

And do you think you understood that as a kid that it was a cultural difference?

00:05:17 **TF**

Oh, absolutely not.

00:05:18 **CC**

Yeah. (laughs)

00:05:19 **TF**

Absolutely not. As a kid, I didn't understand it at all as a kid. I was just like, "why don't you love me Mom?"

00:05:24 **CC**

Because you're used to the, like the American—

00:05:26 **TF**

Yeah

00:05:26 **CC**

—That's what you were around.

00:05:27 **TF**

All my friends parents all the time were like, "I love you. Let me hug you, you're, so—" My parents were like, "Stop. Like what do you want? Go calm down. Go go away. Like, stop. Like, why are you trying to hug me right now? Like, what? Are you sad?" "No, I just want a hug." "No. You don't need a hug." Like, I think it was— (knock at the door)

00:05:45 **CC**

Sorry for the interruption.

00:05:46 **TF**

Oh, yeah. No, so I mean, I think it was definitely just like, as a kid, you don't understand it. You just see what everybody else's parents are doing. And my parents were just not like that. And nor did they expect to [be]. So it was until like we were all older and able to have these conversations and really realize that yeah, definitely raised differently. But at the same time, I mean my parents are still together. Thirty— my God, like, thirty-six years, thirty-seven. My parents are still together. Probably actually like each other more now. They're not raising kids anymore. All of my siblings are all grown. I'm grown, you know, so I think they're just loving life so much more. And that's, you know, it's easier to have conversations with them now, where they're like, "yeah, of course, you thought that," but at the time, when you can't explain that to a five-year-old— the five-year-old doesn't understand. And they're like "yeah. Well, that was, you know, it was what it was."

00:06:41 **CC**

Yeah. Absolutely. And so I hear you mention that you have siblings. Could you describe to me who lived in your house growing up?

00:06:48 **TF**

Yeah, so I was the youngest when we moved and so I had two older sisters, Nicole who was five years older than me, and Jillian, who is two years older than me. And then when I was nine, about ten, like, three months before I turned ten, my mom ended up getting pregnant with the youngest. So Hannah was born in 2000. And that was just a weird adjustment with like, there is a baby in the house with us, so I think it was also great. I think we were all a little bit more involved in Hannah and she's, yeah. We joke that she's everyone's favorite sister. Like, she's everyone's favorite sibling, and I think it's because she definitely is like the best of all of us rolled into one.

00:07:38 **TF**

So it was actually just four girls in the house growing up, and it made for some interesting, fun times. As my mother said, she would never do it again. She's like, never. Never would I have three teenage daughters at once. She was like "it was easier with Hannah. There's only one." She's like the three of you at once— and I, you know, I laugh because the bathroom was always a mess. Who knows who was wearing— like, I mean, it was the joke of like, "is that my shirt? Is that my shirt? Is that my shirt?" Like, you know? I know it's funny like growing up. We were all just like "oh my God, I hate you." And now I'm closer with my sister's than ever whenever I come home to visit I just hang out with them. And that's what we do, is we hang out and we spend time together. And so just growing up. It was the three of us and then the four of us with that, big gap. And so, it was fun. I mean, my parents definitely provided and I was athletic, I like to do Sports. So I played soccer, I played baseball, played softball. My dad took me to all my games. I got to play in club leagues. I got to play travel team. They really just took care of everything and so like it was good, you know, like they instilled a lot of like loyalty and this is your family and we'll always have your back. So I think it made it possible for us to have close bonds. Now that we're grown and my two older sisters have kids now, so it's great. Seeing your siblings kids, like, they're just so much fun. That's just totally different experience. And so I think overall growing up together. It was great. And now we have this good relationship because of how good it was growing up.

00:09:26 **CC**

Yeah. Absolutely. And you remember like playing with them when you were younger or how you would interact with them, like having sisters?

00:09:35 **TF**

I think it was— I was, I was a tomboy as a kid, and never really grew out of it. But my oldest sister, I thought she was the coolest, you know, she was— especially when we started getting older. Like I just thought she was so cool. I think she was in seventh or eighth grade when I started like kindergarten,

you know, she's sixth, seventh, or eighth [grade], like she was just older. So I just want to hang out with her all the time. She's like, "I don't want to hang out with you," you know. So I remember there was one it was, like, an early release day at school and she was supposed to walk me home and she forgot. And so then my other sister, right above me, she like, rode her bike home to tell our mom like, "hey Rosie is stuck at school." You know, my nickname with my family is Rosie. They're like "Rosie stuck at school." So my mom had to come back and get me and of course, as we're driving down the road, there's my oldest sister, Nicole, walking with her friends. And my mom's like, "did you forget something" and Nicole kind of looked at her and went "Rosie!"

00:10:38 **CC**

And so Nicole's punishment was she had to like, hang out with me for half an hour. And I remember we were at the side of like the house like, you know the backyard and there's the RV gate we essentially had at the house. But there's a big like concrete area and just toys were there. And I had the little Fisher-Price basketball hoop. And so I said I was like "we're going to play basketball" and I think we played for like two minutes and she was like, "okay. I'm going to go now, and hang out my friends. You're going to tell Mom, I hung out with you the whole time." I was like, "okay," you know, and she went.

00:11:10 **TF**

And then with Jillian, because we were a little bit closer in age— We also shared a room, which was, you know— I remember the first house we had out here. It was a three-bedroom. So my parents had a room, Nicole had a room, and then Julian and I shared a room. And then, so when we share a room with bunk beds, all of our stuff was in the same room. Like, it was just a constant, like, "I hate you." "Will you play with me?" "I hate you." "Will you play with me?" "I hate you." "Will you play with me?" And so, Jillian had, you know, Barbies and I had action figures. My dad bought me action figures, he bought me Legos, he bought me Hot Wheels. My mom would just say all the time, there was just like blood-curdling screams because I was drowning Julian's Barbies or something along those lines. So Jillian and I, like, played together growing up, and then didn't. Jillian was always introverted in her own way. I mean, she liked comic books then, she like the nerdy stuff and I just wanted to be out and play all the time. So when I finally got to that age where I was, like, allowed out to go play, I would just go play with my friends who lived on the street, you know. We lived in a Suburban neighborhood. There was plenty of kids around.

00:12:25 **TF**

You know, and then with Hannah, I think that age gap was so big that playing with her was when she was like, two and three. And you were playing— or even just as a baby, like the peekaboo and playing in her ball pit. I remember, she was just obsessed— she was a two-year-old obsessed with Tobey Maguire Spider-Man. Absolutely obsessed. Everyday I came home from school and this thing was on the TV. It was just her favorite movie. So she would just want to play Spider-Man, which was just, you just picked her up and just let her jump off of walls. So you would just pick her up, put her on the wall, and she'd jump off of it. That was her favorite game. That was the easiest thing to play with this two-

year-old. And, you know, that was that it. That was kind of just how we played growing up.

00:13:07 **CC**

Yeah. Absolutely. I mean, I would play that. (both laugh) That sounds fun. And tell me a little bit about your parents. Did they work when you were growing up or—

00:13:16 **TF**

My dad was the only one that was working. Since we had come over here from Scotland, he was a green card holder for the first five years, then he got his permanent residency. And so he was the only one with the green card so he was the only one working. He was a semiconductor engineer, which— he basically worked in an engineering lab that manufactured like the actual microchips and processors that go into everything. So he's a very, very bright guy. Then when we got out here, he started going to school for his mechanical engineering degree and got his master's. And so he worked there for a long time.

00:13:55 **TF**

And my mom was actually just, you know, a stay-at-home mom for most of my life, as I remember. She was definitely just, she was home and, you know, she took us to practices. She did that, like, she couldn't work. And then when she managed to get, like, when her— when she got her permanent residency, it was like right at the same time that my youngest sister, Hannah, started like kindergarten. So when Hannah went into kindergarten, my mom started working. And she worked admin at a domestic violence shelter in Arizona. So, you know, when she started working, it was weird at first, but it was also just like, "yeah. Okay. Like, you should do this." Like, Hanna is out, you've raised kids— like her whole life was raising kids. But she was a stay-at-home mom. So, dinner was always ready at the same time. We always have clean clothes. We were always at practice on time. We're always this, we were always that.

00:14:53 **TF**

And for the most part, my dad was the primary, you know, income. And he worked— there was a time that he worked a night shift and we never saw him and he hated everything and eventually it got to a point where my parents were like, it's not worth the extra money. So we grew up very working-class, you know. There was enough— like, we went on family vacations and we got to get new stuff at Christmas. We always have a good Christmas. We always had good Christmases. We always got presents. I mean, my birthday one year, I got an Xbox, you know. So it was never that we were struggling or anything like that, but my parents worked hard to provide for us. I really appreciated that. Again, just as you get older and you start to get to like know them a little bit more, I really appreciated how hard both of my parents worked for everything that we have. So we were never well-off, but we were always able to get by and we never knew if there was, you know, money struggles. As my parents said, there were times when, you know, they were buying generic brand things and they didn't tell us because it wasn't our worry. But they always made it work. And so I just have a great appreciation for how hard they both work, to build a home and raise kids and really make a life. And you know, now

my dad is working as, like, a senior project manager. He's, you know, doing better than he ever has. My mom is still working. She does admin for a network of hospitals. And the two of them are just, like, they're making good money now, and they're enjoying their life, as they should after everything they put in. So I think it was a very average sort of 1990s/2000, suburban life that I lived with parents that just stayed together. And I think that's the weird thing. I know, most of my friends' parents are not together. Most people I know, they're like, "oh no, my parents aren't together. It's my stepmom, my step—" nope. For me. It was— family unit is still intact.

00:17:07 **CC**

Yeah. Wow. And so I am hearing you talk about that, your mom stayed at home, your dad worked and you mentioned earlier like, having to unload the dishwasher. What was the— when you're in the home what was the the gender breakdown of housework and things like that?

00:17:21 **TF**

My parents are very traditional. And they own that traditional, you know, it's not— they understand that there's a negative connotation with traditional, especially in the present day, but they really did it here to the traditional gender roles growing up. My father worked. My mother took care of the home. He would come home and dinner would be ready because she cooked and she did the washing she did the ironing. We always had clean clothes. You know, He would do the yard work. He would put up the Christmas decorations outside. He would mow the lawn. He would take me to practices or games on the weekends. And I think they definitely sort of adhered to those traditional gender roles that they saw growing up of man works, woman is at home, taking care of it.

00:18:15 **TF**

And I think the thing was, as they did that, they were definitely a partnership. There was never one parent that was more in charge than the other. They equally doled out punishment. They equally took responsibility. They made it very clear that when it came to like parenting, and each of us, that they were a team. You weren't going to get one to go against the other. If it was a, you know, go ask Dad, it would be, "Did your mom really ask you to ask me, or you asking me because she said no?" And it was like, "no, she said that I had to ask you," and then he would give an answer. But there was never any sort, of ability to be like "well mom said, no, so let me go ask Dad." It was— they were very clear-cut as a team of parents, and I think it was based on how they were both raised in far more traditional—

00:19:07 **TF**

My mother was raised in a very traditional Scottish Catholic household. My grandfather, for many of his flaws, adhered to that role. My grandmother did too. My grandmother only worked outside the home because they needed to. They were not well off at all. But they definitely had, like, far more traditional— when you think of like the 1940s 1950s 1960s makeup of white Catholic families, that's what my mother experienced.

00:19:43 **TF**

And my father had much of the same too. His father had served in World War II and come back. He had been a radio man, and his unit was the first in Buchenwald. Yeah, Buchenwald. I'm probably butchering that, but um, Buchenwald. Yeah, Buchenwald. They were the first British in one of the concentration camps. So he carried that with him forever. Never talks about it, couldn't possibly put that into words. So he was also— my dad was born when they were both in their forties. So, you know, he was a later in life, sort of baby. And his family unit was very much like the same of just traditional. And his father was far more detached and cold. And we all knew why, you know, as we got older we understood. And he loved my dad and he loved us, and there's no doubt about that. But he saw something that he could he couldn't ever make sense of. And so it sort of influenced how he was. And, you know, my father was raised with very strong ideas about masculinity and very strong ideas about what it is to be a man and not to show weakness. And it was never anything malicious or perverted or anything along those lines.

00:21:11 **TF**

But, you know, he's sort of— he and my mother agreed that they weren't necessarily going to sort of parent that way. And so it became really interesting with me, being a tomboy. To certain extent, my mother was like "okay, whatever, whatever whatever." But then, my mom would always want to force me into dresses, for church. And it would always cause this massive scene and a big blowout and a meltdown. And it was always my dad that was like, "who cares," you know. And so after, like, two years of these big fights who just became a "who cares." Put on a nice shirt, put on a pair of pants, go to church. Like, you're not not going to church, you're going.

00:21:52 **TF**

And so, a lot of it was just like— I preferred shorts and t-shirts. I didn't want, you know, the girly things. I didn't like them. I think there was, like, a solid two years of pictures— probably when I was like eight, nine, maybe into ten or like nine and ten— where the only thing I wore was a pair of overalls, like, the short overalls and, like, an Adidas tank top. Like, just the thick tank top too, like, just that weird jersey cut. That was all I wore. And I only wore sport stops. I would rotate, like, all of the jerseys I owned, just wear those all the time. And it just got the point where they were like, all right, whatever. And so I think for my dad, kind of growing up with that, like, very strong idea of, like, this is what masculinity is, this is what femininity is. I don't think he necessarily disagreed. But he also didn't want to be the parent that his parents were. I think that was his entire thing, is he was going to parent the opposite of what he knew. And for the most part, my mother did as well. She parented the opposite of what she knew, but she also held onto, like, far more conservative ideas of femininity, and masculinity and what's appropriate for boys and girls. And at the same time, she was the one that was like— I was the only girl playing in Little League. She let me play in Little League. It could have been a thing, but I played all the way up until, like, seventh grade. Because then it went into, like, the junior/senior leagues and it became a whole thing a the girl playing in the junior/senior Leagues with, you know, twelve, thirteen year-old boys at this point. It's not, you know— and there was an equivalent, like, there was softball. So I moved over to softball when I was like thirteen. And, I mean, immediately I was like, "well, this is stupid. Why don't you guys weren't pants." (Colette laughs) Why are you

wearing shorts? you play in dirt? The whole thing is dirt white. There's no grass. Why are you— these are stupid uniforms. Why are you wearing tank tops? Wear shirts. Like why do we not wear— this stupid," you know, sort of like that. But I think with the two of them, they had their, like, very conservative ideas about like gender roles and, you know, femininity and masculinity. And I think that both of them, for what they knew and what they were comfortable with, did the absolute best that they could. And I have to say, I think my dad was a huge advocate in allowing me to just express the tomboyishness, as they called it. Because that's what it was. I was a tomboy. And he was just a very big proponent of, like, "the kid is fine, the kid is not harming anyone, let her go."

00:24:38 **CC**

Yeah, and did you— like, when you're at that age that those sort of, I don't know if complex is the right word, but like, the attempted gender policing and then the easing off of it— did you understand the gender roles that were trying to be enforced?

00:24:55 **TF**

I didn't necessarily understand it as gender roles. I think I understood it more as— I saw my sisters and I saw what they liked and I just didn't like it. So I didn't understand why I had to do something I didn't like. And I didn't understand that there was a larger context at play, you know, nobody really gave me a hard time for it. Like among my friends or if things were ever said to my parents, I never knew about it. And so I think for them it was just this massive— there was something more at play for them, but as you know, a five, six, seven, year-old, I just didn't like it. And I didn't know— it wasn't complex to me. I just knew I didn't like it. I didn't like pink. I didn't like wearing dresses and skirts, and I didn't like doing my hair or wearing makeup. I mean, I wore ponytail. It was a pretty consistent ponytail. It wasn't even a good ponytail. Like, I have curly hair, and so it was just this, like weird ratty, you know, and that was it because that was all I wanted. I didn't want braids or anything, and I was like, "no stop." And so for me, I just knew I didn't like it. I didn't necessarily understand any sort of construct around it. And I think my parents did and I think it just got to the point where, for them, it was, "you just don't like it and you don't understand it." So I think, for a long time, my mom thought I would just grow out of it, and my dad was just like, "I don't know, I don't care. You're happy. You're healthy. That's what matters."

00:26:31 **CC**

Got it. And how about other people in your life? Like, when you got into school, how did other kids react to this, like, tomboyiness?

00:26:39 **TF**

I think, for the most part, like, nobody cared. I knew all of my friends. They knew me. I was like the Tomboy. I was like the— you know, I hung out with boys. My best friend was a boy. My best friends were always boys, you know, it was not anything. I had a small group of friends that were girls and it was like, you know, whatever with them. But I liked playing in the dirt. I like playing, you know, superheroes and everything else. And I mean, I think for the people in my life it was never sort of an

issue. It was always just, it is what it is.

00:27:18 **TF**

I remember there was— I was, I think probably about nine, and my mom had this group called the British Wives Club. It was just a bunch of British women who lived in Arizona, you know. They had come from England, a couple from Scotland, but it was their group, it was their Club. They played bunco and then like once a year they had this big tea party thing or— they would get together once a month. I remember there was one time that, you know, I was— for whatever reason, this thing was happening and my mom was like, "okay, I've got take you." I think maybe we weren't in school or something, but I was there. I remember Diane, my mom's friend. They're still in contact, you know. Diane was there, and she had brought her kids. And so she had a son who was probably about seven named Joe and the two of us were playing or whatever. And I remember, Diane had gone back into the other room and said to my mom, like, "Joe's playing Barbies with Rosie right now." And my mom went, "did you listen?" And Diane when "what?" And my mom was like "I don't— just go back and listen." And sure enough, she went back and listened. She came, listened— we're, you know, still playing. She comes back and she goes, "yeah, Justin Timberlake's in the airplane and it's crashing right now." (Colette laughs) It's crashing and my moms like, "yeah." She's like, "that's how they play." It was just, it was still another thing where it was one of those moments where like, Diane was like, "Joe is playing with Barbies." And my mom being like, "it's not anything." Like, at that point, she kind of just accepted— she didn't try and enforce it. She just you know, said like "this is what it is. This is my kid."

00:29:01 **TF**

And you know, even with other people, it was like, it is what it is. So when I played, and with my friends, and in general, when I played with other kids, I didn't have any sort of idea about what gender was, or what I understood gender to be or anything like that. And so for me, I know it was very lucky that I was ignorant about gender roles and societal gender constructs for the longest time. And the kids that I was friends with and I got to know, I think it was just that sort of age that we all grew up together where there was a lot more exposure to things, things were a lot more normalized. So nobody ever really gave me a hard time for it. Nobody ever really cared. It was just kind of like "yeah, that's you know, that's Rosie. Okay."

00:29:51 **CC**

When you play it on the Little League teams with all the boys, it just felt like you were like one of the team members?

00:29:58 **TF**

Yeah. I mean it was never an issue. I remember I made history at— so where I lived, it was the Sweetwater Little League. That first couple of years you get in a coach— you're on a coach pitch team and you don't try out. I remember, I think it was— yeah, it must have been the fourth grade, I tried out for the the Major Minors. Because that's when you have to try out and get picked, and if you don't get picked you go back to farm. But I made a minor league team. I was the first girl and it was like, "Yeah,

you're actually good at this." I was really, really good second baseman. I wasn't so good at hitting but I was, you know, good player. And so when I joined, like, I think there was some, you know, like, "oh, there's a girl on the team." But my mom and my dad, I think they shielded it from me. And I was really, really lucky with the coaches who were just, like, "you can play." And I know that, overall, I can absolutely see and appreciate how lucky I was. All these steps— and it really just came down to luck. My coach, Ronoso, he didn't care that I was girl. And he coached me the rest of my baseball career. He kept bringing me back on his team because he knew I was a good player and he didn't care that I was a girl. And a couple of the parents at first were like, "your daughter is playing," and my parents would be like, "yeah, and she's really good, watch." I remember there was always this moment of, like, "there is a girl on the field," with like the other teams in our team would just be like, "and she is really good, watch." And that was it. I think I just, I could earn my place. And so for me, it was very like, shielded, but also so disconnected because I was like, "okay," like, "you just don't know girls play. That's okay." Like that was it for me, like, "you don't know girls play, but I'm going to show you girls play," and that was it. And I did not understand at all if I was in any sort of trailblazer way. And then I mean after that, there was a lot more girls that started playing Sweetwater Little League. Because it was like, okay, like this girl's going— there was always like, one or two girls, but then it was really, like, a lot more, you know. So I think in that sense, it was just sort of like, "oh." But I had no concept of what was really going on—

00:32:22 **CC**

Yeah.

00:32:22 **TF**

—as far as gender went.

00:32:24 **CC**

Yeah, that's interesting. That's kind of fantastic. (laughs)

00:32:27 **TF**

Yeah. I mean, I know it was really, really, really lucky and fortunate. Because I know it was different for plenty of other people. And it could have been a lot worse, it definitely could have been. I mean, where I come from in Peoria, Arizona, it's not a liberal place like Silver Spring Maryland. It's not, but it was also just people being like, "all right, whatever." And once you get to know me, as my mom said, once you got to know me was really hard to be like, "oh, I hate this kid." Like, I was just a fun, easygoing kid and I didn't have any sort of agenda or, like, "I'm going to prove the boys—" Like, there was never a vengeance in me of, like, "I have to prove the boys wrong." I was like, "no, I'm just gonna go play. I don't really care what they say." So I think it was just lucky. Because again, that's how my parents raised me and that's what they instilled in me. That's who they made me be. So it was very easy for them to support the exact kids that they wanted me to turn into. So it was like, "all right, you're gonna do this, you're going to do this."

00:33:31 CC

Yeah, that's great. And sort of shifting gears a little bit, how do you remember school being for you?

00:33:41 TF

Oh, school was, um— I had undiagnosed ADHD. Which is probably where, like, the one thing I can say for, like, my parents sort of, like, shortcoming— you know, all parents are flawed. Everybody knows this. But for mine, I definitely had undiagnosed ADHD and my mom just didn't want to medicate me. She didn't believe in it. She didn't think it was going to solve anything and her argument — I so remember this— her argument was always "you wouldn't be able to play baseball if you had ADHD." And my dad just kind of didn't go against her. I mean, that was the parent united front. Like, my mom felt really passionate about this. So my dad was on board. So, I was a very bright child. I was very smart. And I was over stimulated all the time. So, I talked a lot in class. I tended to be a little bit of a show-off, which I think definitely carried with me in the sense of, I like being the center of attention and I still do. And it's not sort of to, like, compensate for things that are lacking or missing. It's just, I genuinely like enjoy eyes on me and making people laugh and bringing joy, and like, sort of being this built-up send. So, I was definitely like almost a class clown who— and it got worse.

00:35:10 TF

As I got older, I was smart, but then I was so overstimulated or so bored. And I couldn't focus. So, I started getting into, like, my troublemaker years, as it's called, in the fourth grade and then into the fifth grade. And I fell in with other kids who are like, you know, like, "we're just going to cause problems or we're so funny." We just had a great time and we didn't care. So and again, like, I didn't focus, I struggled with— I didn't struggle with material. I just struggled with doing it. So I didn't do my homework for a long time. I had bad grades. And it would always blow up in the end because I had bring home a report card, and, "why are there D's, where's your homework?" And it was just never a solid balance.

00:35:54 TF

And I mean, I was absolutely one of the kids who cried at the dining table with my dad while he yelled at me about math. It was a real thing in our house and then we later found out that I have the— I have number dyslexia. It turned out that I was— There was— it wasn't until I was in high school, screaming with my dad and he's screaming at me. And then finally my older sister was like, "okay, let's just sit down and take a second." She's like, "write out of the problem," and I did and she goes. "Holy— are you kidding me right now?" I'm like, "what?" She's like, "what's that?" I'm like, "the numerator." She goes, "that's fucking denominator. You've been dividing the wrong way since fourth grade." So all of a sudden why I was so bad at math, it comes in foreview, sort of of this, like, "oh my God."

00:36:42 TF

And so, I mean after that like it was just always a constant struggle in school of like doing my homework because I couldn't do my homework until it was due five minutes before. And that was just that was something that happened all throughout high school, all throughout elementary school is, I

couldn't do something until the last minute. Because once there was a set deadline, then I can focus on it. When the sun's not coming out the next day, if this isn't done, that's the only way I could do anything. So, I struggled a lot and I know it was very frustrating for my parents because I was so bright. My dad is very bright. My sister is very bright. It was just always, like, we're smart. Like, I was smart, you know. They tested me for the gifted program and they're like, "she should go in the gifted program, but she can't because she doesn't do her work." And there were just like no correlation of that sort of thing.

00:37:35 **TF**

So I think, just as I got older, I learned to adapt with it more and I learned how to just skate by, and it was what it was in the end. So I didn't— I struggled. I could have struggled worse and then I just found my own way to cope with what was undiagnosed ADHD.

00:37:54 **CC**

Got it. Yeah. Do you remember, sort of, in those elementary/early middle school days, did you have any idea what you want to be when you grew up?

00:38:03 **TF**

Oh, I was always something insane. And again, like where the center of attention part comes from. I remember one time, I said to my mom, "I'm going to be a police officer so I can die with honor." And her response was like, "what the— did you just say?" And then, so I was going to be a firefighter so I could die with honor. And it just kept escalating. And so I think for the longest time, I just was so, like, flighty in elementary school of what I wanted to be. Because I was like, "I don't know what you mean, 'What you want to be' like, you grow up? What are you— I don't know. Like, I don't know what I want to do." And then, so I was like, "I'm going to be a lawyer. I'm going to be this. I'm going to be that."

00:38:39 **TF**

And then I remember, it was about— I always liked history. I was absolutely that kid just loved history. And I just knew everything about history. Because I just read and I remembered it, and I thought it was so interesting. And so probably about seventh and eighth grade, and then into high school I was like, "I'm just going to teach history. I have no idea what I actually want to do, so I'm just going to teach history."

00:39:06 **TF**

And then as I got older too, and the ADHD, and the lack of wanting to do homework— I like messed around a college a couple of years. Community College in Arizona, I had no idea what I was doing. And then I was like, I'm going to go join the military and my mom was like, "what?" And I'm like, "yeah, I'm actually going to go join the military and figure out what I want to do with my life." And so I literally kind of just had this loose idea of "I'm going to be a teacher," until I went into the military.

00:39:36 **CC**

Got it. Yeah. And you feel— like at that point in your life, did you have any like sense of your own gender, or what gender was, or how it impacted your life? Sort of, I guess, in middle school going into high school, perhaps?

00:39:49 **TF**

Yeah, I mean, I guess. I didn't come out to my family until much later. But, I mean, I think it was in the eighth grade, I Kissed a girl for the first time. I remember her name. Still friends with her on Facebook, because why not, welcome to this day and age. Brittany Arredondo. First girl I ever kissed. And I was like, yep, that's it. That's it. But it was also, as I've realized for me, I knew all along. When you're five years old and there's no concept of actual sexuality or sex, in that— you just have these concepts of, like, you grow up and you marry someone. Little girls grow up and marry boys. And I was like, "I don't want to to marry a boy. But I'd marry Riley." You know, like it was just so— "I'd marry Kelsey. I'd marry Holly." Like, it was always just— So like I think, like, then I knew. Like, I was like, I don't you know, like there was never a part of me that thought I was straight or believed I was straight. For me the earliest memories I have of those, like childhood crushes were of girls.

00:41:01 **TF**

And I'm a big advocate of listening to children when they say it, because it is only gay children were suddenly sexuality is sexualized. Nobody blinks an eye at a five-year-old girl saying "I'm going to marry Tommy." It's so normalized because no rational adult, no sane person looks at a five-year-old goes, "yeah, you understand sex. You're talking about having sex with Tommy." No. Not even remotely. But we do that to children who are non-conforming. So I'm a big proponent of just advocating, like, I knew at five.

00:41:40 **TF**

And in elementary school I continued to be a tomboy. I just preferred masculinity. I didn't like femininity on myself. I liked femininity on other people, on other girls. I just did not like it on myself. And so, I never conformed to, like, being a girly girl, I would conform for like, homecoming. Because that's when you're supposed to. And it still felt so weird and so strange to like, dress up. And it was like, "okay," and everyone was always like, "oh, you're so pretty." And I'm like, "why can't you guys just say this when I'm wearing jeans and a backwards baseball hat? Why am I only pretty this way?" And so I always kind of struggled with that.

00:42:24 **TF**

But my gender and sexuality were very much tied during the age I came up because we did keep them so tied together. There wasn't the understanding. There wasn't, sort of the, the progression— Progressive movements we have today of, like, truly understanding that they're two separate things. But what I knew was, I didn't want to be a girly girl, and I liked girls. And it sort of went into that. And I think I— there wasn't a lot of butch representation. You had like more, slightly, like, not super feminine, you know. And I mean I came of age, God forbid, during the original L Word. (Colette laughs) And for everything that Shane was, Shane was, like, truly the first portrayal, that as this young

questioning kid I could get my hands on and be like, "that's me." I'm realizing, like, no, I was never Shane. But like, the androgyny of Shane, the, "this is not the typical woman," that's being presented to you, and she likes women. It was very much, like, that is what I remember. And that is sort of what I latched onto. And I think that was probably about my sophomore year in high school, that, like, that, yeah. 2000— oh, no. I remember when it came out. But I mean, it was the original, and I remember passing around those DVDs with my other, like, queer friends in high school. I remember like, "I've got season three right now." We were passing these DVDs around like they were some sort of forbidden totem that we all had, but we all felt the same about it. This was our representation. This was our media. And then, I remember when they introduced Max in that show, and how absolutely transphobic that was in itself. But then like seeing that being like, "oh."

00:44:34 **TF**

So like there was a period of time, especially in my like my later high school years where I was like, "am I a trans man?" And I really ended up exploring that as I got older, and I identified as trans for a period of time, and not fully, grasping it. And it wasn't until I was fortunate enough to be in position to like, really go to gender therapy and work with a phenomenal therapist, who would be like, "you're allowed to be non-binary and butch and have masculinity and not be man." And that wasn't until much, much later in life. So for me, it was never an early childhood thing or even my high school years. There was just a lot of like confusion and a lot of, "I don't know what this is, I don't know what this means. I don't want to wear dresses and I like girls. Am I actually a boy?" There was just so much misunderstanding and lack of resources and lack of understanding. And I think just being in a position where I could finally go and take care of myself helped answer a lot. And it definitely changed the way that I interacted with with people and with my family and the way I carried myself. And I stopped feeling the need to have to conform.

00:45:55 **CC**

Yeah, so this is sort of a binary set of—

00:45:59 **TF**

Yeah, yeah.

00:45:59 **CC**

And did you, so you had a queer friend group in high school?

00:46:04 **TF**

So I had a small queer friend group. And it's actually very funny, my best friend— She's actually getting married next month. She is a year younger than me. It was my sophomore year and she had— I been in the newspaper and she joined the newspaper. I mean, it was an absolute fluke. She wasn't supposed to be in the class, but then she didn't want to leave the class and our teacher just like, "yeah, all right, whatever." And I knew of her. She had made something of a fuss for herself. She was this freshman who came to our school specifically to play softball. So like, she didn't go to an elementary

school that fed into the high school. She was a really great softball player, and was coming to the school to play softball. And she'd been, she had been out, like, her family knew, but she had been in a relationship with another girl. And somebody who didn't make the soft— It's so dramatic when you really say it— somebody who didn't make the softball team, outed my friend and the other girl. And so everybody knew like, "oh, she's gay." And she really was the only out girl. She was the only lesbian.

00:47:18 **TF**

And so she was in newspaper and we had been talking, and we've been hanging out in the back room, which was like, we're all the computers were. And I remember, she just turned to me she was like, "hey, do you know you're gay?" She's like, "I just need to make sure that you know." She's like, "I know you're gay, and I think you know you're gay. I just want to make sure, you know that you're gay, right? Okay, cool." And it was just like, she, kind of told me. And it was a very, like, "I know you're gay." Like, "do you know? Okay, like cool. We're on the same— cool, we're both gay." Like, "awesome." And so it was like that. And so she was definitely, like, my queer friend.

00:47:54 **TF**

And then, because it— high school lesbians are so incestuous. So incestuous. It was really fortunate that by that point I was a super soccer player. So I was in the soccer gays, which covered the entire, like, West Valley where we lived. And then she was in the softball gays. And so all of the gays knew of each other because they all just dated each other. And so, like, thankfully, we had these separate, sort of, circles, but we kept cross dating the circles. So the sort of like friend group was, it was other gay girls that you dated. That was your friend group. Because there was like, seven of us. There was eight of us, and then there was 10 of us. And it was a very like, small, sort of incestuous circle. So, like that was the group we hung out with. And, I mean, for the most part, I remember, I would say that my friend was far more, the futch, the Femme butch, the soft, butch, you know, she was the chapstick, if you will. She was a chapstick which was, definitely had sort of those boyish, masculine, but was still very feminine, can touch into the femininity. And she carried that, she still carries that. I'd actually says she's more femme now.

00:49:17 **TF**

And it was the same, like, most of who I dated and who I knew were all femme. And our queer circle was just those that dated each other. And then there was always, you know, "don't date her. She's awful. I can't believe you would do that." And then there'd be big falling out, so now the group was divided so you only had like three friends. And that was— yeah, that was about it. And then just as I kind of, got older and moved on, I still— it's so funny, like most of my friends are still straight. Most of the people — I have great friends that are queer. I know a bunch of queer people. But like, most of my, like, true, close best friends are straight. And it's just so, like, "okay, that's how that worked out." I knew all the gays in high school and now it's like, "are you gay? Can we be friends? I need gay friends, I'm so tired of the straight people." You know, that's definitely where it ended up.

00:50:21 **CC**

Absolutely. I get that. (laughs) And so in high school, did you ever experience a feeling of like, pressure to hide any of the elements of your gender expression or sexuality?

00:50:33 **TF**

Oh, yeah. I mean, I didn't tell my parents at all. And again that came from a conservative Catholic background. And it took a long time for my mother to work through it. And— God forbid if she ever hears this because she will not forgive me— She wasn't okay with it. And she chooses to rewrite history that she was okay with it and I thought she wasn't okay with it. But my sisters and I, and my father even ,we've all had the conversation of like she just can't admit that she was wrong. So it wasn't necessarily a fear that I would ever be kicked out. There was no sort of pressure that way, but there was an absolute pressure of my mother, you know, didn't—it seems silly to say like, how can you not believe in homosexuality, like it clearly exists, but she did not accept or, you know, sort of, she didn't think it was, it was right. And we had a lot of blow-ups over it, just in roundabout ways, and I just never came out. And so because I knew that my sisters also— like I never wanted to put my sisters in the position of having to keep that from my mother. So I never told them. And then I couldn't tell my dad because he talked to my mom about everything. So it was a very precarious situation. So I absolutely hid a lot of my sexuality. I didn't date. They know I didn't date, so it was like, "what are you doing?" Because I dated and they just never knew.

00:52:14 **TF**

And it was a situation where everybody knew and nobody's going to say anything. Because I think, for my mom, a lot of it was rooted in the church. Like she— I feel like there's such a difference between very religious people, and then deeply religious people. And very religious people are those who are so outspoken and their Christian faith is their everything, sort of that over-the-top stereotype. And then you have women like my mother, who have a deep faith that is very quiet and private and she doesn't go out there and evangelize and tell people that God's gonna, you know, Jesus will save them. She doesn't do that at all, but she has very deep, sincere religious beliefs. And for her, the church at the time, it's a sin. It's a sin. It's not natural— and so for her, she really was rooted in that.

00:53:17 **TF**

And again, it carried over into the political side, and my parents own, like again, their concepts of gender and gender roles of— it had been 2008 in the 2008 election and Florida had passed the ban on same-sex adoption. And I just remember, we were talking about it kept getting heated and heated, and I finally said it, I was like, "what if I was gay and my wife and I wanted to adopt a baby, and the social worker says, 'I've got your kid, your daughter,' but then this other couples and it's a man and a woman. Who should I give the baby to?" And my mom was like, "I really believe that children need to be raised by a man and a woman." And that just broke our relationship for a while. She didn't realize until years later, that was also me telling her. There were a lot of moments of me, trying and not— and this is where she misconstrues and rewrites history of like— we'd be watching something on TV, at that point there were a lot more same-sex relationships. And I would, like, say like, "what do you think of that?" And she would be like, "oh, that's ridiculous." And she be like— in her mind, she thought I was talking

about the storyline. And it was like, I think you knew that you weren't. But she has it rewritten to this point. So like we can't change that, but we all know. So, there was a lot of hiding because of that.

00:54:46 **TF**

And then, there was just that sort of, negative portrayal of butch and masculine women at that point as well. So, that's sort of like, I would— I mean, I wore jeans and a sweatshirt every single day during the winter, and I wore jeans and a t-shirt. Like, I didn't get dressed, like, I didn't. But if there was a big event, I would put on the dress, and I would do the hair, and I would do the makeup, and she would be like "but you enjoyed it so much." And it was, it was just playing a part. It was playing a role to satisfy my obligations to my family. To not cause problems, to not make a big scene about it. And up until I was about eighteen, it really was that way. And then— Yeah, it must have been like, my sophomore year of college, I was doing credits and all of this, and I went and I did the big chop. Yep, the big chop. And I still had a lot more hair than I do now, like, it wasn't even that much of a big chop, but it was short. And I remember, at that point my mom was like, "what did you do?" I'm like, "I like it like this. I prefer this. I think this looks better."

00:56:07 **TF**

And then also, like any good, you know— I don't fully understand the correlation between queers and One Direction. (Colette laughs) Like, queer women and One Direction. I understand like gay boys, okay. Bisexual girls, okay. But there is something about lesbians and One Direction. And I feel like it's a fascinating project that somebody should really dive into. But like, there is this, like, pathway of, like, lesbians and One Direction.

00:56:39 **CC**

It's a pipeline.

00:56:39 **TF**

It is. (Colette laughs) It is a pipeline. "Did you like One Direction? Was near Niall your favorite? Yeah, you're gay." (Colette laughs) I don't know what it is, And, but I had "the Zayne." When I cut all my hair off, I did the douchebag bleach stripe. So I just had this douchebag bleached stripe in this like, freaking, like faux hawk ridiculousness. Like, the One Direction aesthetic. I was like, "is it because you look like girls, but your boy?" Like, is this the masculine lesbian energy of One Direction? Where, like, you're all are a little, like, you know, you're definitely a little fruity, you're a little girly, but you're boys. Whatever it was during that era of One Direction. And I was like, "these guys are my style icons. This is who—" I'm like why? And I know I'm not alone in that. Which is crazy. Like at this point, you know, and again, I think the explosion of social media is super helpful as well, but I know so many masculine lesbians or non-binary individuals who admit on Twitter openly, like, "yeah One Direction was my style icon." And it's like, what is this? Where—but it's there. The correlation is there. And I wish I could explain it more so people really understood, but if you are a queer woman who prefers to trend more masculine, butch, futch, whatever you want to call it away from like the femme and high femme, you understand when I say One Direction is lesbian icon and lesbian fashion, like it just makes sense.

00:58:17 **CC**

That is so interesting. Yeah, can't disagree with you, so (laughs)

00:58:20 **TF**

Exactly. So I think— so at that point I cut the hair and I did the whole thing and it was like, okay. This is starting to come out more. This is starting to come out more. And you know, I finally had the conversation with my mother, because absolutely everybody else knew I was gay at this point.

00:58:38 **CC**

Including your dad?

00:58:39 **TF**

Yeah, my dad knew. When I finally like, when I finally came out, it was a big issue within our family. And it had been— I wasn't even there, and it really did, it built off of the masculinity and the gender and, like, I had been saying, like, "I'm trans. I think I'm a boy. I'm thinking a boy." And my mother was like, "you're not." And she was right, but she didn't know how to say that. And my dad was also right. Like, he was like, "you're not a boy. You're not a boy." But they didn't know how to like, actually say to me what I needed to hear that point. And so it was becoming this massive thing in the house of like, I'm dressing, like a boy. I'm acting like boy. I'm not a boy, and like their frustration of like, "you're not a boy," and me not understanding that I'm not a boy.

00:59:31 **TF**

Because you can't explore gender and sexuality like that. You can't explore gender that way. It's not appropriate. It's not okay. It's this time period of it. And a lot of it was, and I will say again, the internet, which can be a blessing and a curse. There's this community of ftms, female to male individuals and transgender individuals who were like, "I'm trans, I'm trans. I'm trans. I'm trans, I'm trans." And they're not. I have many close trans male friends. And every time I talk to them their response is like, "I just know." They're like, "I am a boy. I am a boy. I've always been a man." The dysphoria they feel is very different and it just, it was never like that for me. But because I preferred masculinity, because I preferred male clothing, male attitudes, the male way of carrying myself, I had to be trans. It was such a disservice to myself, and it's definitely harmful to an entire community across the board, both sides of it. There was just never any sort of understanding for trans masc or even just non-binary masc, lesbian masc. There was no, sort of area for it to exist. It was you're trans or you're not. And then the echo chamber you get online, it's just reinforcing, like "you're boy. It's awesome. Everyone's gonna hate you," you know. You're just getting this constant bombardment of positive reinforcement that is not positive at all. Because these are, for the majority part, can also be individuals like yourself, who are confused, who are struggling with these concepts of gender and identity. And instead what you're getting is, "I'm a trans man," and you're not. There's such a dangerous slope there.

01:01:42 **CC**

Do you remember—

01:01:42 **TF**

And so, for me—

01:01:43 **CC**

I'm so sorry—

01:01:44 **TF**

No, no, no.

01:01:45 **CC**

I was going to ask, was there a moment when you realize that identities beyond the binary, or non-binary, were even an option?

01:01:52 **TF**

Yeah, and it was funny enough for my mom, who was explaining that they had some non-binary clients. And she could totally grasp that concept. She could totally grasp the concept of, like, you're neither male or female. 00:00:00 **TF:**

You're both male and female, or you're both— your gender is both masculine and feminine. I think is the way that she's really come to be. And again, that's how I also see it, is my non-binary is not male or female. It's masculine and feminine. And it's my own definition of femininity. I think with with male and female, you really are getting into, like, that is a gender. That is a gender identity. That's a gender presentation. And I think you should absolutely be allowed to present however you choose to, and however you define it. Because those are just constructs. Those absolutely are just constructs. And so I think when it was from her saying that they had a non-binary client and, correcting my dad, like, you know— again, great guy, pure heart, an absolute product of his time, where he says things like, "oh those 'its,'" you know, was saying something, my mom was explaining the non-binary. He was like, "oh my God, those 'the both of them's,' like, what are they," like, you know, "can't make up their mind." My mom was like, "no, it's not that at all. It's really a lot more simple. It's just how they present. They don't want to present as a woman and they don't want to present it as a man. And that's just what it is." And my dad being like, "Oh, okay," but then hearing that from my mom being like, "maybe that is what's going on."

00:01:27 **CC:**

Yeah.

00:01:28 **TF:**

I don't necessarily define myself as a woman and I don't define myself as a man. So can I exist is both? Can I exist is neither? And then just realizing that for me, it's all about— my gender presentation is based upon my, my identity, my— my gender identity is based upon my gender presentation and I prefer more masculine. But I also know that, you know, when it comes to my sexuality and why I like female is still something that I have to hold on to. I do choose to hold on to, is I am not attracted to men. I'm not attracted to males. I'm not attracted to those parts, either. It's not what I'm into. It's women. And I don't experience a dysmorphia with my body anymore. I bind because I preferred that presentation. And I also like my parts and that's, you know, where my sexuality lies, is in women. And I like my body the way that it is for that same reason. And so it was really just realizing I can have that, and have it separate to how I present to the world and how the world sees me. And I'm so okay and comfortable with the world seeing me as neither and both.

00:02:54 **CC:**

Yeah, and so where does being in the Navy come into this complexity—

00:03:03 **TF:**

Oh yeah.

00:03:04 **CC:**

— of how you understand your identity?

00:03:05 **TF:**

I mean, I think it is the thing that just absolutely helped me the most.

00:03:08 **CC:**

Really?

00:03:09 **TF:**

There's a lot about the military, and I will say that the one thing the military does is everyone is the same. You know, females, males— it's female and male, it's not man or woman. It's you're female or you're male. Like, yeah, that's a pretty straight forward construct. But the uniform is the same. We wear the exact same clothes. We are treated the exact same. And I was very fortunate in the work that I did. My brains came into play and save me. So I got to do intelligence and analysis, which was awesome and opened up my whole path that I take now. But the Navy was just like, we don't care what you look like. We don't care who you are. Here are the standards. This is how you have to be groomed. This is

what you have to wear. This is how your uniform should look. And it was, they didn't care if I had short hair. It just had to be groomed properly.

00:04:02 **TF:**

And so it was the first time where, the military— and I feel like a lot of military culture would be like "how dare you say that—" but, like, it is truly a non-binary force. Like when they're looking at it, it is nonbinary. Like, in uniform, they're not looking at you as a man or a woman. The Navy changed their uniforms a couple years ago because the female and male dress blues were different. And there's no need for them to be different. You're all the same. So it's a very like, blank slate of like, you're a body and you're going to do a job for us. And for me, like that was really like that, sort of like, holy crap. I can kind of just be whoever I want to be. Nobody cares that I'm masculine.

00:04:52 **TF:**

You know, it was— I joined post, don't ask, don't tell. It was a very quick turnaround with that. I mean homophobia absolutely still exists. Because you're talking about a microscopic level of American diversity and culture, and you're always going to have people that are homophobic, that are racist. They get in, you know, you're taking society as a whole and you're shrinking it down with the military. You're just thrown in guns and bombs for fun. But I think it was just that whole entire— nobody cared that I was masculine. Nobody cared what I looked like, nobody cared what clothes I was wearing off-duty. When I was in duty, nobody could tell. I could just be. And it was like, this is really where I'm comfortable, this sort of just being and not having to explain that I'm, you know, masculine or feminine.

00:05:43 **TF:**

And I just started getting really comfortable when I was in the Navy calling myself butch. And being butch. That took a long time too, because I was also like, "well, I'm trans. Well, I'm still trans. Well I'm —" All of these things are happening concurrently. They don't make sense. Some days it's this, some days, it's that. And that's when I also realized like, yeah, maybe like there's something to be non-binary. Of like, what do I feel like today? What do I want my gender presentation to be?

00:06:12 **CC**

Totally.

00:06:13 **TF:**

So there is a lot of that, and it was still a mess. And again, it was so much, like, "I'm trans, I'm trans." Because everybody else was telling me I'm trans online. And I was like, "yeah, yeah, yeah," and it was

just creating a whole different persona. It wasn't even me. It was just creating a different persona to get by and to cope, and to feel okay with like, wasn't okay with me. And then I think, just two, three, four years ago when I really got into the gender therapy and being like I can be non-binary. And I can be butch. And I've always been confident and comfortable in my sexuality and I've never apologized for it. Even when everything was happening with my parents and my mom, I didn't feel bad for being gay. I didn't wish I wasn't gay. All I wished for was for my mom to be different. There was never a moment—and I know I'm really really lucky and fortunate there too. Because it could have been a lot worse if I had wished I was different. But I just wish they were different So I have always been really strong and secure in that. And I think just the whole a journey through the Navy and everything got me to the point of being like, "oh, I can be both and I can be neither and that's awesome."

00:07:28 **CC:**

Absolutely. Yeah, and so then where does drag come into the picture?

00:07:32 **TF:**

So drag for me is an absolute expression of all things masculine. And you meet that over the top part, of I'm not a boy. I'm not a man. And I enjoy having these moments and these pockets of time to just present that way, and to entertain that way, and to kind of really dive deep into what expression of gender can be, and how I view gender, and how I see gender. And, you know, getting to express something that's in me that— for a long time when you're carrying the whole trans question of I'm a man, I'm not a man, I'm a man, you get familiar with whoever you're becoming or you're being or you're trying to be. And for me it was like, okay, well, this is gone. What do I do? And then it was finding drag and being like, this can just be an expression of all things masculinity of, for a period of time, safely transitioning to a place, into a persona, into an experience that is a part of me and can bring fun and can be used in a good way. And I don't have to be afraid of anything else with it, or try to explain it or justify it or fit it into a different mold. It can be the over-the-top that I want it to be. It can be the ridiculousness that I want it to be. It can be my view of what masculine is and what is it attractive as masculine.

00:09:08 **CC:**

Absolutely. When did you start doing drag?

00:09:10 **TF:**

So I started in, I want to say Fall, 2019.

00:09:16 **CC:**

Okay.

00:09:16 **TF:**

So just, before the pandemic hit. Great timing. And I started with PrettyboiDrag because they had an open King night. And I just, I remember I went to their drag King 101. It was just so great talking to them and hearing and being like, oh my God, you guys get it. You know, like, you guys get it. Who you are during the day, is not at all these Kings and these personas. Like, wow, this is so awesome. This is super freaking awesome. And so that's when I really started to think of like, well, what would I want to express with gender? Like what am I trying to do? I don't want to be a performer of like, Oh, I'm a Luke Bryan impersonator. But I realize I love country. Like for all country's— and I love country music. And I realized it was like, you know, there's not this expression of like, what is Southern. Not that I know Southern at all. I'm very aware that I don't know Southern. But like, there are no plays on this country, hyper-masculine— country music itself is a commentary. It is so hyper-masculine. It really is. And it's insane the way it can be. And there's a lot of faults in it and it's taking something that I love and turning it into something far more positive too.

00:10:40 **TF:**

Country music can be fun. It can be catchy and it doesn't need to have the negative, that makes it so turn-off-able. You don't want to listen to country music when you're like, this man doesn't believe gay people have rights. Like, you just don't enjoy that, when you're like, it is a catchy song. And so again, I know, I use Luke Bryan because I know that that man is so liberal that he's like, the reverse expression. Where like, these really true like, hardcore conservative country, like "this is real America," ignore the fact that Luke Bryan is like, "Black Lives Matter." They just totally gloss over it and they're like, I'm not talking about it. He just makes good music. And it's so funny watching them do the mental gymnastics. But at the same time, I'm like, good. I like Luke Bryan. And I like the opening up that's coming with Country music and I just enjoy it. So, for me it was taking like, the Luke Bryan, and the Thomas Rhett, and the Luke Combs, like all these super, hyper-masculine figures and turning them into drag Kings. Just turning them into a drag King. And so for me, it just became this fun expression. This fun moment in time.

00:11:50 **CC:**

And when did you start performing those?

00:11:52 **TF:**

So it was October 2019 and the first song I did was— it was Luke Bryant. Oh my God, its his—

00:12:05 **CC:**

what's the story of your first—yeah

00:12:06 **TF:**

It's his late, yeah, it's his, "lay me down, the catch yourself a little catfish dinner. Don't it sound like a," you know. And I'm laughing now that I'm like, what is the song. I can't believe I can't remember the song. But it's one of Luke Bryan's like original, it was a Luke Bryan hit. And I just remember, it was at — I invited all my friends and they definitely turned up. And I went through the whole drag 101. And I remember spending so much time— I got a wig and I cut the wig up, and I spent so much time putting on this ratty, terrible-looking chinstrap. Because that just screamed country to me. This wreck, and with a goatee. This goatee and chinstrap, and it just looked so raggedy. And then all of the patchy hairs here (motions to face). Just had no idea what I was doing. I really didn't. But I'm using spirit gum to stick it to my face. And it looked good. I remember when I got there and Ricky looked at it and was like, "it's just so trashy, it's good." I was like, I did not do that on purpose, but I'm glad it works for the aesthetic. I'm glad that it really speaks to what I'm trying to go for.

00:13:27 **TF:**

And so I performed and I remember everybody was just into it because, you had a couple, like, with amateur drag especially, there's this struggle of, like, why are you performing? Are you just cosplaying right now and making us all watch? Like, some of the songs that people choose the, the performances they put on, you're just like, I don't know what this is at all. Like I don't know this song. You know this song, you're doing this for you. So it's not really a drag— like it's drag, but I think there's not that, like, show element to it. And for me, it really was about making it into a show. And making it fun. And making it so that Gage Razor is like a rock star up there. And it worked. Everyone was going crazy. Because again, I chose a song everybody knows. Like, you hear this Luke Bryan song, you're like, I know that one. So everyone is singing along, they're having a great time and afterwards, Ricky was like, yeah. That's how you do it. That is how you do it.

00:14:35 **TF:**

It's also— I'm very, very privileged and very fortunate that I can do that in such a predominantly black troop and Black space. And that it's so welcomed and accepted. It's not what they normally do. It's not what they normally perform. and it's this just twist on it. And it's a lot of fun. And they're like, yeah, like we want more of you, we want more of you. So it was just this little show in October. I mean, the strap, I had a flannel with the sleeves cut off, I literally was drinking a beer during it. It was this whole entire thing and it was so funny. It was such a great time. And I was like, this is really what I wanted. Like just this moment of, like, here's Gauge. And just, like, for a couple moments, I just wasn't me. Which was awesome.

00:15:28 **CC:**

Can you describe what that feeling was the first time that you got into drag performed like that?

00:15:34 **TF:**

Exhilaration. It was like, exhilaration and this almost out of body where me, Fraser, like, yeah, I'm here, but it just gets to be Gauge. And it's just fun, and it's exhilarating. And it's this expression that I have that is just being welcomed because this is safe place for to be welcome. There's no complexities of trying to explain, "well I'm not a man and I'm not a woman but I—" what people unfortunately expect of you when you are other than, when you portray and exist in any sort of otherness, people need to know and understand it. And with drag and with Gauge, I didn't have to explain anything. I could get up there and lip-sync, and everybody knew who gauge was. I didn't need to explain anything. I didn't need to justify anything. And it just felt so completely comfortable, and normal, and good. Just being, and having it there, and it was safe. And then I could step back into me, and take on all the responsibilities of me, and what comes with explaining when your other. But it was like this release of I have no responsibilities and no response and no otherness to justify for these three minutes and fifty two seconds. I am just a southern guy singing a song. And then when I step back into me, I'm okay. So that's what it continues to be for me. Is this the step out, get everything out, and then step back into me and be okay.

00:17:09 **CC:**

And so how would you describe Gage, like as this sort of separate drag persona?

00:17:16 **TF:**

He is just a good old boy who thinks that the world can be solved with some beer. He's the good that you see of kindness, and generosity, and being polite to people. He really just is like a good ole Southern boy who likes beer and singing songs. And in that moment, he just exists and he just gets to be, and all of these notions don't— like, there's no responsibility with him. And that's it. Just for one night, there's no responsibility associated. Everything can take a breath and take a pause. And all that matters is, am I being polite to you. Can I get you anything? And then laughing and joking and having a good time. And it's just a totally freeing experience.

00:18:15 **CC:**

It sounds liberating, yeah.

00:18:17 **TF:**

Absolutely liberating.

00:18:18 **CC:**

And so you started almost right before the pandemic?

00:18:23 **TF:**

Yeah.

00:18:23 **CC:**

And then, what happens, March 2020?

00:18:25 **TF:**

Yeah, so I performed in October 2019, my first show. And then my second show was February 2020, and it was the same thing where I actually performed Florida Georgia Line's 'This is How We Roll,' and everybody's going bananas. Because again, it's just a good song. And Ricky saying to me, like, "you got this, you understand what drag is about. And you can perform, and you're an entertainer." Like, "these are all good things to have." And so actually in March 2020, just before the pandemic hit, I was back home in Arizona. And my friend back in Arizona is also drag king. Goes by the name of Frankie Fahrenheit. Frankie is much different style. It's a very indulgent, makeup, sort of— it's just great show. Frankie's persona is just brilliant. Totally different thing. But Frankie performs at, there's bar called Charlie's. It is the gay bar. It's a gay country bar too, funny enough.

00:19:25 **CC:**

There you go.

00:19:25 **TF:**

It's just been the staple of the Phoenix gay scene. And so Frankie performs. It's actually a bunch of drag queens, but Frankie is friends with them. And so Frankie asked like, "do you want to perform at a drag show?" And I was like, "yeah." So I actually got to— my third performance was Gage, in Arizona, in front of my family and my friends, which was awesome. My parents came, my sisters came, their friends came. They made shirts, which is even more great because they had a picture of me performing as Gage and it just says "Gage Razor." And like, my niece, wears the shirt now, which is so funny. She's like, "who is this?" We're like, "it's Rosie." She's like, "no, it's not," like "no, it's Rosie." She's like, "oh my God, what," like she just can't— but, you know, she's—it's funny that way. So I got to perform that show and that was awesome, and I'd been working on it. And so I finally got like, I did a

full beard. I mean, it was like, a full-blown beard and it looked good. I mean, it took so much time because I'm cutting wig hair to like get the hair and stick it on my face. And I mean like, my super indulgent part is I draw in these like, big-ass boxy eyebrows. It's ridiculous. And so, like, I was really comfortable and really understood.

00:20:41 **TF**

And then the pandemic hit. And everything was paused. And I tried once. With PrettyBoiDrag I did the Drag Me Down music video, but it's just it's not the same online at all. You need an audience to interact with. If you're doing it for the sort of release for the entertainment, for the purpose of it. You need an audience to interact with. You need something to feed off of, you need something to feed into and with the screen and the virtual, it's just you. So I didn't participate for most of the pandemic. I just sort of stopped. And, you know, I kept it in mind and I've missed it and I've definitely struggled with not having it, and not being able to perform.

00:21:31 **TF**

You know, now that I have— so I work full time, I go to school, I've got one class left, I'm doing my Master's. So, you know, I have a partner, so there's a lot of like, life stuff that is built up and there's just been no release for it. And so I've noticed more and more like, the need to come back out. The need to feel again, the need to do, to participate. And for me the pandemic just, it paused it and put it on a shelf. I really commend any performer that managed to get through the pandemic with virtual shows and online shows. And even those who came into spaces, that was then livestreamed. Like, they were just performing in an empty theater. I just, I can't. It doesn't fulfill the need I have for why I do it, that sort of payoff, and that interaction and that whole aspect. I don't get with virtual shows.

00:22:28 **TF**

So for the last, what, it it a year and a half now? We're in November. Oh my God. Yeah, so I just haven't performed. There's a couple opportunities this past summer with PrettyBoiDrag, and just my own responsibilities in life, I couldn't. So, I really want to, again. I want to be able to like, put on Gage's flannels and get back out there, but the pandemic really stopped it.

00:22:54 **CC:**

And so, what was your experience like in quarantine? And I'm thinking specifically, like March when things were locked down. Were you quarantining with somebody else?

00:23:04 **TF**

So I was— I had roommates. We had a house out in Maryland. You know, and we were hanging out. It

was two guys, both in their 30s. We were just like, okay. This is what it is, and like everyone else, we thought it was like, okay, it's for a month. Okay. It's for two weeks. Okay, it's another— and it just, we did. We quarantine together. We didn't go out. We didn't see people.

00:23:33 **TF**

I actually had the really, really fortunate, great time of, at the end of March, 2020, I was diagnosed with Stage 1, bladder cancer. Very curable. Very like, super— it used to be called superficial cancer. And then they're like, you can't cause cancer superficial. But I spent most of the first part of 2020 quarantine going back and forth to Sibley [hospital] to do radiation treatment for bladder cancer. So I had about two months of treatment, and then a break. And then like another month. So that was most of what I was doing the whole time in quarantine. So, at the same time it was— I didn't have other things, like I didn't have time to think about going back to drag, and I was trying to find a job. I just graduated, I was doing the first set of online, which turned into everybody being like, "all right, I don't have class planned. Here's my speech. Post on the discussion boards." So class was actually really really easy, which made it great. And then it was just like, holy shit. Like, where do we go from here? So I was so focused on my cancer treatment that first half that by that point I was like, okay.

00:24:53 **TF**

And then by that point, I think when I was all wrapped up we were getting into July and it was like, all right. So this is still happening. And things were starting to ease a little bit more, and I just kind of was like, alright well, let me find a job. So I managed to get a job working with the federal government. And so that last part was just the work from home. And then at the beginning of this year, 2021, I moved out of that house and I moved into a new place. And so, you know quarantine, just feels like a fever dream at this point. Where, yeah, we were locked in a house, but I also I was out every single day because I had to go get cancer treatment.

00:25:37 **TF**

And so there was just a lot of here. About catching COVID at the time like a, massive fear, but I did what I had to do. Washed my hands, wore a mask, didn't complain, and here we are.

00:25:49 **CC:**

And did you feel isolated during that time, period, or was it different because you did were going back and forth?

00:25:56 **TF**

I feel like I wasn't super isolated. I had my two roommates, and then my best friend was also the one

that was taking me. So I got to see her a lot. And then we utilized Zoom with the family and I don't think I ever truly felt like, isolated, isolated. I think I just kind of was like, all right. Well, I'm not alone. I knew I wasn't alone. I think the hardest part was definitely having conversations with my parents about like how you cannot come out here right now. There is a massive pandemic going on. Like you fly, you will catch it and you will die. Like you're not the healthiest of people, you know, like you can't do this, so I think for that, it was tough, not being with my family, but I had other support systems. So I never felt truly isolated. I think the saddest part was sort of Gage going, you know, on a shelf into a closet. There was just no time to express this thing I had immediately fallen in love with, and gotten so much joy out of. Because I couldn't perform in the space that was there.

00:27:02 **CC**

Do you feel like your relationship to gender or to Gage changed during the pandemic at all?

00:27:07 **TF**

No. I'm still me. I still have my core beliefs, about gender and about identity. And as far as Gage, like, I can't wait to bring them back out. Can't wait to get to perform. And it's still there. I didn't give up on drag. I think it's just a matter of finding the time in a very adult, busy life to get that time to really prep. Like I don't go in just— when I started performing, I really rehearsed a lot so I don't like to go in cold. So it's a matter of, can I really get two weeks and some time cleared to be able to do this?

00:27:54 **CC**

Absolutely. And you said that your sense of your own gender had crystallized before—

00:27:59 **TF**

Yeah.

00:28:00 **CC**

—the pandemic had hit?

00:28:01 **TF**

Yeah, so it was really lucky in that sense, that I definitely knew my gender before. It was just unfortunate that this experience that helped me express this other part, kind of got breaks slammed on. So that was that was tough. But who I am about gender about my gender about my identity. None of that changed during the pandemic. It's still me and still who I want to be. I think the only thing that's definitely changed since I've been with my partner— she's femme and she definitely adheres into a

much more Butch/Femme dynamic. There was a bit of an age gap between us. She's older. And so she's got more nuanced ideas about Butch/Femme relationships. And I'll say, I think the only thing that has changed is I present much more masculine all the time. And even at work now. Dressing professionally when you're non-binary, you don't know, am I masculine? It can be tough. And I think it's finding clothes that fit that fit right too.

00:29:09 **TF**

And a big part since March I have lost forty-two pounds. So none of my clothes fit me anymore. But then that's also be more exciting because now I'm getting to get new clothes and I'm not stuck in fat people clothes that don't feel good. And I'm able to kind of shift more into like androgynous clothing. I have a lot of shirts from DapperBoi and Androgynous Fox and Hot Butch, and I've really started like build a closet that I'm comfortable in. And so, I think the only thing that's really changed as a result of the pandemic is, I got way fatter, because all we were doing was eating. And then I lost a bunch of weight, and then got way more comfortable being able to wear male clothing and male presenting clothing and dressing more masculine in my every single day. Like going to work and wearing khakis or chinos and a button-down that fits properly. So I think that's the only thing that has changed is like, my style and my presentation is definitely become more Butch and masculine.

00:30:24 **CC**

Yeah, and so was the factor that played most into that was the weight loss, or it was the pandemic, or it was Gage?

00:30:35 **SPEAKER_2**

I think it was a lot of just factors coming in of like, the pandemic and putting all that way didn't feel great. That made it harder to, I think to a certain degree of like, what I envision for performing. Like I don't— no shame to anybody but I don't want to be like a traditional Stone Butch that's like overweight and big. Like I never wanted to be that and I was big. And I didn't realize I was that big, but then I started seeing myself in pictures and was like, I am getting big and I don't like it. And so when I started losing the weight, and I started being able to like fit in clothing, again that I liked. I was like, I really like this and then it was getting me excited again, being like Gage can— because now, I used to have to wear big flannels to like cover up, because when you've got curves and boobs and stuff like it's hard to like— So you wear a big flannel so that nobody can tell. But then I was getting to stage of like, I can bind comfortably again, and I can wear shirts, like I can wear it Henley's. And that creates a whole new level of wardrobe and dynamic. I don't have to wear these big ugly flannels. I can kind of really style a little bit more. And when your face is skinnier, hats look better. So it was like, I can get a cowboy hat now. Like I can really get a good cowboy hat to go when I perform with Gage. So I think Gage benefited far more of me just choosing to get healthy after everything. I think there's a lot of opportunity there for Gage. Again, it just sucks that there was just not been an opportunity yet to get

back out there.

00:32:25 **CC**

Yeah, and it sounds like there's a correlation between your style changing in and out of drag post-pandemic.

00:32:33 **TF**

Yeah. Yeah. There definitely is. It just, it feels good. And I really applaud anyone who ever does it. And I encourage it, it just, it feels so great to get to choose a style that suits you and that you're happy in, and is more representative of you, yourself, and your gender. And it sucks. It's not cool that you know, big people don't have the same choices. And I think that's obviously a larger conversation that I know is going on throughout the world. So like I know that. And I just feel really lucky that I got to make the change and now I get to benefit from it. Like my style is changing. And Gage's style is changing. And we're both happy for it.

00:33:19 **CC:**

That's so awesome. I love that. (Colette laughs) So I guess just in a moment of reflection here as we kind of draw to it to an end, I'm curious how you would describe what gender means for you.

00:33:34 **TF**

I think gender for me is just about expression and presentation. Gender is something that is for others. Just the way that human nature is and society is, there needs to be explanations. There needs to be definitions. There needs to be something tangible, something that people can make sense of. And so I think internally, gender is whatever I want it to be on any given day. And I think externally, gender is how you present to the world in a way that you are comfortable with. And I think that is what is most important. When you are not comfortable presenting and being out there, it can lead to a whole host of mental health problems, of insecurity. And I don't wish that for anyone. I don't imagine anyone does. And so, when you're able to find words and expressions that suit who you are, I think that's what gender is. It's an introduction for others to see you as you want to be seen. As that's why I embrace non-binary. I think it's wonderful that you can choose, and you can be whatever. And you don't know explanations to other people. I think gender doesn't own explanation to anyone people want explanations, but they're not owed it. And it comes down to the individual. And when you are happy with gender, when you are happy in your gender identity, it is less burdensome to have to explain gender to other people— to explain your own gender. When you're confident and comfortable going, "no. I'm actually a non-binary. I use they/them pronouns." It doesn't feel like a chore. It doesn't feel like punishment or anything else. And that only happens when you are able, to define it for yourself.

00:35:37 **TF**

And for me, expression is what I'm good with, what I'm comfortable in, how I feel good how, I look good, what's giving me internal validation, while also being comfortable with whatever is happening externally. So I think gender is personal. And it's not owed to the world, but the world sees it. So you should be able to give whoever you want to the world. And you should be happy and confident and comfortable in it.

00:36:06 **CC**

Do you ever experience gender as a performance outside of drag?

00:36:13 **TF**

I don't. I think I get a lot of validation when I'm I do get a lot of validation from my partner who, when I put on my work clothes now, looks to me and goes, "damn. You look good." And I get a lot of validation when I look at myself and go, "I do look good. This is awesome." Like I get a lot of that. Like for me, it's not— I don't get it performative outside of drag. I don't. My gender validation and my gender expression comes when I'm feeling good with how I'm looking. Because I'm just comfortable in it and I look good. And you just know when you look good. You just feel good and it carries over into your life. When you feel good, you act good, you do good. And I think for me, it's never just a performative expression. I think that's what Gage is. He's a performative expression who gets to exist to deal with all the other bullshit that comes with gender. And just me in my everyday is just good being who I am.

00:37:18 **CC**

So do you think drag has changed your life in anyway?

00:37:22 **SPEAKER_1**

Yeah, I think drag is absolutely just made me far more comfortable with the way I carry my gender. And that I don't owe it to anyone, I don't have to explain it to anyone, and I can experience it how I want, when I want. That's what drag is drag is me, getting to experience hyper-masculinity in a safe and healthy way. And without contributing toxicity, or trauma, or anything to something in a harmful way. Drag is just me getting to express myself in such a healthy positive way, and it carries me on, it makes me happy. Makes me able to do good.

00:38:01 **CC**

I love that. Yeah, thank you so much.

00:38:03 **TF**

Yeah, absolutely.

00:38:03 **CC**

There, any questions that you think I should have asked that I did not?

00:38:07 **TF**

No. I think that you definitely— I think I would say if you want to ask moving forward, is just how do you think the world views your gender? How does your world interact with your gender? Sort of how do your co-workers react, how did your family react. And just the reaction to somebody's gender and how they express it. Like what's the reaction of other people when you say I do drag? So yeah.

00:38:37 **CC**

And what is the answer to that for you?

00:38:38 **TF**

I think for me—

00:38:40 **CC**

it's good question.

00:38:41 **TF**

Yeah, I think for a long time it was something that everyone was like, "what? This is ridiculous. You're being ridiculous." And then getting to see it and understand that, when you do enjoy performing and being an Entertainer like that— and as I mentioned like, I do enjoy a little bit of the center of attention. I think it was just really validating that they were able to see that too. And like, really understand that this is not some big internal problem I'm trying to sort out. Like, I'm not trying to be like, "am I a girl, am I a boy?" Like, there's nothing that I'm internally struggling with. They're just getting to experience and be with my joy. And I think that's really good.

00:39:23 **TF**

I think a lot of my— I think I get a lot of what many non-binary, or masculine leaning, masculine

presenting people get which is like, "excuse me, sir. Oh, I mean ma'am. I don't know what you are." And then just kind of rolling with that. But most people— I mean with work, I've been really fortunate that— I had one co-worker, before she left. I miss her so much already. First time I ever came into the office I wore a suit. And it was a time when nobody was really in the office. And she laughed because the next time that we met on our team Skype and everything, she had said, she was like, "yeah and Fraser's coming into work in a suit, and I'm just sitting here in like a shirt, like I didn't—" It was just such like a normalized, like, okay, like, nobody's ever said anything.

00:40:13 **TF**

But I do, I make the effort to dress professionally at work, and everyone's just kind of accepted it. And nobody said anything like, "why are you wearing a tie right now." So I've been very fortunate there, too. But I think, for the most part, when you're comfortable in what you're wearing and how you present, you carry that confidence. And when you carry a confidence like that, it's hard for the world to interact with you in a negative way. When I'm like, "oh, it's fine." When somebody is like, "ma'am, sir, ma'am." I'm like, "it's okay. Sir works ma'am works. It's okay." Like, I roll with it because I'm so confident and comfortable in it. And when you're not and you're struggling with it, it becomes such a traumatic, horrific experience. And so I think for me, how the world interacts with my gender is how I defined the world acts with my gender. And when I'm comfortable in it, when I'm confident, and when I'm calm, the world can't dictate how they want to. You can tell me what you think, but it can't touch me. It's almost like my gender becomes an armor. It cannot penetrate me when I'm good in it.

00:41:23 **CC:**

I love that. That is such a great note to end on. Thank you for that.

00:41:26 **TF:**

Absolutely.

00:41:27 **CC:**

And thank you so much for talking with me today. Your interview has been so informative and will be a really valuable inclusion to my project on drag as a vehicle of understanding gender and how we experience it. So I really appreciate you taking the time.

00:41:42 **TF:**

Yeah, absolutely. You just let me know if you need anything else from me. I'm more than happy to give whatever you need. So thanks for having me today.

00:41:49 **CC:**

Of course.