

Johnna: Well, we are in the sociology department, 120 Bedford Street, my name is Johnna Ossie, J-O-H-N-N-A O-S-S-I-E.

Daija: My name is Daija Paradis, D-A-I-J-A P-A-R-A-D-I-S. And can you tell us your name and spell it for us?

J. Remi: Sure. I am, it's interesting to say that I was born and given the name Jason Dionne, J-A-S-O-N D-I-O-N-N-E. But in the last year of my life, I am exploring my gender and my representation so uh, I am going by just the letter J and my middle name R-E-M-I, last name D-I-O-N-N-E. It is interesting though to be brought into a conversation where I've already had to think about and question my name three times within the beginning of this conversation.

Johnna: Yeah, definitely. Thank you. Um how old are you?

J. Remi: Forty-two. Just became forty-two on the tenth, November tenth.

Daija: Happy belated!

Johnna: Happy birthday! You're a scorpio.

J. Remi: Thanks! Yeah totally.

Daija: So, uh where were you born?

J. Remi: I was born in Northampton, Mass, in Western Mass, and then moved out to Germany, um, at about a year and then lived in Germany on military bases throughout most of my childhood.

Johnna: Oh wow, can you tell us a little bit what that was like?

J. Remi: Uh growing up on military bases? Yeah, it's interesting there's so much of it that was actually pretty wonderful. I think that living around and having such a close community was really really cool when I was really young. Um, I think as I got older it was a lot more challenging um in terms of me finding out or starting to explore truths within myself. It became a lot scarier um because it was a definite military base with very very rigid structures and systems in place. Um, it was really, it was really hard to get out of that. You know I grew up with fences around me and walled and, not always but like grew up in situations that was pretty intense. Um, and I also grew up as an American, I grew up in Germany as an American abroad so I grew up with that sort of sense of being not from here, but feeling really connected to the here, whatever the here was. So uh, yeah.

Johnna: Right, wow.

J. Remi: Do I need to lean in or is it gonna hear me?

Johnna: No, it will hear you wherever you are so just be comfortable.

Daija: Um so could you tell us what life was like, um, so you were born in Northampton, Mass, you grew up in Germany, at what point did you come back to the United States?

J. Remi: Came back uh, moved back here after eighth grade, came back here for ninth grade, moved up to Norwich/New Hampshire border, uh went to school there for a year, and then went to school in Shrewsbury, Mass for three years, and uh then went to college in Boston then went out to LA, and then uh you know I'm sure we'll talk about it, I don't know what we'll talk about but, I've done a lot of moving around, I was a professional dancer, so I definitely did a lot of touring and uh have definitely been in a lot places.

Daija: Right. That's awesome.

Johnna: Yeah, do you have any siblings?

J. Remi: I do I have two sisters, one of which is seven years older than me and one of which is five years older than me. Melissa and Tracy, Melissa's the oldest, and Melissa lives in Brazil right now, Tracy lives in Germany right now. So all of us our family is pretty well known for kind of just sort of disappearing in a lot of ways, we're definitely military brats in that sense.

Johnna: [laughter] Travelers. Yeah that's awesome though.

J. Remi: I'm actually the most sort of like settled right now, which is not usually the case. Or never the case.

[laughter]

Daija: Um, do you have any other family members that are a part of the LGBTQ community or just you and how has that been?

J. Remi: Um, I have, uh, not really no. I have a cousin, like there's like distant you know people, there was an uncle when I was a kid that was maybe known to be gay, but um , and it was definitely, that was back in the day where it was you know, he had a special friend or he lived alone or he was like the lifetime sort of bachelor. But um, no, there was none of that. There was none of that, I, it was not a good, it was not a safe road for me.

Johnna: So what was your family's reaction when you first came out? Do you wanna talk about that?

J. Remi: Uh, I remember December 23rd, 1989, I definitely pay attention to dates in my life, I guess you probably see as I talk but uh, I woke up from a dream in which I was kinda came out with this like language that I was um, that I was at that time I think bisexual was used, and I don't even think I knew the word bisexual I think we had had in the few months proceeding that, I think we had somebody who had HIV and um, or full-blown AIDS at that time who was bisexual came and spoke at our school which is a very strange thing to me now thinking, on a military base that they had that experience, but it also incited such fear in us so maybe it was a part of the

process it was such a strange thing. But I had access to that word, I don't think I yet had access to gay, um I had just turned thirteen, um and I woke up with a profound and terrifying fear that I was gay. I remember at that time, I remember going to bed that night actually and I would fantasize, about not um not like sexually fantasize but I would fantasize about being married and laying in bed with this girl named Shannon who was in my class and we were married, and I would fantasize that we were going to sleep, and the lamest of fantasies [laughter], and uh, I woke up from this darkness telling me that I was bisexual. And I went into the family room where my mother always was watching TV, we always went to bed with the sound of television going and woke up and she was hours later - she really struggled with insomnia, I went in there in a state of - it was the first time that I felt what has become unfortunately in my life a repeated sort of terror, I felt that, that sort of high pitched anxiety, went in and talked with her about it, we talked for a little bit, she woke my father up, and we talked about it a little bit, and uh I was immersed in uh in therapy to reroute my sexuality within, within the week, which then continued for the next seven years. Um, so it was uh all hands on deck, I saw about fifty therapists over the course of my teenage years to help me reroute uh my brain so that I would be heterosexual. Um, it sucked. A lot.

Johnna: I bet.

Daija: Yeah, I couldn't even imagine.

J. Remi: Yeah, it was uh, there was a lot of reasonings used which I'm very mindful of now. You know uh, the phrasings "What you don't act on, you're not" uh "It's your hormones and they will settle down in time" that was a big one, that one was able to be really used through thirteen, fourteen, fifteen because my hormones were and everyone's hormones were so I was able to kinda buy into that and believe in that. That there would become a time where I would uh, my hormones would be less jaggedly going and I would be heterosexual, um, I would settle in. I dated girls throughout that experience, and uh yeah it was actually, it was the beginning of my teenage years, um I would say before I was fourteen I had entered a ritual for me uh that lasted until uh about eight months ago and I still struggle with it, a bathroom ritual of I would go in from anywhere from one hour to two hours to four hours a day, and I would reroute and kind of retrain my brain and I would visualize male and females and punish myself for desiring males and ensure that I was attracted to females. So that continued on, and a part of - uh I'm just going to be honest since it is - I think that's the point of this whole story, by sixteen was using, was drinking by seventeen was using drugs and drinking and doing whatever I could to feel nothing, and uh went to college. Really partied hard in college, uh and it wasn't until I was uh, wasn't until I was about, until I was twenty just before my twenty first birthday that I woke up in a similar space, uh woke up - I've had many at that point, by that point had had most of my seven years of that experience was that. Um, but I woke up, my sister was there, my sister with whom I'm very close, my oldest sister, she and I partied together, she supported all that I was and I, I basically just said I uh, I either need to die, or I need to go, I need to go meet with a counselor and uh, I think I need to say that I'm gay or something, I think I need to figure that out. Um, she of course like a great sister was like so the one and only option is that we're going to the counselor and meeting with the counselor, this was at Emerson. And I remember sitting there, I remember sitting um in the waiting room of the, that office, and uh, I remember sitting there and I remember just looking at a magazine I remember I opened a magazine, and it was like the first

time, it was like something larger just had - it's so bizarre that it was so simple, it said "all you need to do is say you're gay". So I went in, and I think I, I said there maybe I am gay but I think I am bisexual I definitely feel .. at that point I had been actively working against being attracted to my best friend for, you know all of us have that story, for three years I was trying as hard as possible to make sure that I'm not attracted to my best friend and uh, ended up being that I was very much in love with him. And that ended that friendship. And I came out, and I eventually came out and moved to Los Angeles and uh, had my first short wild romantic few months relationship with somebody in Los Angeles and, you know, made my way, so, it was a very difficult journey, it is a very difficult journey.

Daija: Absolutely.

Johnna: Yeah. So when you, you were at Emerson when you came out? When you decided to-

J. Remi: Yes.

Johnna: And did you feel like you had any support system there other than your sister? Did you have friends there that were supportive?

J. Remi: Yes, yup. Well the ridiculous part is that I was in the theater department, I was in the theater and film department, so the fact that I was waiting until the very end of Emerson to come out, everybody kind of jokes about now, like all of my best friends some of my best friends that have been my best friends since I was like nineteen are, you know they just think hilarious in a, in a, in a gentle way, but they're like I can't believe that of all the places you wait till the end of Emerson College to, to come out, where like most guys are gay at Emerson, you know, so.

Johnna: Yeah. So did you have other friends that were gay too?

J. Remi: Yeah, I did and I had one um, it is interesting I had one that kept on poking uncomfortably around into my constant life that was you know reminding me of a lot of things that I had yet to, to be and to explore. Represented a lot of things that I was scared of, even though I really cherished him. Um, represented a femininity that I was really scared of, represented a sensibility that I was really scared of, just, yeah I never never felt like - I was always scared, I've always operated from a space of fear or shame, and uh yeah, but I did, definitely.

Johnna: Yeah, that's great.

Daija: So, you moved to LA shortly after coming out?

J. Remi: I did, I did, really came out in uh, I mean I came out in LA, and um it's interesting when I look back on that time period in LA because there were a couple years there that I really was, wild, I was wearing skirts and and and um, and ski goggles and I lived on Venice Beach and my best friend and I lived on Venice Beach that was one of my best friends from college, still one of my best friends, and uh it was wild and I was learning what it was like to be an out queer person, although in that time no one would have used the words queer, um ever. Uh it was a real

negative connotation although now I use it in trying to re- sort of like re-fabulousize it. Um, it was amazing, it was amazing in some ways, it was amazing in some ways, I did have a whole lot of sex and a whole lot of hooking up and whole lot of everything and whole lot of using drugs and drinking and all that, so it was a wild time. And I also - and I dated somebody - I dated a really lovely guy for a short period of time, and then kind of did a lot of things, and then I - and then I found the first real love of my life. Um, his name was Sam, and he was uh a crystal meth addict and was positive, and I was twenty one, I was really young and I uh didn't know how to deal with all that was going on there. Um, he was in and out of the halls of AA and NA and recovery programs and it was really tough and I, um and I was scared and I was in love, I was really in love. But we uh, but we decided it was - I decided to leave there um, I was, at that point I started to teach at a private school elementary school. I was closeted at the school, was still pretty scared of that, but was out in life. Um, and I decided it was really time - I've been craving dancing I've been dancing a little bit since college, I was in theater and had been dancing really pretty informally and not taking - and had started taking some real classes in LA and decided that I wanted to dance professionally and that it was gonna make sense to leave Los Angeles and to go to New York or Paris or you know, to leave. So I decided to leave, and leave that relationship and kinda leave that world. But it was a couple years of um, it was wild. Lived on the fourth floor of Venice Beach overlooking the water, it was different then it was, think it's much more expensive now, but it was a really kind of fabulous experience, it was a very queer experience actually that was - whether you were sexually queer or not, it was just a queer fabulous kind of wild experience, so.

Daija: What drew you to LA in the first place?

J. Remi: I wanted to be a movie star! I wanted to be a movie star and I wanted to be seen and known and validated I think and I wanted to have all that and I got there and I did a little bit of like the trying out and auditions and all that and I did my internship through Emerson there, I went there my final semester of Emerson. And uh, I don't know. I quickly found a school. I was told by somebody to become certified as maybe a substitute teacher or teacher and I had certain credentials - was easier working then in California. So I became certified and started going around to schools, and found a school that became a deep home for me for a couple years and uh became a teacher, and kinda was like I'm ready to let that - I don't know I'm not interested in being an actor right now, so I did.

Daija: Awesome!

Johnna: So once you decided that you wanted to start doing dance, what were the, can you walk us through that? You were teaching at a school and decided you wanted to be a dancer and then...

J. Remi: Totally. I um, I wanted to dance. I knew that I wanted dance and I knew that I needed a lot more training, and I needed a lot more - I was a gymnast, I was a gymnast as a kid so I had all the flexibility, the strength, and a lot of the movement capacity and awareness of my body but I didn't yet have any of the real training. Um, really, the real training, I've done lots of improv and and and sort of like modern kind of like post-modern work but I haven't done real training, so I knew that I needed to train. So I left Los Angeles to dance um, I was on route to fly to Paris, I was gonna do a road trip across country, uh and part of my story is definitely gonna be drugs and

alcohol so I mean I don't know how appropriate it is or whatever, it could be censored out of this, I think it's -

Johnna: We don't have to censor anything, whatever

J. Remi: Good, I uh, I traded weed I brought tons of weed in my car to trade along the road trip across country, and had weird crazy experiences in Big Sky, Montana and Beaver, Utah and did my thing, I was gonna stay with my parents for a couple weeks in Boston once I got there, and then I was gonna fly to Paris. And uh, once I got to Boston I decided - which is where I went to Emerson, um I knew that there was a fabulous uh complex called The Dance Complex in Cambridge which was like all sorts of fabulous dancing, it was uh modern and ballet and West African and hip hop and everything, so I decided to go in and take a class. And I went in and I took a class, I saw a friend of mine who told me to take - she's like why don't you come a modern class with me? I was like what level is the modern class? And she says it's an advanced modern class, I said uh I think that would be a disaster show. She says just do it, just do it and just come up and have fun. So I did! Um, I went up and took the advanced modern class and I was a disaster and I was probably pretty dangerous for other people. And uh but I went up to the teacher at the end, her name was Diane, an unbelievable, gosh an unbelievable uh dancer and uh director and teacher. And I asked her "I'm going to Paris, do you have any advice?" Like where should I have taken class or do you have any kind of like, you know advice on what I should be doing. And um, she gave me some advice and then she said "You gonna come back to class this week?" and I said yeah! And uh, so I went home and I did my thing and I came back a couple days later, maybe two or three days later, came back and took class again. Took class, was equally as much of a mess I'm sure, and uh after the class she talked with me and, um and said uh "How committed are you to going to Paris?" And I said well I mean you know I'm committed to going to Paris, I've been getting my visa and getting my passport all set and everything's all good to go. She's like well "because I'd like to, I'd like you to stay here and I'd like to train you, I'd like to train you and take you into this company," which took me back and I was like uh, alright, um let me think about it. And uh so I went home, I remember, I went home and I was kind of blown away that anybody could possibly want that, and um went home and talked with people and people were like "It's like getting what you want without having to like go all over." So I uh came back in the next week and I said I thought about it and I uh - after another class which I was probably, who knows what was going on, um I came back and I was like "I think I'd like to stay here and train with you." She's like "Great! Do you have your passport?" I said "Uh yeah I mean I was going to Paris" She goes "Okay good because we're gonna go to Venezuela in like three weeks so, I think your first gig is gonna be in Venezuela, and it was. [laughter] So I danced with them for years and uh, and had amazing experiences, it was a small dance company and I got to dance in different countries and different parts of the U.S. and got to fully um, be in and of my body for years, and it was uh, it was extraordinary. Yeah.

Daija: That's amazing. Did you kinda feel just really at peace with yourself when you were dancing, like this is who you were meant to be? Or was it more of like a this is fun but this is not entirely what I wanna do and entirely who I am?

J. Remi: I think there are times where it was both, I think there were definitely times, I mean, there were times I was dancing eight, ten, twelve hours a day, and it was definitely who I am

meant to be. I love that I wake up and this is what I do everyday all day, and even after a day of rehearsals I still wanna take like a West African class tonight, and I was surrounded by people who were in their bodies whether it was yoga or dance or um, theater like, I loved that idea of just like you know - even this idea of us sitting in a - this has become my education world is like sitting in chairs and desks, but the dance world is sitting on the floor and sitting you know, immersed in sitting in my split and kind of just talking to people so, I love that. Um, yes, I love it. It was not far into my dancing though unfortunately that the return of, of anxiety and depression and struggles came back it. I injured myself, um I injured my, my right foot? I'm actually not even sure which foot it was, think it was my right foot, broke my right foot. And it was pretty quick into that that I had new um, basically the the same sort of feeling as that thirteen year old kid, um that terror filled feeling, but this time it was with gender, and it was with uh, am I meant to be a woman? So that entered in, kind of took over, so uh you know I loved the dance but I also was really really struggling in my head with gender identity, and the gender identity that entered at twenty-four twenty-five that had - you know I had always been trying on my mom's dresses and doing my own thing and, I had never wanted necessarily to be a woman, but it was all of a sudden almost a fear that was larger than a want, it was a, I wasn't sure which is was. And it's never, it's actually never end - it's never left. That has never left, and I you know, moved into um, you know I dated plenty and really headed - that was another period of my life where I headed into really dangerous, much more dangerous drugs. Um spent a couple, you know spent a chunk of time really engaging in very unsafe sexual behavior and sexual behavior was definitely having sex with multiple people a day. Um, was severely losing weight and not taking care of myself, and at the end of that period I actually met my current husband who is the most amazing man ever, um but I met him and we've been together now for sixteen years. Um, and he uh, he is the man that I've been waiting for my whole life I mean he's the image of sort of, the man that I imagined as a kid would hold me and take care of me, so it's pretty awesome. But it was uh, it's been difficult, that's been difficult. You know, the fears that I'm only now exploring.

Daija: Right, that's beautiful though.

J. Remi: Thank you, it is beautiful, he's beautiful.

Daija: That's so lovely.

Johnna: Um, what year was it that you two met?

J. Remi: 2001. We met like a week and a half before September 11th actually.

Johnna: Oh wow.

J. Remi: Yeah we remember both, you know the intensity of that experience being like a week and a half into a relationship and just being really nervous and scared and we were in Boston, so we met and we knew that that was - you know I remember, I had gotten onto the radio the second, in the time between the two planes on my way to dance, so it wasn't until after rehearsals and everything that I got to see him and it was well after the buildings had collapsed and the

Pentagon had just been hit, and yeah I remember that day. So we had only been together for like a week and a half.

Johnna: Wow.

J. Remi: At that time, and it was an interesting like solidifying sort of safety.

Johnna: Yeah.

J. Remi: In a time that was - do you remember that time?

Johnna: I do.

Daija: I don't. But I wish I did.

J. Remi: Well don't wish you remembered something that you didn't remember cause, it was pretty tough.

Daija: Do you think that had an impact on your relationship at all?

J. Remi: No, I don't um, I don't know I mean I can't say whether that had an impact on our relationship, he definitely - he has consistently left me feeling safer in times of great fear, so I guess in that sense yes. Um, but no and I think, that would be taking away from the real victims of that atrocity to say that it impacted our rel - like it was something that was happening, but we were very safely in another city, even though we were in the city where the planes originated, we were in another city we were safe. So, no uh I think it changed our consciousness in a lot of ways, um but didn't really like solidify our relationship, but I just remember it timing wise.

Johnna: So when you were dancing and you started sort of questioning your gender identity, did you feel like you wanted to stop dancing or did you feel like you wanted to keep dancing through it? What happened after that?

J. Remi: It's really interesting, it's been interesting because I was a dancer and then I went back to get my graduate degree in urban elementary education and became a teacher and became a dean of students and, like through this whole process like I've fought hard to continue to like be immersed while this whole time I'm really really daily struggling with gender, and how I'm presenting myself. I went through periods of time where I wanted to present much more mas - you know I wanted to really kind of like push the boy um, out there uh, my gender dysphoric sort of experience impacted everything, it impacted everything, it took - it kind of stripped from me, um it stripped everything from me. Uh, hanging out with friends to dancing to being in love with Michael to whatever it was, um you know the bathroom ritual, the sneaking off, the trying to get my brain in place where I'm, I am okay. So, what was from thirteen to twenty, focusing on being attracted to men and women and making sure that I'm attracted to women, at twenty-four twenty-five onward, was um sitting with and extending that time period to focus on now it wasn't about what I was attracted to it was what I wanted to be. So it was seeing the two bodies and really making sure that I really wanting to be a man. Um, but always being sort of tortured by um, the

way that sweaters fall off women's' shoulders or that way that uh, a scarf can be worn or the way that uh an elegance can be walked, those kind of things really were always very present for me um, so that's something that I'm exploring now in my life.

Johnna: And how does it feel to let yourself explore that now?

J. Remi: It's really conflicting because I feel on the one hand deeply interested in exploring my gender, and then I feel as if I'm a fraud when I do it, or I feel sometimes like it's a force. Um, I'm introducing myself to kids now, so I'm in the ed leadership program I'm a principal intern at Westbrook High School, and the kids know me as Mx. D. Uh, I last year when I started to - with Michael, I have a very supportive husband, he actually came home from um Target or somewhere the other day and goes "Honey, look I got you a shirt in the women's section!" And it was a pretty romantic thing, it's a really romantic thing, um, yeah it's crazy sweet like it's so beautiful. Um, I am uh, I wanna be thoughtful about this because this is an opportunity for me to be thoughtful about it. Um, people ask me what pronouns I use in life, and I don't know, I don't know. Because I've used one set of pronouns for so long, um so I don't necessarily wanna use female pronouns, and for me I don't really feel compelled to use they/them pronouns. But that's also I wonder generationally if that's something for me that like I'm of a generation where that's just kind of a - I think your generation has an easier time, maybe has an easier time with kind of alright let's figure this out. I have been playing around with the ze/zir/zirs kind of those pronouns, I think when people ask me "What pronouns do you use?" my next question would be, in a magically possible world in which we got to be fully exactly who we are, I would love to use those pronouns. Um, you know down to my name I don't know, like even when I introduce myself as J, as just the letter J right now, this genderless experience, it leaves me really uncomfortable. I feel sometimes really excited about it, I feel like I could be any - I could be J - I could be anything. But then I feel like, you know a fraud, I feel like I'm you know I question everything I feel insecure about it I feel like I lack confidence. Um, Mx. D is something I've been thinking about lately because as a teacher, um you know I knew that last February, this last February when I was forty-one, um I sat outside of, I sat outside of Pom Thai Restaurant in South Portland with my husband in the dark, and I can remember the feeling of - at that point I had about eight months nine months of sobriety, I now have just over seventeen months of sobriety, um so I'm full recovery of substance misuse. Then I had eight nine months of sobriety and I remember it was like February seventeenth, I'm all about the dates, it was a Sunday night and it was dark, it was cold, we were waiting for the food and I remember I just sat there with some tears, but there was a different tearfulness that night. Um and I just said "I think it's important for me to move from I'm fearful of or I'm scared of and changing the language, even if it's not right language, to I think I'm trans." And to be able to say those words. And he said "How does it feel to say that?" And I said "If I could pretend that there was nothing that existed in this world outside this car right here right now, and I'm not going tomorrow to school, not doing anything but just being here with you right now in this darkness of this car, the warmth of this car in the midst of the cold, I'm relieved." And he said "Good." And I cried, and I laid my head on his shoulder, and he held me. And for that few minutes, everything was okay. So I'm trying to hold onto that. As an educator it's pretty scary, um in education and lower edu - I'm in middle school/high schools, it's a very binary experience, and not for youth as much, but it is for teachers. And I am striving to operate from a place of Mx. I talked with a person over at

MaineTransNet who says there are people who are starting to play around with this idea of the Mx. Are you familiar with Mx.?

Johnna: No, can you talk about it a little bit?

J. Remi: Yeah I will talk about it, because it's become a major part of my process. So he says um, I think he identifies as he and/or they, but um I think he is good. He said for those that don't feel like the other end of the binary system, the Mx. is a great way to have the professionalism. So when I introduce myself as Mx. D, it's M X period, D Dionne. And it's really interesting because most of the time kids have no reaction, they almost have literally zero reaction. Um which is amazing. I explained it yesterday though to a fourth grader um, I had a name tag on and I wrote it, because I wanna have the courage to write that even if I don't know what I am, I still think it's important. And I realize - so he says, raises his hand and his name is Tristan and he said "What's up with Mx. D?" And I thought, I had a feeling of fear, and then I was like wait but if I have the courage to put this on and do this and he has the courage to ask the question, this is a rich experience for twenty of us right? So I said "You wanna know?" and he says yeah. And I said "I think, I think that there are some Mr.'s and there are some Mrs. and then there are some Mx.'s." And he and another kid kind of were like what does that mean? [laughter] And I said - and I kind of felt nervous, and I just said "I think sometimes in our society or in our world, we spend a lot of time in trying to make people like black or white, and I'm really interested in the gray. And just like we try to make everybody a Mr. or a Mrs., I'm interested in being more of a Mx. And that's what Mx. D is. And he says "I can get that!" and then we just moved on. And it was almost like I didn't even know what to do with his like fabulous acceptance of it, that I was like but wait? But where's the shame and where's the like - and I realized if I continue to open it up, it's much bigger than me, and I don't even know, in the end I really don't know, I can't know what it is. Right now I'm dressed you know relatively pretty masculinely presenting for sure, but because you what maybe that's today just how I feel? But larger than me, I want kids to see that there is a Mx. D and that they have an endless array of possibilities, the middle of which exists. I think we've done so much damage um, in terms of binary with gender, but also not just binary with gender, I think we've created a real binary experience with healthy/unhealthy, right versus wrong, racially we've created a very very, I feel a very dangerous binary of compartmentalization. For me I think a lot of my work is like, no you get to be fragile and strong, you get to be empowered and disempowered, you get to be, you get to have to acknowledge the assaulter in you and the victim, you have to - like all of those things I think, that's what Mx. D is. Does that make sense?

Daija: Yeah.

Johnna: Yeah it does.

J. Remi: So for me Mx. D is, is my professional role, but larger than my professional role I think it's kind of, I kinda feel like it's um, like a life's mission. I kinda feel like it's sort of a life's mission because I every single day show up to school, and I'm in my post graduate program here at USM to become a building principal, so I am showing up terrified that there is no room at the table for somebody like me, somebody like me who struggles with mental illness, who struggles with profound depression, struggles with bipolar disorder, struggles with - which is a very new

thing for me to know, um struggles with gender, struggles with all this, and there is still room at the table for somebody like me. Which I kinda feel might help others who feel as if there is no room at the table for them, to feel like there is in fact a seat right there waiting for you. So that's what I'm trying to focus on in my life right now. No matter how scared or terrified or um, yeah terrified is a better word than scared, um no matter how scared I am or deeply saddened I am or unsure I am, it's larger than me. Is that an okay answer?

Johnna: Yeah that's an amazing answer yeah, I'm sort of struck by it.

J. Remi: Good. I think it's important for us to - I think there's way more Mx. Ds than there are not, I think we are many more of us much more in the middle.

Johnna: Yeah.

J. Remi: That's what I feel.

Daija: Do you think that that realization has kinda helped you get through everything? Especially recently, so just knowing that by me accepting moreso who I am or even my uncertainty about who I am, that it's helping so many other people that it's just a driving - keep going and keep trying to be your best and figure that out?

J. Remi: Yeah, I'm definitely getting constant feedback from the outside world that it is driving them to explore their life differently or how grateful we are this is so interesting. You know I remember, you know that you come in with your um - I bought some blouses lately that are much more obviously feminine and, and I'm gonna wear 'em. And I'm gonna, I'm gonna walk into that school terrified, and I'm gonna wear it, and I'm gonna wear it with elegance. And I'm gonna show up, and I'm scared the whole day almost always. I don't think it will be that way forever though, but I'm given the feedback from students [laughter] students are always like "That's the most amazing shirt, so cool, awesome, see you later Mx. D!" and like it's like they don't even, I keep on waiting for one of them to - I keep on really waiting to have my own internal high school experience of being shamed, which seldomly happens.

Johnna: So do you think that kids now are more open minded than they were twenty thirty years ago?

J. Remi: Unbelievable. Unbelievable. It's unbelievable how much more support and alliance there is, it really is pretty gorgeous. And how many more kids are living out as queer youth, um it's pretty phenomenal. We also do have though unfortunately we do have incredible amounts of drug misuse, substance misuse, and Westbrook specifically, we have been, we have been recovering from - we had a senior take his life three weeks ago. Um so, it has been a really really intense time cause, I think there is a lot more acceptance and then, and then we have a long way to go, we have a long way to go. I actually think we've made a lot of strides, with - I think we've made a lot of strides with sexuality and gender identity in some ways, I know we've made a lot of strides in sexuality, gender is newer and we're making those strides. What I think we really haven't done good work on is really allowing the public conversation around mental illness to exist. And I think that many more of us struggle with mental health, than have the conversation

about, and that's something I think we have a lot of work to do, and whether it's related - I think it is, and I know that we - I know that queer youth have more uh predispos - uh have more not predisposition, are more disposed to have more issues with depression, anxiety, and things like that. But I really think we're not doing the real conversation. I think we're using language - we're misusing language like crazy and OCD and bipolar and things like that in language, and I think I even been really guilty of that in the past, and now I confront people and people say "Oh that's my OCD" I was like "Is it actually your OCD talking or do you just like things tidy?" Because if you have OCD and struggle with it, it is a profoundly dismantling disorder. So if you have it, then own it and let's talk about it but if you don't have it, then don't use it.

Johnna: Mhm.

Daija: I do that as well [laughter]

J. Remi: Yeah it's hard! And you don't always wanna be the person correcting everybody because that gets really annoying [laughter] I feel annoyed by myself, I wanna like punch myself in my throat. But like, you know I was schooled, I was really lucky, I always say this. When I first came out in my early twenties when I was - when I literally self identified as young, dumb, and full of cum, it was ridiculous what I got away with and would say, but I was also surrounded with guys that were about fifteen years older than me, twenty years older than me, that were like "Okay so you're pretty, now shut up and read a book and educate yourself" and I was really lucky that I could really be informed by Andrew Holleran and Armistead Maupin and you know all these - Edmund White and E. M. Forster and just like, they were just like "You know what? Like get the education going on of your history". And uh, so I do think it's important even if we're annoying and we're always like "Hey, how about thinking about it this way?" I just think the world needs more of that and I guess if I'm annoying because I'm pointing out that yet another song has "bitch" said in it seventy-eight times and I'm the guy who's constantly like "What do we think about - ?" you know, then that's what my role is. You know, cause nobody - it seems like a lot of people are not doing a lot of thinking about it you know? And in Maine - I'm new to Maine I've only been here the past couple years, you know I'll be in gyms where it's almost entirely white people listening to hip hop music in which there is language used that I feel as a group of white people is so uncomfortable for us to be okay with that language, none of us having experienced that experience from which hip hop comes, that I'm always like I feel like this is not the right population to really be enjoying or like cherishing this music. Um I think this music has its place, as long as it's really - like I feel like it needs to be more thoughtful. Does that make sense?

Johnna: Yeah, that makes sense.

J. Remi: I'm constantly like why are we listening to this language music with a group of people that I feel like doesn't really get it? Doesn't really get that struggle. I don't know, I don't know, that's a whole separate like a side thing but I, I work with teenagers so I'm constantly thinking about like -

Johnna: Yeah, yeah. So, speaking of your work with teenagers, when was it that you decided you wanted to stop dancing or move on from dancing and go into education?

J. Remi: So I knew [laughter] by the time I was like twenty-nine, thirty, my hips, my knees, my body I mean dance is like - it is its own - it's tough. Um, and I just - and the whopping you know the whopping \$11,000 a year that I was making as a professional dancer doing my thing, which was amazing but like very very financially like, you know not cutting it, um I was supplementing at that time with personal training and uh, was doing alright and was also married and you know - or we weren't, we were not married yet but we were living together. It just was known - I had dreamed - I knew that I was returning to the classroom, never wanted to be in the classroom ever actually, in my life as a kid. Um, even in college like just never wanted to be a teacher. Uh, kinda found that experience and found the like passion that it brought out in me, I couldn't believe that like wow this is really cool wait, to hang out with a bunch of third, fourth graders at that time, um this is awesome this is really cool. Uh, so I knew that I wanted to go back and get my gra - but I wanted to go back not with passion as the only thing. When I was in my early twenties, I went about it with passion, but didn't ha - I went in with raw passion and didn't have any skill and resourcefulness. I went back to my graduate program to gain resourcefulness and to gain sort of a different understanding and theoretical practice and all that kinda stuff. So went back to grad school at like thirty, and spent those couple years in grad school, and uh - focusing in on urban elementary. And I left dancing professionally but I stayed with my partner, Karen, and we danced through our thirties in guest shows and sort of like pieces like that, I moved into a lot of duets, um and doing that and we danced until we were about - I was about thirty seven so I did another like six, seven years of dancing. Um, but much more recreationally and we would rehearse you know a couple times a week and then perform so, was able to do that but I transitioned into - I always, but I always incorporated dance, I never wanted to teach dance, dance was very much about like my experience, but I always incorporated - that's some of my favorite favorite things are when I get my fabulous like middle school you know boys doing Athenian like dance on chairs and those kinda things, cause I love to incorporate dance into the classroom all the time. Um, to get their bodies into the feel of something before we start to look at content, cause I want that to kinda frame their thinking so um, I often incorporate dance. You know when we're looking at like West African like Nigerian sort of like tribal affiliations, I first wanna have them up and doing West African ..., like I wanna get them in their bodies a little bit. And they're like, they're into it.

Johnna: That's awesome.

Daija: That's so cool.

J. Remi: They're really into it, you know what I mean. So it's really really fun. Yeah.

Daija: Awesome. Um, so what made you stay in Boston to teach? Cause you were dancing in Boston, training, went all over the world, all over the country, and then you transitioned back into education, but you were teaching in Boston schools?

J. Remi: Yes, Boston Public Schools.

Daija: So what drew you there?

J. Remi: Well, the definite biggest thing was I had - when I met Michael, my husband, I was um - had gotten an apartment in New York City, was like on route to - I was dancing professionally and like I think I wanna have an apartment in New York City so that I can do some dancing in New York City and kinda come back and forth, maybe I can make that happen. Um it was pretty quick that I realized I had found the man of my dreams Um, so left the apartment in New York City, knew that I wanted to kinda centralize myself in Boston. I wasn't sure that that was always the right decision, I knew that he was the right decision, wasn't sure that that was the right decision, um but when I started to teach um, I was in my graduate program in Cambridge and then at the end of it got my student teaching in East Boston, and at that time had been training and personal training and one of my clients was a parent of children at the Hurley, which is a Boston public school, and um a school that is almost entirely Hispanic with a small splatter of caucasian kids, and pretty much just those two, there's a very small African American or um Asian population, and uh it just kind of made sense that that was the next step for me and once I found that school, I found that it was gonna be a new home in a way, so - and it became a home, it became a home so yeah it kept me there, kept me there.

Johnna: How long were you there for?

J. Remi: Like eight years.

Johnna: Wow. And then how did you end up in Portland, Maine?

J. Remi: Mmm. Well let's just be real, um I uh so at the Hurley, I knew that it was a fabulous opportunity but I also knew that I wanted to be in more leadership opportunities, um by the end of my time at the Hurley though I was drinking at night pretty heavily. Um, pretty consistently. I received an opportunity to become a dean of students for a school that was really struggling in many many ways, uh in Mattapan, Roxbury. And so I went and I took that opportunity, and as a result I think um largely is a result of two things now, I am now able to see, um I'm only now exploring uh struggling with bipolar disorder, and I don't know what that means in a lot of ways but I know that we're starting to look at things differently. Um my medical team and my psychiatrist and all that and I uh, I think that I was medicating with booze, I think that I was working all day every day and overworking and um, over working out, whatever like whatever the whatever was. And uh I think as a result, alienated people, was too not collaborative in a lot of ways and was just kind of going going going, and uh I was fired as a dean of students. So I think it's a combination of my struggles with mental health, and my drinking at night, I think I became a very reactive educator. I was fired, um I was fired, it was pretty awful although I definitely agree that it was the right decision. Now I'm able to look at that. But it was within a very short period of time there, Michael and I had bought a house in Maine, and actually I brought my eighth grade class up here every year for their end of year like three-day, we came up with them and families, and we'd celebrate them before they went off to high school um, to give them that just final sense of we love you and you're gonna be amazing. So we'd always come up here and thought about living in Portland, Michael had lived in Portland, and I was fired and was like wow I really think a change is needed. And I went after I'm sure you've heard the geographic fix, which is - very seldomly works, maybe it does. I actually said the other day - somebody asked me why I came to Portland and I said "I think I might have come to Portland to fall apart, to be put back together again." So maybe that's true. Um so I, a week after getting

fired, Michael just was toying around looking at houses, and he's been talking about wanting to leave Boston and me leaving Boston and, he found a mid-century modern. We drove up about a week and a half later, and uh saw the house and we're like - he's like it's the perfect house I absolutely lov- adore it. And I think I was excited, I was also really terrified, I was also really vulnerable and fragile and had just been fired - I mean I was fired within two weeks. And this is coming from me, a career of the last ten years of my life where this is everything I am is Mr. D, everything I am is what I am to kids, um because I'm pretty terrified of who I am when I stop doing that you know like and really look at the full thing. So we closed on the house two months later, I moved up here right away and lived with an aunt that we have in town, and started to network and going into schools and I went back to continue a program that I started my post-graduate like ed leadership program, um I started taking a supervision evaluation class, closed on the house, uh, absolutely ramped up my drinking big time. Uh, and uh at that point was fully drunk every night. Within a couple months though, I was given an opportunity to direct a non-profit organization, something I had no experience with, and so I can show up really really passionate and engaged and have the right languaging and the right energy, and uh be given responsibility for which I am not prepared. And that's been a recurring theme that I've explored in my sobriety now, that I like am given too much and then I throw on kinda the cape you know to try to rise to the occasion and then I kinda alienate people in the process and end up being in this like strange shame filled space in the end, so it's important for me to really recognize that now. Um but I was given that same opportunity, headed into that manic sort of production mode of working all day and was drinking every night, and was fired for the second time in one year. And it was hard, it was rough. At that point, fully drinking. So Portland - so I went back to school, continued my classes, at this point I was like okay, I need to finish my program, I need to become certified, I need to figure this out, not realizing that certified meant - who knows what that means in many way. And uh a few months later, um a few months later uh, it became more and more obvious that if I kept on drinking like I was drinking that some real rough stuff was happening, and I was pretty fortunate that certain things were not happening like jail or drunk driving charges or killing someone or you know those kind of things. And I sobered up June 9th of 2016, and uh it's been an intense journey since then because I have taken one major major drug out of my system. And so there's a whole lot of things coming up, and that's why in the last year and a half, further explorations of bipolar and what that means and the truth, the potential of that, my gender exploration, there's a lot of stuff.

Johnna: Yeah.

J. Remi: And original shame with being gay. I mean, like a lot of stuff. When I came into the halls of sobriety I really, I had at that time drank and misused just - I had drank and drugged since sixteen, seventeen years old nonstop. Um, so there was a lot of, you know there's the analogy that we use you know that you've carried a lot of dump truck - in the bed, a lot of stuff and you've slammed on the breaks, and it's [whoosh] it's good to slam on the breaks, but there's gonna be a lot of junk coming forward. So that's part of what's coming forward.

Johnna: That's a good analogy.

J. Remi: And it's real, it feels like it!

Johnna: Yeah [laughter] okay, let's see where we are.

J. Remi: I know, where are we? Where are we?

Johnna: [laughter] I have no idea.

Daija: [laughter] You mentioned in your notes um, Barney Frank.

J. Remi: Totally! What a gift that was.

Daija: So um tell us a little bit more about just your experience with that.

J. Remi: Totally. Barney Frank was amazing, he was um, I remember going up to him because he worked out at the gym when I was a young little - I was a - at that point I was probably twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-six, yeah twenty-sevenish. And I remember going up to him and just being like I really respect that you get things done while not jumping into like the ideas of others, like you really have your ideas, and you do it in really um, you know unorthodox ways and you get stuff done, and you're out and you're a politician and I'd like to take you to dinner. He's like how about I'll take you to dinner and let's just go upstairs. And so we went upstairs, and it blossomed into a really cool friendship, and I shadowed him at different times and visited him in D.C. and shadowed him and drove him around and watched him and observed him lead and work with like union workers and work with um elderly assisted homes and really get out to his constituency, and I learned about what it was like. He was the first person who said to me, um something really important for me um as a teacher especially um, when straight people, when straight people uh come out, it's called conversation. When gay people come out, it's a big deal. And that was a really big thing for me, I remember driving in the car with him, I was driving and we were getting ready to go to some event and him saying that and me thinking yeah it's not coming out, it's actually me sharing with you that I have a husband named Michael and he's amazing. That's just sharing with you a part of my life, so I think - that was really important for me to remember that, and he has such a rich history with that, so you know figuring out that n-n-no, I'm not coming out right now. That's just a part of the process. So, I don't know. Yeah he's great.

Johnna: Are you two still friends?

J. Remi: I haven't talked with him in a few years, but I would love to connect with him, I just haven't, yeah. The last couple years have been pretty rough, for me it's been - it's not been a connect with old acquaintances kinda time, it's been about me figuring out some stuff. This has been a time of pretty deep exploration, kinda putting my head down and doing my focus work in my leadership program and kinda putting that hat on and then at home, really trying to figure out sort of who I am.

Johnna: Yeah that makes sense.

J. Remi: You know, yeah.

Johnna: Kind of an introspective time.

J. Remi: Yes, it has to be. Really get a handle on things so that I can ultimately be more empowered I hope.

Johnna: Yeah.

Daija: So do you think this would be more of a time where you're just focused on being present versus thinking about the future and overworking yourself and always working toward the next thing?

J. Remi: Which is so hard. It is, and it is so hard, because if I have two sections of my life - if I have the sobriety and the recovery community, and then we have education. Sobriety and recovery community is about the now, and about one day at a time, and about slowing down, and about sort of finding this. Education is all about what's next, so it's very difficult for me to say, you know I don't know if I want to be a principal. I don't know, people don't know what to do with that, um actually people in recovery know what to do with that, people in education don't know what to do with that, and for me I'm thinking I can be in this program and at the end of it, decide that I wanna head back in the classroom, I have no idea what I wanna do. Um I also am exploring my gender I'm exploring all those kinda things so, I don't know what that looks like at the end of this. And I do know that one provides conflict for the other. I hope that I can do both. Um, in fact Matt Moonen, you know Matt Moonen over at Equality Maine? Matt Moonen and I were talking the other day and he says "I kinda feel like if you sacrifice one or the other, you'll always regret having sacrificed it." So if I head toward educational leadership but sacrifice gender fluidity or some sort of trans identity, he's like you're gonna regret that. And if you sacrifice being an educator or an educational leader to be gender queer, I think you're gonna regret that. He says, and I try to remember that, people like Matt Moonen, people like Barney Frank, people - that you get to be both. You actually need to be both. For yourself and other people, you know.

Johnna: Mhm. So as an educator and as a queer person, what do you think are some of the most important things for like young, queer people to know now?

J. Remi: About themselves? About their own process?

Johnna: Yeah!

J. Remi: Hmm. I think it's really good for everybody to be in collective community, but I do think it's really important for queer youth to have a queer community. I know that when I was in high school, one of the big big fallings was that I didn't have - I didn't share my terrors with anybody else so there was nobody else that could really be in a place of support and so many people would have been in a place of support if they had known, I'm sure. Um, I didn't wanna share it as openly with people because I was terrified. Um, for young people who are queer, I think it's really important to have that community. The safe space. The safe community, because while we have made lots of movement forward, we have a profoundly dangerous level of suicide in the queer community, we have some real dangers that exist so I think it's really - I think we've

made gorgeous change and movement, but we are, we are a unique lot. And there is something uniting about that. And I think that it's really important to have gay marriage - I'm married - it's really important to have gay marriage passed. It's really important to have certain things normalized, but I think it's also deeply important for there to be a bit of radicalism in our experience. I think that acclimating is a dangerous thing sometimes. I actually think it's most of the time a dangerous thing, I've done it most of my life. Um, you know I was just at the polls, I was just at the po - it surprised me actually, because I went through therapy that was working to re-route my brain so I went to the polls with Equality Maine, to uh inform voters that Maine is one of the - is one of forty-one states in which mental health professionals can use conversion therapy. So we are one of forty-one states in which it's legal. Equality Maine would like before the Trump administrations sort of turns its - it has in some ways not attacked the queer community as vehemently as it has attacked other communities, but it will happen in time. And I um, you know - Matt was talking, Matt and Gia were talking about the uh - that's Matt Moonen and Gia True, were talking about the importance of getting national legislation in place that makes it illegal for mental health providers to give conversion therapy as an option. Cause conversion therapy could be talk therapy all the way through electric shock therapy. Um we wanna make sure that we're, that we have our youth safe. So I volunteered that night and realized, I was like ah this is a real deal, this is a big deal, still, here. You know I think we like to make assumptions that it only happens in other areas or it only happens in the South or whatever the assumptions that I make in my own head, which I do. Um, most of my therapy was in Massachusetts. Some of it began on the military base but it was in Massachusetts. And Massachusetts is a state that does not have a law against it. There are f- you know, Washington D.C. you know the city of whatever, the capital, California is one that has a law that makes it illegal. Um, I think we need to make those things important. So, you know um, it's such a hard question. Like what would I want queer youth to know? You know, I don't think I want - I mean I want queer youth to have a community but I think I would want the answer to be for any youth, that exactly what you are, exactly what you are, is exactly what the world needs. So that would be for queer youth, but that would be for all youth. Like, I wonder if in the end, all youth have something queer about them, you know? Like if we all really look at it, is there something othering about us that we need to celebrate and like own and wear and have, I don't know. I'd like queer youth, I guess I'd like queer youth to know that when they feel othered, or when they feel scared, or when they feel kind of mistreated, to speak up. That you have every right, you have every right to feel safe, and there should be no room for shame. Because I know that for me at forty-two, I have operated under such a profound level of shame, that I'd like to make sure that doesn't happen for them.

Johnna: Yeah.

J. Remi: That no matter what they're feeling, that it's real. I've never known until working in high school, I've never known the levels of anxiety that youth are living with. It is unbelievable, how many kids are profoundly angst-ridden. We are raising a generation of anxious people. So I'd for more of them to believe that exactly who they are is exactly what we need. I'd like to believe it myself.

Johnna: Yeah, yeah. Well it's great for them to have you as a role model.

J. Remi: Thanks, I hope so. I don't often feel it, but I, I have a long way to go in my process. Cause I'm pretty new in recovery and I'm pretty new in terms of a lot of things, so it's kinda - I'm having this conversation with you at a time of like tremendous transition for me in a lot of ways.

Johnna: Yeah.

J. Remi: It was actually one of the reasons my husband and I came, and I got hooked up with this project because we came to watch the videos, all the fabulous like videos that were shown over at USM's uh like the sixth floor of the library, Glickman Library, and I remember thinking, I remember being deeply depressed that night. But I remember thinking that doesn't mean you don't sign up to have your story shared. We all get to exist. It was another opportunity to remind myself like my depression doesn't get to keep me locked up in a doorway behind closed doors so nobody gets to see this, just another way of closeting.

Johnna: Mhm, yeah. Do you have any other ones on there?

Daija: Uh, I think we basically covered everything that I wrote, um is there anything else that you'd like to discuss? Anything else that you mentioned you wanted to say or anything that's just come up during the interview that you thought would be interesting to share?

J. Remi: I just really like, I really like that you're doing this. It feels good to feel - I was excited to come here today, um woke up feeling pretty depressed but that's okay. Um, it just feels good to know that no matter how my life has been, that it is a life worth sharing, being heard, um, and that feels good. It feels good to feel as if I am valid, that I'm not more important than somebody else but I'm not less important than somebody else, that I exist. Um, that's something I would like queer youth to feel. Because I, gosh, I really, when I started to feel that I was gay, it became, it became a way for me to exist less importantly than somebody else. It became a way for me to just have another piece of evidence to like show me that I didn't exist, or that I wasn't worth existing, and it doesn't get better from there. You know, we need to catch it in the moment. So I think that I'd like for queer youth - I'd like for youth of any kind um, to immediately share their experience with some other human being. And imagine the richness of if I'd had this opportunity at thirteen and fifteen, and it was reacted to very differently. If somebody said "Oh, that's how you're feeling, I hear you I see you" instead of any other choices that were made. Yeah. There's no one right path for queer youth, that's part of the beauty - I had a friend over la - two friends over last night. One of whom was talking about she had first identified as a lesbian, and now identifies as queer, once she found out what really queer was, she's like I really - I love that it's just such an open experience that what makes me queer and you queer and you queer is actually very different, but that it links us all together. You know, that somebody might be gender queer, somebody might be presenting queer, somebody might be feeling - whatever. But we all get to exist. I don't know.

Johnna: Mmm. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us.

J. Remi: You're welcome.

Johnna: It's been really powerful, it's so important for us to get these stories down, so I'm really excited that you came in and told us yours.

J. Remi: Absolutely, it's my pleasure, thank you for listening.

Johnna: Yeah, absolutely.

Daija: Of course.

J. Remi: It's really kinda cool because I've been doing work with The Telling Room, which is where I talked with a fourth grader yesterday, and The Telling Room - the origin of The Telling Room - do you know the origin of The Telling Room?

Daija: I do not.

J. Remi: The three authors who - do you know the organization though in the downtown?

Daija: I've heard of it.

Daija: The Telling Room, fabulous, if you ever get to do any work with them, pretty amazing. But um, three writers who founded the program, two of them I think went to Spain, and uh went to a village in which they, in which they um they learned that there was a telling room. Found out that the telling room is a cave in a mountain on the outskirts of town, and they walked to the cave in the mountain in the outskirts of town, I'm not sure if they were gui- I have no idea. And found that it was a room in which there was a desk and two chairs in the edge of a mountain, where two people went, one to tell their story, and the other one to hear it. So they decided they wanted to create that experience here and it's become very much a literacy, uh writing um program. But that's what you're doing. You're creating the opportunity for someone to tell one's story and you're listening, and you're documenting it. That's pretty cool.

Johnna: Yeah, it is. We're pretty lucky to be able to be a part it.

J. Remi: You really are.

Daija: And it gets to live on no matter what, it's really great that you shared. It's really important.

J. Remi: I think it is. That was part of - one of the reasons that I wanted to do it too, that it lives on beyond me sharing it, that it lives on wherever you're - I don't know how you're, how you're uh, I don't know what you're doing with it, are you chronicling it? Do you type it out?

Johnna: They are going online and then they're also being saved in the Sampson Center archives, so they're being transcribed and saved, yeah.

J. Remi: Really?

Johnna: Yeah. So it will be there, safe.

J. Remi: It's pretty cool.

Johnna: Yeah, for anyone to -

Daija: Used for research or just to listen to.

Johnna: A queer person in the future could go and read it and it could really, could really have a big impact on them. So we really appreciate you sharing.

J. Remi: It's pretty cool.

Johnna: Yeah.

J. Remi: Thank you.

Johnna: Thank you.

Daija: Thank you.