

Interview with Mike McKenzie, April 3, 2017
Conducted by Prof. Wendy Chapkis

Wendy: All right, well we'll just go with that.

Mike: All right.

W: So, what I need you to do, first of all, I need to say I'm Wendy Chapkis, W-E-N-D-Y C-H-A-P-K-I-S, and I am interviewing Mike McKenzie, and if you would spell your name.

M: M-I-K-E M-C-K-E-N-Z-I-E.

W: And it is April 3rd, 2017. You know that you can stop this interview any time you want, you know that you can refuse to answer any question that I ask you, should you feel uncomfortable about the question. We're going to talk for probably an hour or so, maybe 90 minutes at the max, and you can tell me whenever you'd like to stop if you want to stop before then, and otherwise, if we don't get to the end of everything you want to say, we'll come back and have another go at this.

M: Gladly.

W: Okay. So, maybe you can tell me a little bit about your earlier life that lead you to the question of your chosen family, your coming out as a gay man.

M: Well, I grew up in Scarborough, Maine, so a relatively suburban town in the southern part of the state.

W: What year?

M: Oh, um, let's see. I was born in '71, so the late '70s to, you know, mid-80s, I guess, is childhood for me. In 1988 I was already aware that I was gay, I knew that I was living in podunk, and had to get out. You know, having, growing up in the type of town where the kids that couldn't hide, the kids that, you know, weren't wearing a Winchester hat and a flannel shirt, you know, I think it's why I've always had such a love of, you know, the femme boys, the sissies, that kind of thing, I love them, the queens. They had to rough it out, I slid, hid, and slid through and I watched a fellow student, you know, when I was a freshman in high school, I watched this kid pinned behind the store, and they were charging a dime to spit on the fag. You know, so that's, and I was like 'I've got to get out of here'. Doesn't matter how fun you might be, doesn't matter how popular you might be, everything will change. You know, and I dropped out of high school and worked as, you know, doing landscaping and painting, and just crap, for about 6

months, until I turned 17. And my mother signed the permission slip for me to join the Coast Guard, and I went to boot camp in 1988. Luckily I joined the Coast Guard, luckily I got into the Coast Guard, I scored well enough, I tested well enough to get in. The Coast Guard really wasn't big on GEDs, and that kind of thing, but I did well enough that I could get in. And luckily it was the Coast Guard, because it's like, the liberal branch of military services, like, the completely laid-back group. First woman in command of combat vessels: the Coast Guard. Alex Haley retired from the Coast Guard. First black man commissioned as an officer's the Coast Guard, you know, all that kind of thing. A lot of gender equality before it was hip, you know? That kind of thing. Worked with a lot of, you know, crate women. All kinds of different people. It was, having grown up in southern Maine, it was nice to go and meet people from a completely different experience. And most of the time in the Coast Guard you find outer banks, Alaska, Midwest, New England. The average education level for an enlisted person is a Bachelor's degree, so it's the best-educated branch of the service. Well-read, you know, you serve with, you know, some pretty sharp characters a lot of the time. A lot of just fun, interesting people but laid-back, and it was such an easy environment for me to, being on a ship, they knew. They thought I had a guy send me to a ship thinking, okay, that's gonna man him up, all of a sudden, I don't know, vagina, hooray! I'm on a ship! *laughs* So it did the opposite, because I had never in my life been so close to a group of people, including my own family as I was with my shipmates, because that is, I mean, there it is. So it was very comfortable for me to come out. It was only a newcomer into our group that upset the applecart, you know, because he didn't know me, and I found that repeat itself in my life time and time again, you know, you have people who are homophobic and flipped out and then they find out that somebody that they know or care for is, and then all of a sudden, 'well, I probably better take another look at that'.

W: So you were out while you were in the Coast Guard?

M: Um, for the last several months. I did get thrown out, I did get thrown out of the service. The newcomer, the guy, we had a guy come onto the ship that had a real problem with it. And come to find out, he got thrown down a ladder because he was talking about me behind my back a lot, so a couple of guys who will stay unnamed, came back to the ship drunk, and this guy made a comment about the fag, and got thrown down a ladder. Broke his arm, can't be on a ship with a broken arm, so he was on the base while we were underway, and they said, 'Well, how did you break your arm?' He said, 'Well, I didn't like the queer, and so a couple guys broke my arm for me'. It all came undone after that, but I still, I stayed on the ship until, you know, it was time that I actually had to leave. Everybody knew, there were jokes, it was funny, we were in New London, Connecticut, it was after Hurricane Bob, and we had been out, we stayed out for quite a while, grabbing buoys, picking up debris, that kind of thing, all the stuff that you do on a buoy tender. And we went into New London, and we get there, and this chief petty officer from another ship comes over, a smaller cutter, comes over and says, 'All right fellas, just so you know, when you leave the base, you're gonna go up the street, you're gonna see this bar, and it's

gonna have great music and it's gonna look like a great place to go, it's called Frank's Place, stay out of there, it's a fag bar'. Well it's, now, a beautiful day, as so often happens after hurricanes, you know, and all the [?] usually get a little high pressure comes in and, just beautiful day and everyone's out on the buoy deck, we're all out there, and the door from the mess deck onto the buoy deck swings open, slams open, and my chief petty officer comes out and screams 'Where's McKenzie?' 'On the boat deck, chief.' He said, 'Did you get those directions?' I said, 'Oh, I've been there before.' And we all laughed, we all, I mean, broke down laughing, and this poor bastard is standin' on the pier, and he's like, you know, 'What is this, a Rock Hudson movie?' And he turns around and walks off because he's just freaked out. You know, he's like, holy shit, you know? You know, I, we had a couple of cadets serve on the ship, one of them dropped me off at the Unicorn back in the day, he gave me a ride to the Unicorn. These guys were great. I mean, there were people that really stood up, and cheered me on, and it was really heartening.

W: So this was well before Don't Ask Don't Tell.

M: Oh yes. Yeah, this was 1990 to '91 that all this came to be. I was also, I should say, that I was also stationed back in Maine. So I was on Commercial Street, having grown up here, and so when I was going out, going to the Unicorn and all that stuff, I was running into people I had gone to high school with. The people that had come out, you know, the little butch lesbian, you know, the femme boy, all that stuff, it was like a really bad movie, if they actually made movies about us, you know what I mean? It was that demographic, all these people that, you know, it was. It was something from Central Casting, they said 'What do you have for diversity? Oh, we'll send it right over.'

W: So did you know each other to be gay in high school?

M: Some of us did, some of us suspected. But one of the first girls I had ever touched her boobies and all that stuff turned out to be a lesbian, so that all worked out in the end. But, you know, we all had a pretty good idea but I also split, mind you. I split my freshman year. So they actually had the opportunity to actually really grow up together, where I showed up every now and again and couldn't buy beer.

W: So let me just ask, you left high school in part because of the homophobia that you were experiencing?

M: Yeah, I knew that I wasn't going to be able to stay in the closet. I was getting ready to pop out all over. And I had already started to fool around with guys, of course, so there were a couple guys in my high school that I had already fooled around with, all that kind of thing, so it's like, okay, I need to get out of here before the drama, 'cause I'm not gonna be able to stop. I like dick. And shirtless boys, great, I love it, it's my favorite thing, I'm not gonna, you know, I just knew

that this, I'm not gonna be able to hide this, you know? As it is, I'm dry humping furniture, it's unbelievable, you know what what I mean? It really was. And of course back then, there were no, in arts and culture there were very few books, magazines, that kind of thing. I remember when I was young, and I first heard of The Advocate, The Advocate paid a lot of its bills through very specific gay male phone line advertising. So it was leather daddies, or twinkies, or whatever it might be that was, I mean, the magazine was littered with it. This is before it could get Subaru, and Kohrs, and all those, but nobody, you know, Michigan Michelin tires, you know, advertising in The Advocate, you know what I mean? It's like, no, no, white bread middle America, no. They had to go to you know, Big Black Cock 976, you know what I mean? So, to get that magazine, you had to go to, if you went to Bookland to get it, you had to go to the pornography section. And it was wrapped in plastic, like, you know, so much hustler. And there it was. And then one day when I was young, when I was in my early 20s, that's when things really started to change, so that it was okay, you know, all of a sudden you had Michelin and Subaru and Kohrs and Budweiser, advertising in The Advocate. So long, Charlie, I don't need your, which is also great because those things sucked. And we only called them because we were afraid we were gonna get AIDS and die. So we, you know, and even then it was like 'holy shit, oh my god, I can't believe I'm talking to this guy, I'm getting off the phone. Have a lovely day.'

W: So tell me a little about the intersection of your own coming out and the AIDS crisis, 'cause it's kind of in the same area, right?

M: Oh, it's, my entire pubescent, every, AIDS. I started to go through puberty when it was GRID, when it was the Gay-Related Immune Deficiency. Before your Magic Johnsons and such. So, my entire sexual life, at 46, I've never known a sexual world without it. It's always been there, you know. And I, you know, it is, because I'm of, having been born in 1971, you know, and that's, by 1983, you know, and that, the wave of homophobia that came out in the 1980s that was fueled by this, you know. In my, in my youth, I mean, Eddie Murphy. Eddie Murphy made millions telling gay jokes. And AIDS jokes. You know, and it's one of those things, I mean, you had all these comedians that told gay jokes, and there were a lot of movies where the gay person was the bad guy, or woman, that kind of thing. Within popular culture, the only way that we were allowed in was with comic relief. You can be the mincing, prancing queer, so long as you never had sex, you never had a relationship, you never had any of that. They might be allowed on the periphery. I remember being in the, here's a Coast Guard story: I was stationed in Newport, Rhode Island, at a resident inspector's office. And this lieutenant comes in and he watched that television show 30-something. I was a young man in the United States Coast Guard, I did not spend my evenings at home watching, you know, episodic television. I spent it in a gay bar, you know, from the time I could change out of my uniform to the time I had to drag my ass home at one o'clock in the morning. Gay bar, club 28, on Prospect Street, Newport, Rhode Island. When I went there, it was a medically-retired cop and his school teacher wife found it, they bought it by accident. They bought it in a bulk of property in probate. And they

apparently tried to turn it into a straight bar for about 15 minutes, and then that didn't work out, but, you know, you have a core group of people, maybe 20 different people in there at a time, and it was huge! You know, and in the '70s it was hoppin'! It was a hoppin' gay bar in the 1970s and the 1980s. People were scared to come out, the fleet had left, you know, the fleet had left Newport by then. I can only imagine the days when the fleet had been there, but yeah, but I was there. You know, so he came into work, he had seen this episode, the gay kiss episode of 30-something, that, you know, I heard about it the next day. 'Jesus, two men kissed on television last night!' And it's like, please. Really? Is this such an amazing thing? But he walked in and he talked about feeling physically ill by seeing two men kiss. And I remember looking up to this guy and thinking, you're a commissioned officer of the United States military. What kind of a candy ass are you? Geez, I really hope you don't have to beat anybody to death with a rock, you fucking sissy. That's all I can think, is like, what kind of a spineless thing are you that just two men kissing on ABC at, you know, ten o'clock on a Wednesday night is so traumatic to you, drama queen. It's like, really? I was horrified by the thought of it, and I also knew it well. 'Cause it was, you know, there were a couple of people at that duty station that knew that I was gay. But, again, really didn't give a shit.

W: So they weren't freaked out by the specter of AIDS, like, oh my god, the gay guy, monster, we're all gonna get AIDS.

M: Oh god, no. No. By the time I made it to a ship, I guess it was 1990, by then everybody knew that it wasn't, any thinking person. This is also the disconnect between the media and our community. We've always been the source of a documentary and not necessarily of a conversation. So, when I was young, if you went on television and said 'I have AIDS', or HIV, and tried to describe the difference between the two, 'Boo!' You know, I mean, they would, I mean, they did. So, for the most part, you had people that knew you, and had, and if they knew you, they probably had a brain in their head, you know, the straight people in our lives back then, the straight people in our lives always seem to be very bright, and usually very artistic and open-minded and free and easy. The kind of people we used to be able to call liberal without that being an issue, people that were, I remember for a short span of time it was okay to be a liberal in this country. And it was in the '90s, it was okay to be, you know, a white heterosexual liberal, because you had an idea in your head about something, or knew from firsthand experience, you just weren't spouting off and, you know, not really making any sense, and thinking you're doing well.

W: So that was your experience in the Coast Guard, you had pretty good support...

M: Oh, yeah.

W: ...and then you get thrown out. And then, what year did you get thrown out?

M: 1991.

W: Okay, and then what happens to Mike McKenzie in 1991 after you get thrown out? Was it shocking, first of all, to get thrown out?

M: Yes. It sucked, it was like a divorce. It really was. It was, for me, 'cause I loved it. I loved the military life. Particularly Coast Guard life, you know. The camaraderie and all that stuff. I was actually just getting my shit together in the service when I got thrown out, because I really didn't know what I wanted to do in there, I got knocked around, I went to all these different, you know, stations and all that kind of thing, spent a year in Washington D, which was awful. Just the work was mind-numbingly dull and everybody had a stick up their ass because they didn't have anything to do for real. They work, you know, 7 to 3, Monday through Friday, and they weren't living, you know, they weren't flying helicopters into a storm, they weren't on a small boat station, they weren't, they weren't doing the things that they really meant to do, the real, you know, pros that were there, you know, so, they weren't on a cutter in the middle of the north Atlantic, you know? I mean, this, Washington DC, which sucks. You know? So, yeah, that was just awful, but, you know, when I got out, you know, 'cause I had decided, okay, well, I'll stick with the whole law enforcement, public safety kind of thing. And I couldn't get a job as an openly gay man, you know, to save my life. You know, everybody loved my, you know, resume, and all that kind of thing, and my applications, and so I kicked around for a little while. I did some under the table work, I did, you know, just private little gigs, oh, we're having a party, we need somebody. Somebody I went to high school with stripped and she hired me a couple of times to bounce for her. You know, so just kind of low-key, kind of little security jobs.

W: And were you living in Portland?

M: Yeah, well, I was, at the time, I lived in Saco for a little bit in the family house, and then I moved to Portland. 'Cause I got a gig at Chaos, which was a gay nightclub, and I was sitting there going through the paper trying to figure out, looking for jobs, and I, oddly enough, I thought, well, I'll look in the back of the Casco Bay Weekly. Back then, newspapers had, like, real, there was also Casco Bay Weekly. And so they had job advertisements in a newspaper. We didn't have any fucking computers, so, there it was, it said 'Gay Nightclub' and listed all the positions it wanted, and one of them was security. And I thought, okay. So I mailed them a resume, and a letter of intent, and they called me up and invited me to this, we're gonna have this day where we're gonna interview for everybody, so just be here at such-and-such a time, I think it was like, eleven o'clock, you know, no easy piece of cake for me. And so, you know, I, khakis, laced-up brown shoes, brown leather belt, oxford, necktie, tweed jacket, lapel pin that says 'I am honorably discharged from the US military'. Had hair then, not a lot, but I had enough that it didn't look ridiculous to have hair on my head. And it was, you know, I had the very

conservative haircut, parted on the side, that kind of thing. My beard was very trim at the time, and I went in and it was all these gay people. And they're wearing denim jeans that are rolled up higher on the thigh, tank tops, a lot of neon kind of colors, that kind of thing, baggy pants, and you know, the whole horrible fashions of the early '90s. And I was the only guy wearing a jacket and a tie, and they sat down with me at a table and said, 'you know, we've read your resume, we really, really want to bring you on, but we want to bring you on as the chief of security. We want you to, you know, train the staff on certain things, and, you know, all that, and we'd like you to be beyond a doorman.' And I said I would be happy to take the position, and they said, well, here's the thing. He said, we just want to make it perfectly clear, we don't want to trick you in any way. And I said, all right. And he said, you do know that this is a gay bar, right? And I said, well, yes, I said, I'm gay. And they were like, oh, thank god, we didn't think that you were. We read your resume and it was like, no way is this a gay guy, you know. And I mean, I didn't, in my early 20s I heard a lot that, well, you really don't act gay enough. And, you know, all that kind of thing, and it's like, and I didn't know anything about popular music, you know, when you came over to my apartment and I threw an album on, or a cassette, you know, or even into the DVD, it was not Madonna, you know. You came over to my place and you were listening to The Dubliners, or Gordon Lightfoot, or Peter, Paul, and Mary, you know? Exactly. You know? I mean, I'm a Melvina Reynolds fan, you know what I mean? And Nina Simone, that kind of thing. You give me, give me a whole lot of anger, and a touch of booze, and maybe just two scoops of crazy in there and that's my music, that's what I, I like angry people. I am an angry people, so, you know. I've always said I fill my heart with hate to get out of bed in the morning, you know? It's just the way I am. But, it's, yeah, I didn't want to hear about, you know, *upbeat tune* Shut up. It was actually, that was the hardest part of working in a gay nightclub, was the goddamn music. Quentin Crisp said, 'A lifetime of disco is a high price to pay for being gay.' And I couldn't agree more, the man was a genius, you know, it's like, Jesus.

W: So how long did you last at the Chaos?

M: Six months, and then somebody offered me a job, one of the customers offered me a job. That's when I went to work for the school department as a contractor doing security, the guy, Bill, owned the security company that had the city contract, and part of that contract was the high schools - Portland, Deering, and Voc Tech, now called PATHS. So, I went to work there, and it was a great job. The pay was shit, and, but a really rewarding job, incredibly rewarding job. Had a blast. Actually, I think I got better at what I did at that job, I think that it really helped to round me out, and because everything I had always done before was basically my way or the highway. I had the authority of law, and that big flag waving behind me. I had the, you know, when I was in the Coast Guard, if I said 'Stand over there', you fucking stand over there! You know what I mean? It's just, there is no option, you don't, you know, so I'm, you know, with adolescents you can't really, you know what I mean, you just, and the harder you push, man, the harder they'll push back, so.

W: So what did you learn to do differently?

M: Listen to individuals in their story and understanding where they're coming from, as well as understanding that not everybody wakes up to a good day. We had kids from all over the region, from all kinds of different schools, we even had homeschooled kids there. You know, from like, the Jesus people, you know, that they wanted them to learn some trade, and actually socialize, in hopes they don't touch their sister's boobs, you know? The struggle is real, so there it is, you know. When you're homeschooled and in the woods, crazy things can happen, so, you know, so, you know, start socializing some of these kids, we also, we accepted kids from everywhere in, within the region, the Greater Portland region, Bonney Eagle, Gray-New Gloucester, all that kind of thing. So you had African and Asian immigrants and hillbillies and all that kind of thing, and I am proud to say that there are a couple of businesses in town that are owned by kids that graduated from that, the kids that didn't go to college. They weren't, they were gonna go to the world of work, you know, they might do some time at a community college, but they weren't going to college. Some of them already had police records, some of them had full-time jobs and lived on their own, because their parents had booted them out, you know. One of the kids I had, he was in the automotive class, and he, you know, he had a full-time job at the Jetport as a housekeeper, you know. He worked from like, you know, 4 to midnight and then went to his apartment, did whatever he could for homework, got up in the morning, went to high school, you know, and spent a couple hours at my program, or, at the school I worked out, so.

W: Did you, were you out when you were working in the high school?

M: It's when they made the caftan party.

W: Do tell.

M: So, well, was it my first year that I worked there? It was my first year that I worked there, I, not as much, but that was the year that I volunteered to be the director of security for the gay pride committee.

W: Do you have any idea what year we're talking?

M: Well, that's 1993, I want to say. '93, '94. I think it was '93. And that was the first year of the pier dance and all that stuff. And we did training at Chaos for the people that were, and you know how gay pride works, or at least used to work. You put out this call for volunteers, and everybody rushed in to volunteer, and then when it came time to actually do things, they were nowhere to be found. But anyways, sorry, I'm having a wig emergency, I can't come to security training tonight. But anyway, and it was easier to get away with back then because there were no

cell phones, so, you could just not answer your phone, it was fine, let the machine take it. But we had this training session at Chaos, and Bill Nemitz came down and wrote a story about it called, and the, it was, title was, 'Gay Pride Mixed with Prudence'. And I gave this little training session on how to be safe and what to do, particularly, you know, when you're marshaling at the parade and all that kind of thing. And then everybody that went to that training session, I mean, I think four of them showed up. And so, anyway, but that article appeared in the newspaper at the end of my first year, and so there I was. It did change the way that, because if I went to talk with a boy privately about something, it changed how I was supervised and that kind of thing. There it is. I mean, it's, you know. Back then you were just glad you got to keep your job.

W: Did you get any kids coming up to talk to you, because of that? Like, gay kids who 'oh my god, there's a gay person!'

M: Yep. Yeah, I, and, I did have people come out to me, and I did have people ask questions. And then it just became automatic that like, you know, one day girls came in from Gray-New Gloucester and they were really upset about how one of their fellow students had been treated at Gray-New Gloucester, and didn't know what to do about it. 'Cause teachers laughed, you know, teachers laughed when this kid got called a fag, and pushed, and that kind of thing. And this school had a, had a deputy sheriff assigned to it, you know what I mean? So that's the law, you don't, you can't knock people down, it's called assault. You know, you have, it's part of the problem that, later in life when I went to work on a contract for the federal Bureau of Prisons, it's the same kind of thing, is that you had people that they got away with it, got away with it, got away with it, and then when they turned 18 years old, someone turned around and said 'the law', and then was surprised to go spend 5 years in prison. You know, if you don't demand, you know, certain behavior from everybody, within society, you can't be surprised that they continue with the bad behavior. And I'm also one of those people that, you know, when someone says 'well, this kid's bullying my kid' or, you know, 'we've made this complaint', and then the second or third time it happens, you know, your kid goes ahead and knocks his tooth out for him, hey, we told you 3 or 4 times that he was being bullied, and now he's gonna stand up for himself. Now both kids get suspended from school. At some point in time we do need to teach young people it's okay to stand up for yourself, you don't have to have a hand laid on you. And that's just, when I was a kid, we were taught that. It's okay to defend yourself. I think that's one of the reasons that people in my generation weren't really afraid to join Act Up, or, you know, that kind of thing, it was okay to go out in the street and say, you know, fuck you! I'm not putting up with this shit. You know, it's one of those things, and I think that when you have somebody, even like, when you look at it today, when you deal with, when you're looking at like, trans issues, and that kind of thing today that we didn't even recognize in 1986, 1987, that kind of thing, when I was coming out in the late '80s, early '90s. There was, you know, that rule of three: a drag queen was somebody that did, dressed up as a girl for entertainment and monetary purposes. A transvestite was a straight man that liked to dress up in ladies' clothing. And a transgendered person was

somebody, or a transsexual, is what we used to call it, a transsexual was somebody who was in the wrong body and was trying to live true to themselves, and that was, there it was. You had boom, boom, boom. If we, you know, you couldn't say I'm a bisexual back then because then someone would turn and say, 'pfft, soft option', you know. Still trying to give your mother hope? You know what I mean? We didn't, the idea back then, people were already, and I don't think it came from, you know, I don't think the Matlovich Society sat down one Saturday night and said, 'fuck those people, let's do it this way'. I think that the people that were speaking for us at the time, A, were either largely ignorant, because that is such a personal and individual thing, that unless you've been invited in to come in and watch, you know, you really don't, particularly then, did not have that information. So it's, you know, a mixture of ignorance and fear of confusing the issues. You're a college professor, you have dealt with people from all over, and you probably know better than anybody that there's a lot of people that really, it needs to be jackhammered in. Who has the time? There's a lot of stupid out there. I blame the food. I think that it's all the preservatives and shit in the food, it's just, I don't know, and bad television, really. Do we need to see another stupid father and a very smart mother, but for some reason they live in the crappy suburbs? Who fuckin' needs it? But I blame it on that stuff. But there's a lot of stupid out there.

W: So how did you get smarter? I mean, what was the, who, how did you get, you know, clued in to bisexuality or trans issues?

M: I've never been afraid of people. I also have been known to walk down dark alleys at night, we've discussed this in the past. But I'm not, I've always been a very open person, always very willing to talk to people, and listen to somebody else's story, and where they come from. I've always been receptive to that, you know? I know that there is a time when you just need to shut up and soak it in. When they're done, you can proceed, but right now, you just need to hear, actually hear, what that person is saying. People sometimes, particularly when they're emotional, this is also part of what I do for a living, and have for almost 30 years, deal with people in the worst possible time. It's, you know, nobody walks up to you as a security professional, you know, and says 'great weather we're having today'. No, somebody, something has happened, somebody has fallen down stairs, something has happened. I have come out of my little cubby hole office and have, you know, come out to deal with the issue. I am a problem-solver, and sometimes that means just hearing what the person's issue is, and what their real complaint is, you know? You know? It's just one of those things when you deal with people and you actually have to take action about their issue. You actually have to listen to them, and so I've always been very receptive. I also have slept with a lot of straight men, quote unquote, since it's a microphone, so, never, you know, don't mind rough trade, I've dated bisexuals, you know, I was in a relationship with a man who, we had, Thursday was date night. He lived with a girlfriend. I'd call over there, and she'd be 'oh, hey, it's Thursday, good, I'm going out with my girlfriends, dadala, you boys have fun!' We dated for a couple of years, you know, until he moved. But, and they broke up and he and I continued with our situation. So I've been with bisexuals, I know

people that really are, honest to God, bisexual, and I know people that, I believe in the spectrum. I think Kinsey was right. I think that, you know, there's a scale on it, and I think that what we're seeing now is more about awareness. And it's a really kind of interesting thing because it's a self-awareness, because people now have to answer that question about themselves because we've held a mirror up to society and have said, hey, you know, you really, where are you at? What's going on in your house? Smarty pants. And I think that people have, at this stage in the game, I think that people, porn in the internet, you know, some guy named Randy in a Nascar hat ended up on something and said, oh ho, that ain't as bad as I thought it was. We've got this whole social media thing going on right now that there's Grindr and Tinder and whatever the bear thing is, and all that stuff, you know what I mean? There's, I am a social media, don't know anything, social media guy. I don't know anything about social media, I'm not on any apps or any of that stuff. I sent my first emoji the other day and then wrote after it, 'I have sent an emoji'. So, so there's that, so I'm not on any of that stuff. I pick up my men the old-fashioned way, I meet them, you know what I mean? I don't swipe anything, I go out and meet people, still.

W: Well, talk a little bit about that, Mike. Because, that, the word about, particularly gay men, is that it's all gone online now. But you're still finding ways to meet people in real life. So what's that look like in the early 2000s, or, you know, in 2017?

M: in 2017? I meet them in, like, a place like the bar and grill, that kind of thing. You meet people that, you know, because, well, it's actually, it's that, that double-edged sword. When I was young, there were gay bars. There aren't gay bars anymore. In the early '90s there were what, 6, 7 gay bars in this town? And, you know, Blackstones was the leather levi bar, the Chart Room was the old mans' bar, the Unicorn was the mixed crowd, guys in flannel shirts, women in tank tops, you know what I mean? That was, so there was a nice little mix. And it was also great because it was, it was one of the only places that I can remember in my youth where men and women mingled socially and partied together and it wasn't, you know, 'well, if your penises hadn't gotten away' or 'oh, well, if your vagina didn't get in my peanut butter' you know? I mean, whatever the hell those arguments are, you know what I mean? It was, so that's, I mean, it was everybody. There were drag queens there, there were, there was really butch girls, you know what I mean? There was, all of that stuff was there. You know, the whole Melissa Etheridge set, they were there, and, so that was, that was one of those places. But every, like, you know, the twink bar was The Underground, it later turned into Styxx. Chaos was for the edge group, and all that stuff. Also, like, Zoots was a very open place. So we had gay bars here, and there was Sisters for a while, that was basically, you know, the lesbian bar, and all that kind of thing. So we had gay bars, we don't anymore. We have Blackstones, that has turned into a neighborhood gay bar, where straight, trashy guys go in to play pool, you know what I mean? So, we're out and about within Portland, but we're also spoiled rotten living in Portland, Maine. I can kiss a man at a bar in Portland, Maine, and so long as I'm not on Fore Street, nobody's gonna hand me my ass. I am not gonna have to get in a fist to cuffs, you know? I am not gonna have to, you know, hear

people go 'faggot!' You know, none of that's gonna happen in Portland, Maine. You know, when you have the pretty little twink couple bobbing down the street holding hands, they can walk into any bar on Congress Street and nobody's gonna bat an eye. If they did that in Bangor, might be a different story, but those of us, particularly in the Northeast, in this, you know, you got Boston, and Providence, and Burlington, and Portland, and Portsmouth, and that kind of thing, we're spoiled rotten, because not only do we have a liberal base around us that really doesn't care, that that's a minor thing. I mean, like, Portland, look at all the trans people that have come here because they can live here, because there is a community here, and it's a community that, you know, the overall Portland community, but there's also that core group of gay and lesbian people that have lived here in this city and chose Portland as a home, all those years ago, and bought apartment buildings, and started businesses, and became part of the community, the overall community, but also helped within our community, and spoke up, and marched their asses in the rain, and made this place as welcoming as it is. And those people that have been here a long time, I was in my first gay pride parade in Portland, Maine, I was 19 years old, it was in the pouring rain, and the police told us if we had a kiss-in or a die-in, that we would be arrested. And I kissed Jimmy Neal and Roger Mayo. But we marched from city hall to Congress Square. We had one side of the street, traffic coming down the street the other way, people screaming 'faggot' and the cops really not doing anything. And then getting up and being pushed right off and out of Congress Street, then into the square, and told if we had a kiss-in or a die-in we would all be arrested, and half of us kissed and the other half died. *laughs* just laid down on the ground and they didn't do anything, it's like, what, there are 4 of you, there's all 30 of us, you know what I mean? And it was back then, you know.

W: And what year was that? Do you know?

M: Oh, god. Let's see, that hadn't, it was 1990. So, isn't that funny? It was, it seems like yesterday sometimes. But this, the funny, the caftan party. The caftan party. Let the caftan flow, Kate Kaminski made that movie. I'm in it. And I was still working at the school department at the time, and, so, I guess it was my first year at the schools, and it was that summer, so it was the summer between my first and second year. Well, Kate Kaminski was running community television at the time, so Let the Caftans Flow ended up on community tv, like, channel 3, or whatever, like 6 times a day.

W: Describe the film a little bit.

M: It is a, basically a documentary-style film, of a group of people, mostly gay men, who are organizing and preparing, and then throw a party who has a theme of, or has a theme of caftans. And for those that don't know what a caftan is, it is a one-piece, unisex, loose robe, basically. Think giant t-shirt or Mrs. Roper, but you can't say Mrs. Roper anymore 'cause nobody knows who she was, either. So anyway, and that's the caftan. Very comfortable, very popular in certain

places in the 1970s. San Francisco, perhaps. But anyway, I had a madras caftan, and wore combat boots, but there were, there were, you know, contests. Most flowing, most sheer, that kind of thing. A dear friend in a bolero hat and a, and a very sheer caftan and a black, and black bikini underwear. Jimmy. *laughs* Swirling. There, they did give out a Miss Congeniality to a very happy-go-lucky fellow, Roger. So, but my roommate at the time, Paul Irwin, who is dead now, he wrote the music for it and played the organ, or the synthesizers and sang Miss Caftan, and, and all that kind of thing. And they had a pageant, basically, in Tommy and Howard's backyard, and there was music and lights and, I'm the only one whose language had to be edited in the film, because I was so mad. I was going on, there was a woman in, I, South Cackalacky, North Carolina, who the hell can remember. But she had sued her daughter for custody of her granddaughter because her daughter was a lesbian, and so that made her unfit to be a parent. And so this, and the judge agreed. Yes, you're right, you batshit crazy old woman, who's most likely hogging 3 or 4 teeth to herself, gets to raise this child, away from her mother, because she's, and I was furious. I'm still, I still get, mad about these things, but, and I was going on about it, and Kate was filming me, and I had no idea. And I was like, 'WAH!' Oh my god, it was ridiculous. But it was a fun, a fun party and a fun movie, but it got played on community television all summer long. And then I had, I was standing in the hallway, and this girl from South Portland ran up to me and is like, 'Mr. McKenzie, Mr. McKenzie, you look great in a dress.' And I said, 'It's not a dress, it's a caftan.' *laughs* And so everybody saw it, you know, and so, I mean, that's, it was fine, and the kids were a lot more laid-back about it than the adults were, you know what I mean? The kids, it was like, who gives a shit? They really didn't, they didn't pay any attention to it, they didn't care, you know. It's like, what, you think you're the only gay grown-up in our lives or teacher or whatever, you know what I mean? It's like, pfft. You know, the kids, I actually spent more time explaining things or dealing with issues with staff members, particularly at the vocational high school. Carpentry instructors, automotive instructors, welding instructors, electricity instructors, the building trades and automotives and all that stuff. And, you know, and then you had the people that were in more specialized, what, you know, special education and that kind of thing. Again, they were always the ones that were the first ones to be like, you know, well, there you go, picked up on that, or, figured, or whatever those that, a little more sensitive, a little more in-tune, that kind of thing.

W: Let me ask you Mike, so, your self-presentation sounds like, throughout your whole life has been, and that you're super-masculine, you're kind of a butch guy, you know, military, the whole thing. Has that, and in high-school, that was self-protective, I mean, people didn't know. But once you're out, do people go, do people feel tricked in some way? Like, 'How could YOU be gay? I thought you were straight!'

M: I, I have, I have had that a couple of times. I, you know, not so much now, but when I was younger, it happened quite frequently. And, when I, actually, when I first went to work for the museum, you know, I had the, the chief of security at the time, you know, knew people that I

know, that owned Drop Me a Line, and all that kind of thing. And so we were having a conversation about mutual acquaintances, and that's when I said I had shopped in that shop quite often, in Drop Me a Line, which was a gay and lesbian-themed, you know, card shop and that kind of thing. And, so, you know, this was in my first couple of weeks working there. I had left a contract job for the federal Bureau of Prisons, where I was not really out. There were a couple of people that figured it out, mostly because I stood up and said, 'cause that was right around the time Matthew Shepard was murdered, was when I was working for the Bureau of Prisons, and so I had a lot to say about that. And people figured it out, some people did, and most of them were actually really cool about it. Again, guys coming out of federal prison, like, I don't care *laughs* like that's the only thing in my life I'm gonna fucking worry about is the fact you're gay? I don't give a shit, I want to get off probation. But anyway, so I was completely ready to be out again, after a couple of years of being guarded about things, 'cause let me, once you're out, there's really no going back in, not for real. There's, you know, you're still gonna be out to somebody, you know, the, the idea that you are gonna be able to go back in there and actually maintain any level of sanity. It was already starting to make me unhappy in the job anyway, is the fact that I didn't feel like I could be honest and real anyway. So anyway, so I was prepared to be out of the closet again at the museum, and I had this guy come in, and he was a born-again Christian, and, not that his religion, his religion has nothing to do with the fact that he was a complete putz. He was just an ass. He was one of those people that thinks he's a lot smarter than he is. And, God love him, he proves himself wrong all the time. But anyway, he came in and said, 'Hey, you seem like an all right guy, so I'm gonna let you know, 'cause I know things' kind of thing. You know, it's like, ugh, whatever. He said, 'There's people spreading a rumor about you.' And I said, 'Oh, really. What rumor is that?' 'People are saying you're gay.' I said, 'Oh, that's not a rumor, that's true.' And so he's like, 'Oh, oh, uh...' and shuffled out of the room. And, it was like, oh, you jackass. Get out. We had a rocky relationship, after that, but, you know, 17 years later, he's working at another job and I'm a supervisor, so *laughs* things work out in the end. It's another reason that I have worked at the museum for as long as I have, is because it is an environment in which I can be me, that I can be a gay man without worrying about, 'cause they don't care, it's an art museum, you know? There's a lot of gay people that work there, that kind of thing, we're surrounded, again, by the intelligentsia, where there's comfort and security, and when someone calls you a fag, there's comeuppance, you know, somebody gets spoken with, you know, or spoken to and dealt with, you don't get away with that shit, you know? And a lot of it, too, 'cause the person standing next to you, 'cause I know for a fact that one of the guys that had been on my team had referred to one of the co-workers as a fag in front of another straight guy that worked at the museum, and that straight guy was all over him like white on rice. You know? He's like, 'Hey! That's not cool. I don't want to ever hear that kind of talk again.' You know what I mean? So when you, you don't have to worry about watching your back, because somebody's got it, because they don't care about who you fuck or what your kink is, or whatever and, they just don't, it's, it's not the issue. Are you a decent human being? Are you a good co-worker? Are you someone they consider a friend? Then they're not gonna let somebody run you down, they're not

gonna let somebody make fun of you behind your back, you know. So that's, you know, we've seen that arc, you know, in my lifetime, you know, from being the villains, to being in the lead, you know what I mean? We've, there's a sitcom right now that's basically about a gay teenage boy, you know what I mean, and it's like, you know, growing up in middle America, in a Catholic family, that kind of thing, and it's like, that never would have happened when I was a kid, you know what I mean? When I was, you know, 13 years old, there was no television show option, not this country, you know? I think it's another reason that you have so many people in the gay community that emulate the European society, is because it is so much more open and realistic about who people are.

W: On your sheet here, you wrote something about the, the age of change?

M: Oh, no, that's the arc of change, sorry, bad handwriting.

W: So say, say, what are you, is that what you were referring to?

M: Yeah, this is, yeah. And, you know, in, within my lifetime, in the 46 years I have been alive, we've been, we've gone from being a dirty joke, or the bad guy, to a slightly less dirty joke, and the light character, again. They've brought that back from way back when, the light, gay character, who's comic relief, to being taken seriously as, as members of society that doesn't need segregating, that nobody, people in civilized places don't have a stink when they realize the table next to them is a gay couple. Or that that guy and his girlfriend, oh, someone's transitioning. Maybe both are transitioning. We've gone from that time period that really, just even saying that we are two grown consenting adults in love and we want to get married, and having people say, 'my god, you should be killed', to a point where there are a lot of people in this country that say, oh, okay, I think I understand that there's this, you know, thing, that you, that, you know, it's not a disorder or whatever, but there's something within your makeup, that in your brain you're not the gender that you got comin' out of the machine here. 'Your mother should have kept you in the oven for a little while, that bun wasn't done.' You know, that kind of thing. There's, I mean, I think that people have come to an understanding, like, that we've had a lot of addiction issues, and a lot of issues where people have said 'well, this is about make up of the individual.' This is about something that's going on upstairs, and within their body, you know? Because people, I mean, the idea of a hermaphrodite, I mean, that's, that's carnival stuff. Until, wait a minute, now we have the information that this happens more and more than people ever thought, and that it's been going on for, since recorded time. The difference is that you don't have some guy, who's like a bit character from Emergency! 51, saying, 'well, I'm gonna assign this person a gender right here and now, with this handy sewing kit and shears I have.' You know what I mean? You don't...

W: So you don't, do you feel at all discouraged by the rise of the Trump era, then?

M: Oh, christ, yes. But, being within my generation, we were raised basically being told we were dead meat anyway. Those of us that didn't die of AIDS were going to be blown up in World War 3. We were raised on the idea of World War 3. My generation is the last generation that grew up in the Cold War, with the constant threat of death looming over us all the time. Mine was the generation that actually saw the lovable hobo turn into an epidemic of homeless people, that was, you know what I mean? We were raised pretty much as the doom generation, you know, we were all gonna die, and horribly. You know what I mean? It's just, you know, your head is going to explode and the skin's gonna rot right off from it. You know, we were basically told this, our childhood was spent being said, 'you're dead meat.' You are toast. You're not gonna live to see 40. Show them. But, because they were. We didn't know so many different things then, you know what I mean, like, with AIDS, or with a lot of different things with it. I mean, you, the advances of all forms of medicine at this point in time has been astounding because somebody finally realized 'hey, we can make a shitload of money off from this!' You know, so suddenly somebody said, I know where I'm putting my money, pharmaceuticals, and this, and that, and the other thing. And, you know. I don't, when I grew up, you didn't turn on the radio and hear an, an advertisement about a medication. Maybe Bayer, or Alka-Seltzer. 'You ever feel blue? Ever feel a little down? Eat this pill. By the way, this pill might, might make you kill yourself, or somebody else, and drive a car up some stairs, or shit on the rug!' I mean, and they eat the stuff anyway. But anyway, and, 'Doctor, I think I should have this pill.' 'I think you're right. Here you go.'

W: So all of this prepared you for Trump? Is that what you're saying?

M: Yeah, well, exactly, yes. Because we're, at this, at this stage I'm, I'm not as afraid of it as I was because I know that a lot of this, like, with the Russia stuff, and whatnot. I'm not as afraid of it as I was when I was a kid. Maybe it's because I'm not a kid anymore, and I know that I'm actually self-aware of the fact that I'm going to die anyway, at some point in time. So maybe that's why I'm not as afraid as I was when I was a kid about this stuff.

W: Do you think living through the AIDS epidemic had any effect on your, sort of...

M: Oh, certainly. I, I think there was a, it was, I don't want to say a hardening, but a toughening of a lot of our community, that you had to get, get tougher or, or die. So I think that there is a resilience there, and a lot of grim determination within a certain generation and older. But I also think that, quite frankly, that people don't give the millennials enough credit. They are a hell of a lot smarter than people give them credit for. And, you know, everybody talks about how entitled and privileged they are, but every millennial I know works three goddamn jobs and lives in a really shitty apartment, you know what I mean? And so I don't, I don't know where they're

getting this, this thing from. I guess they say it about every generation, I'm sure they said it about mine.

W: That actually leads me to the last thing we haven't talked about that you circled here, which was class. Talk a little bit about class and the role of class in your life.

M: I've, I was raised poor, raised by a single mom, and growing up, class was an issue, what side of town you were on, who, who you were allowed to hang out with, all that kind of thing. And within the gay community, a lot of that breaks down quite a, quite a bit. But you do have the people that aren't necessarily have the same motivation that you might have as a poor queer person, who, who wants things like insurance benefits, 'cause they can, I always called them the six-figure fags, they can afford their rights. When you're poor, you can't buy your way out of a problem, you know what I mean? It's like, particularly, you know, in my generation, if you came from a certain social structure, people look the other way about you being gay, and you can still go work at the brokerage, or the law firm, or get into the fraternity, or whoever, 'cause your dad was there, and dada dada da. So you got a pass, where those of us that had no money had to, we didn't have an uncle that would fudge it for you, you know what I mean? We weren't going to work for Goodyear, you know, we ended, the bartenders, the waitresses, waiters, kitchen staff, you know, all that kind of thing, service industry jobs. It's retail, all that kind of thing. You know, that's where, you get a lot of these, you know, a lot of gay people end up within these industries because it's easier than corporate America. Corporate America, back then, had a, had an issue with you, they didn't want you. You know, you had to go, you know, whether it was hairdressing, or this or that or the other thing, the stereotypical gay jobs. You know, like, my friend Tracy, you know, he spent his entire life: waiter, florist, back to being a waiter, you know, making hats, you know, all this stuff. You know, he went through his life, you know, and of course, he also, you know, he's, you know, a generation ahead of me, you know, and he got sick in like, you know, I think it was '93, I think is when he got HIV, and so, and then he lived, it was cancer that killed him. But, you know, was that, like, 2013, I guess, something like that, when he died. But he had basically, he had done a rotation, a steady rotation, between florist, waiter, you know, theater, there was always some kind of artsy-fartsy thing thrown in there somewhere, but it was always waiting tables, working in a flower shop, all that stuff through and through and through, because those were the places he knew that he could get a job. And when your boss saw you on Friday night wearing a long blue blazer, and fishnet stockings, and a Judy Garland cap, and hadn't shaved your mustache yet, you'd keep your job. You know what I mean? So you had, so there is that thing, this, this idea. Armistead Maupin hit it in *The Tales of the City*, when tongue-in-cheek he was writing about opening up retirement communities for gay people in, in San Francisco. And, and now we're living there, we're living in that time. There's a bunch of us old fags and queers running around that are like, oh, I gotta think about this, you know, me and Jim, taking care of Jim after a stroke.

W: I actually wanted you to just talk a little bit about, 'cause you, you circled on the, on the sheet about what you wanted to talk about was family of choice, and, you know, family, you have a big family. You have a family of, so talk a little bit about what that family of choice is like.

M: Well, and that's, and that's something that I actually learned in the service, was when you're with people that you, you basically, you've chosen to do the same thing. But when I, after the service and started to, you know, live an out life in the gay community and, and all that kind of thing, these were the people that, you know, you began to identify with, you meet with, you meet them, you, you understand that they're great, beautiful things, and you want to keep them in your life, because it's not a matter of complementing you, or anything like that, it's, they're, it's because you want to know those people. You want to, like Jimmy and Roger, and Tommy and Howard, and you and Gabe, and all that kind of thing. Over the years, you meet these people, and you're like, holy shit, these, these are the people on my wavelength, and I dig it, and I, I, I'm really picking it up, I, I, I love this, I love this, this idea that we actually, we don't just belong to one another, but there is a connection that over years, because you can break off and go and do but come back, that idea of family that most of us gave up on when we were young, because we knew that even though mom or dad or oh, sisters and brothers, they were cool with it. For our, you know, generations and older, there was no inter-mingling in that, you know. I remember being young, and I think I was still in the service, and hearing this story about a gay man and his lover going home for Thanksgiving, and the fellow whose family it was, he had HIV. And they sat down at the dining room table and had this beautiful family Thanksgiving dinner. Except he and his lover were fed off of paper plates with plastic utensils. So, and even, like, within my own life, the assumption that I'm, that I don't have any plans, or, you know, that, that even though I might be seeing somebody, I'm still really single, you know. And I remember going to a family friend's home, and, you know, and she's, you know, she's not a right-wing nutty or anything, but she is, you know, kind of conservative in her thought and way and religious beliefs, to a degree, and all that kind of thing. And she said, you know, 'Michael, I love you. But if you ever come to visit with a boyfriend, you're not gonna be able to sleep in the same bed because you won't be married.' Well, now that's different. But, I was like, it's okay Linda, I'll rent a room, and fuck all night. What do you think of that? And, again, it's, she's another one of those good people that's just not running on enough information, you know. This is the one about, oh my god, it was funny, 'cause she's the mother of a service friend, and I went to visit them in Vermont, and she and I were the only two up on a Saturday morning. I went out in the driveway and smoked a cigarette, came back in, I was sitting there drinking coffee at the kitchen while she was making like, you know, June Cleaver breakfast, wearing her little bathrobe and all that stuff, and she said, 'Now, were you molested as a child?' *laughs* I was, I gagged on my coffee and I said, 'No, no I certainly wasn't.' And she said, 'Oh, well I saw on Phil Donahue, this psychiatrist said that people were gay because they had been molested as children.' And I said, 'No, no, when I got up to a certain age I was hoping somebody would molest me and quick', I said, 'but no, no, I had to fool around with people my own age.' And, so, she, when her kids got up, and they were 'Oh,

how did it go with, you know, breakfast with Linda?' And I told them, they both wanted to crawl under the carpet, you know, it was just like, oh my god, I can't believe she asked you that. But it's like, hey. But this is just, she doesn't know, it's coming from a place of innocence, not ugliness, you know?

W: And you have created, over the decades, you've been in this part of the world, really quite a rich family.

M: Oh, well, yeah. And, again, that also goes back to not being afraid of people. And I'm willing to meet people, and you do, and it's also about how you want to, once you've met those people, how you want to keep them in your life, and, and also about the fact that friendships, and that sort of thing, are things that can be crafted, and, and how you go about it, and all that kind of thing, and, and the mutual agreement between two adult beings who are going to share a certain amount of their life with you. And whether it's a level of honesty, or just, you know, shared interests, and all that kind of thing, it weaves in, and, and it does, and, and when you harvest that, when you, or, or, cultivate that, I guess is a better way to put it, when you cultivate that kind of world around you, because, again, it comes from that great piece of fiction by, you know, Armistead Maupin, *The Tales of the City*, is that, one of the characters says all you need in life is 5 good friends. Well, 5 good friends, yeah, they'll get you through life, but when you can share, and be open, with more than 5 people, and have that kind of open, honest communication and not be afraid of their judgment, because you don't judge them, and you have that opportunity to turn right around and say, I love me some rough trade, and nobody cares, because they don't! They, they love you! They don't care of the thing that makes, you know, that makes you do this, or the thing that gets you off there, or what have you, you know what I mean? That kind of thing, they don't care that you like to sip scotch as soon as it's 4 o'clock in the afternoon, or that, you know, if it's a day off you are smoking pot as soon as you roll out of bed, or, all that, they know who you are. And that's warts and all. And it's, it's stuff that sometimes, that, the chosen family, you can be far more open with than your, your blood kin. Because, when you are coming up with somebody, childhood and all that kind of thing, you're used to judging one another and being in a certain amount of competition within a family structure. And there is no, that chosen family of friends, there is, that competition isn't there, because we're not fighting for more affection from somebody, we're fighting to give more affection to somebody, we want to, you know what I mean? There's that, just loving somebody for who they are base. Bam. That's who that person is, I love them. I'm glad they're in my life. They, they make me laugh, they make me smile, they sometimes make me ache, but that's because you love them, you know what I mean? And letting somebody, you know, loving people like that, it's also because you're letting them love you, you know? And a lot of people, you know, you wanted to push away from that and all that sort of thing, 'cause you couldn't, you know. Depending on where you were, two men moving into an apartment together, they wanted to know the story. 'Cause there's still places where you can't be a gay couple and live in the same apartment, 'cause they can, landlord can throw you out. You

know, we think that we've gotten far, we have, but not far enough, you know? And again, that goes back to my point about how spoiled rotten we are here, because we can live openly, we, you know, we don't have to trick the landlord, we don't have to live like, you know, Three's Company, or whatever, you know what I mean? We don't, yeah.

W: I always find it so funny, though, because I certainly can say that as well and then I think, we're spoiled rotten because we're treated with the same basic rights as heterosexuals have, spoiled rotten!

M: Right, well, that's, that's just it, and that, and it's funny, too, because, you know, when you do, when you put it that way, it is the fact that we're just being treated with the same disregard as every other slob, you know what I mean? It is, it's crazy, it's like, oh, thank god, I'm just, I'm just like the asshole down the street. I'm, you know, there it is, not a problem.

W: So Mike, is there anything else that you wanted to talk about that we didn't touch on?

M: Oh, I, I don't know. I think we touched on quite a bit.

W: We did, quite a bit, it was wonderful.

M: It was kind of a ramble, though, not at all.

W: No, you're fantastic. So I will, if, I'll send you the tape of this, and I'll also send you a transcript once we get it typed out. And if there's anything afterwards that you look at and you think, you know, I didn't talk about whatever it is that you want to, we'll just do another one.

M: Oh yeah, sounds great, I would love to. It's fantastic, and thank you so much for the opportunity.

W: Oh my god, this has been wonderful.