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Smallwood, Thomas

Miasarah Miskoon

Winter Devyn

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<p>DW And that is our interviewing subject</p> <p>MM Yes..alright so I have to say this again you can refuse to answer any of our questions or you can also if you want to stop the interview at any time please feel free to tell us and we will do so</p> <p>DW Alright now I will ask you one more time what pronouns do you prefer?</p> <p>TS He, him, his although my friends say girl and she</p> <p>MM Okay so I guess we're gonna start with you know sort of the basics of where you grew up I guess</p> <p>TW I grew..I was born in LaPlata Maryland. I grew up in the DC metropolitan area</p> <p>DW Nice</p> <p>TW With me my two sisters and my parents</p> <p>MM That's awesome.. So how was life growing up in the DC metropolitan area?</p> <p>TW Well a lot of my childhood I spent with my grandparents, they lived in LaPlata Maryland so a lot of my childhood I spent down there on the farm that was there so...But I mean my sisters grew up in a little neighborhood we had our friends, we'd ride our bikes to our friends houses go to the pool and swim during the summer. You would walk to our elementary school we had to...Well we could walk to the middle school too but we had to take the bus to our high school... .I guess a normal childhood</p> <p>DW That actually leads perfectly into my next question where did you go to highschool?</p>	<p>Pronouns - He/Him/His or Girl/She</p> <p>Grew up. LaPlata, Maryland</p> <p>Family</p> <p>High school. Elementary School. Maryland.</p> <p>High school. Maryland.</p>
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TS LaPlata Highschool which is in LaPlata, Maryland for a good old 4 years

DW Awesome and how was highschool for you?

TS Thats a lovely a..that's an interesting question highschool I was the class clown I was popular I knew everybody... I knew everything about everybody I gossipped a lot I was also teased as a kid one because I danced and sang and two because people made fun of me because they thought I was gay I hadn't come out of the closet... at the time I was still dating women in high school..Yeah..It was fun at times but difficult at others

MM Alright what did you do after high school?

TS Highschool I was in Americorp

MM Ooooh

TS For a short spell after high school and then I started college and I was in college for 2 years and that's probably one of the biggest regrets in life is that I did not actually finish school. I got a job performing dancing and singing so I left school to perform and just continued to perform and work and school sort of became an afterthought

MM Do you plan on going back?

TS I would love to go back to school it's just one finding time and two finding money and both of those things are there I guess I just need a little swift kick in the rear end to get me moving but I would say in life it's probably one of the biggest regrets not finishing school

High school. Gay.

Americorp

College.

School.

Major and Minor. Children.

MM What were you taking?

TS I studied musical theatre and dance education and then I decided I was going to stick with musical theatre but switch to early childhood education so I could always have..I love children as we were talking about earlier. Love kids. Love love love them and at first I thought I was going to be a teacher but I really liked the performing part of life too so that was the primary focus was the education within the minor so it started it.. So to say

DW What college did you attend?

TS Pointe Park in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I think it's now the University of Pointe Park or Pointe Park University

DW How did you get from Maryland to Pennsylvania?

TS One of my dearest friends Jonah Ledo went to Point Park first so I learned about the school when I went up to visit him..Fell in love with the area..Pittsburg is such an interesting place..There was a time when Pittsburgh was really dirty but it it's cleaned up quite a bit there are small little sections of the community there's the Jewish community here and there's an Irish community there and Pittsburgh has Primanti Brothers which is probably one of the best places in the world.. you get coleslaw and french fries on everything...It was a late night treat for sure but yeah Jonah went to Pointe Park and I went to school to visit him but also to check out the school. I really liked it so that's where I wanted to go

MM You go

DW So when did you move to Portland,

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Pointe Park.

Maryland. Pennsylvania. Primanti Brothers.

Moving to Portland, Maine.

Idlewild Theme Park.

<p>Maine?</p> <p>TS Good God that's a good question..Portland...At the time I was working at a theme park in Pennsylvania..Idlewild theme park which is in (inaudible) one of the two but I got a job working for the same company that did the shows at the theatre at the amusement park. Scotia Prince which was a ship or a boat whatever you wanna call that..A gambling boat....It sailed from here it sailed 12 hours from here to Nova Scotia and turned around and sailed back from Nova Scotia. So I think it was... We had to be an hour out to sea and then they open up the slots but we did shows in the boat so I moved here to choreograph and to do the shows on the ship probably....14 years ago? 15 years ago? Let's see Max is 13...I'd say 15 years ago or maybe even 16 I don't remember I'd have to...</p> <p>MM You were 24 somewhere there</p> <p>TS Yeah cause I'll be 40 this year..Yeah I was 23. I was 23. wow...40. Okay. So yeah I had taken the job working on the Scotia Prince and that is what brought me to Portland</p> <p>MM Tell us your relationship with the city itself... Like Portland</p> <p>TS Well at first when I first moved here I hated it. I did not like Portland. I it was cold, I didn't understand what people did in all of this snow and the fact that it just went on forever..I was miserable and then I started doing things..I started doing theatre I started singing with the Gay Men's Chorus. I was with a gentleman by the name of Jim Neil at the time so he introduced me to a number of wonderful people in the city that have since</p>	<p>Working on the a cruise ship called the Scotia Prince..</p> <p>Dance choreography</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Portland. Cold weather. Gay Men's Chorus. Community.</p>
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become family. Professor Chapkis is one.
Um..yeah.

MM That's so awesome. So I guess like when..What peaked your interest to finally like okay I'm gonna put myself out there I'm gonna immerse myself in the culture of Portland and decided to stay?

TS Well I toyed with the idea of wanting to leave but I think if you're gonna live in someplace you have to sort of get to know it you gotta get to know the people you gotta get to know your surroundings I think that first..Maybe not say the first year the first Winter here was probably I was like yeah there's no way I can do this. There's 11 inches of snow on the ground.. growing up in DC Maryland if we got 2 inches of snow everything shuts down. And Pittsburg it was like you know it would snow and then 2 days later all the snow would be gone and I lived in Denver for a bit and in Denver it would snow and then you know 3 hours later it's 65 degrees and the snow is melting and I was like this is crazy..It just stayed! And wrapping my head around the fact that if people could you know be out here living and surviving..Skiing..Ice skating all that stuff it's you know..It's a pretty good place. I met lots of wonderful people through theatre through the Gay Men's Chorus through connections through Jimmy and the friends that I met through him and you develop your own little group or family so to say? Because my family is in DC they're so..well Maryland. And yeah you sort of have to create yourself a little group of people and I think that's what I did and that helped me realize that this was you know a good place and Portland is a really... I mean I've had some good times and some ugh times for sure

Weather. Denver, Colorado. Pennsylvania.
Gay Men's Chorus. Family. Friends.
Community.

Gay Men's Chorus. Community.

MM I guess let's talk about the good times...Like the Gay Men's Chorus..Like when did you start?

TS Oh yeah! When did I start singing with the Chorus? So I probably sung with the chorus for 6 years and then I started really doing theatre and I took a break and then the chorus was no more so we've been back as a chorus..This is our 3rd season..We are in rehearsal right now for our holiday concert and that's the 2nd weekend in December so I think since the Chorus has come back this is our 3rd season back. Its nice to connect with a number of people who sang with the chorus in the past who are back in the chorus now with the new members who are a part of the chorus..We sort of you know the chorus stopped and friendships..You think you're going to continue them you know continue to chat with people and connect with people but our lives get crazy and people move onto other things so it's nice to have that fold and group of guys back in the mix.

DW what is your favorite part about Gay Men's Chorus? 12:05

TS Definitely not the rehearsals. Well because always through rehearsals I start complaining that I'm tired and I don't want to sing anymore..Definitely you know meeting people..Doing things as a group and when it comes time to actually do our concerts the fact that people actually take us as a legit chorus it's a wonderful thing...definitely the rehearsals do help...the fact that we are a group of men who can legitimately sing we do get a little campy and you know fun at times we are supposed to..We are the Maine Gay Men's Chorus people want to see the camp and the fun but I think people want to see the fact that we are you know a legit group of guys who can honestly sing so thats a wonderful thing

DW Do you sing alto? Soprano?

TS So for a Gay Men's Chorus it would be tenor 1, tenor 2, baritone and bass and I sing tenor one so I sing all the high notes way up in the rafters.

MM I wish I could ask you how high you can go..

TS Oh I have no idea..There are times I'm singing and my friend one of my dearest friends Tommy Waltz who sings with me in the Gay Men's Chorus is like girl you are not supposed to be singing that high..I know I just felt like it should go there... I think as a vocalist that's something I should know what my highest note is

MM You wanna try?

TS It's too early!

MM So what's your favorite song? If you could choose

TS In the entire world?

MM Or what you have sung with like..?

TS Or what I'm singing with the chorus sorry. That's me stretching out my legs...This concert season I really love 2 songs in particular.. 1 I have a solo..I have solo's in both of them but Tommy and I are singing Love is an Open Door from Frozen..Of course you know

MM Of course I know!

TS So Tommy and I are singing that and then I am singing the solo part in a song called Doo Wop Christmas..So Love is an Open Door is just you know..My girls Madeline and Melody well they're not my children I call them my girls they will be tickled pink when I tell them that I'm singing Love is an Open Door from Frozen because last Christmas I sang Let it Go so it's nice to be doing both of these Frozen songs but then we have a song

Songs. Babysitting.

Music.

that's really tough and it drives me absolutely insane and it's called Allelujah I forget who wrote it..It's this 16 page almost 4 minute long song that seems like it never ends but it's just beautiful it rings you to the core it warms that heart of mine yeah..Those 2..Those three!
Sorry I can't count

MM That's awesome.. Very (inaudible)
Allelujah

DW Can I ask when you first started getting into music? I mean it's clear that it's always been a big part of your life

TS Oh I was young I was little I could probably remember singing for as long as I can remember singing at home..Singing at church..Singing..I think I started doing theatre, community theatre when first I could remember was Big River with Poor Tobacco Players I think I was in middle school at the time but I sang in chorus throughout school Tri County, all state, all county my high school chorus, my middle school chorus and I danced so I liked that too I wasn't always the best of dancers but over time...They say practice makes perfect not that I'm perfect but the practice helped...So as long as I could remember I've been involved in the arts in some way I think...I would say, my parents supported it yes, no. My mother never said I couldn't do something..If I wanted to take a dance class I could take it..I can't ever remember my father ever coming to a concert or a performance...I was doing a show at the Kennedy Center with the Kennedy Center Traveling Young Players and I think there's like 600 people that auditioned for the show and they only take 16 and I got into the show 2 years in a row....Not 2 years in a row sorry it was sophomore the first year and senior the second year with 2 of my friends Micheline and Jonah..They were brother and sister so Micheline and I did the first year and Jonah and I did the second year. But it was great so we learned these folktales from across the world and they were all put together I think the first show was called Walking the Winds American Tales and the other was Footsteps

School.

Family.

Kennedy Center.

in the sky...I know my mother came to both of those and those were big to do things for me but my father...No. So I believe my parents supported it all but still it's always been a part of my life..I think the day that I wake up and I'm not able to sing I would be a very lost soul I'm always walking down the street and I'm humming something and then people are like oh don't stop that sounds so good and I'm like oh I didn't even realize I was that loud cause I'm in my own little head just singing..There's always a song going..Always a song

MM Do you think I guess Portland and your community in Portland supported you ?

TS For sure most definitely. I..Between the theatre I've done I've done some stuff singing with a few groups singing the area I did a couple of things at the Portland museum of art singing even down to the drag that I do. Cause I do drag at Blackstones which is a gay bar here in town and the following of people throughout and the fact that some of them mixed over from the theatre world and they were like you gonna do the drag show? and I'm like yeah, here it is this is the night here you go! I'll see you there I won't be there Miss LaJoy will be there.. Miss Sprede LaJoy so yeah most definitely...If it weren't for the community here that I have and the family that I have created here in Portland there's no way that I would have stayed

MM You have flourished here in Portland?

TS I don't know about that..I have created a life for me that works and that I really like so yeah I guess flourish. Yeah.

DW What is your..When do you think Portland is at it's most beautiful? Like what season?

TS Oh..Now this is going to completely contradict everything I've said but I would say Spring into Summer is gorgeous because you've got you know the trees are coming alive and the flowers..there's a place where you walk in State Street and you look at the

Portland. Community.

Blackstones

Drag.

Portland. Weather.

side of somebody's house there is this whole row of crocuses that come up and I think that is just one of the..I do find myself walking everything spring down just so I can see these crocuses that are there but the flowers that are coming up the city seems to be coming alive people are coming back to the city but I have to say I do like the quiet and stillness of the Winter you definitely see that people have nested and you're inside you're doing fun things with people instead of out and about but you're still being social and loving but when it snows sometimes it can just be so magical and pretty but then I'm just ready for it to go away..then it can disappear

MM I guess could you remind us again of your drag queen name?

TS Oh I am Miss Spreda LaJoy..I become so clear when I talk about drag...Miss Spreda Lajoy I have a show coming up on the 22nd of....The night before Thanksgiving at Blackstones it's a benefit for the Frannie Peabody Center so all of the queens the drag queens that are in the show we will....Everything that we make as far as our tips will go toward the drag show well not towards the drag queens normally it would go to us ...It will be going to the Frannie Peabody Center and I believe we are all donating our pay as well so depending on the show I get paid between 50-75 dollars to do the show and then I make tips from everybody coming up and giving me dollar bills 5 dollar bills 10s and my favorites 20s! But everything that we make will be going towards the Frannie Peabody Center so every year we do I think it's been the Frannie Peabody Center for a while but it's always the night before Thanksgiving show

DW How did you get into drag?

TS I did drag a little bit for fun bad drag when I was in college I got turned onto drag here's the awful part of life not awful part but mischievous part of life being 18 and 19 and sneaking off to the clubs in the city Ziegfeld's in particular which was a place where the

Drag.

Blackstones.

Frannie Peabody.

Money/Pay.

Drag.

drag queens..There were drag queens that we would go see them perform and I don't know where my mother thought I was going on these nights when we snuck out at 17 and 18 I don't know maybe it was 17 and 18 I don't think I was 15 -16 17- 18 but that's what turned me onto the idea of drag the fact that these men would dress up and look beautiful and then reveal as miss Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday..It was Billie something Holiday a few other...Moxie someone but just the show was fantastic and Billie always smelled so good..She smelled so good! But I was just mesmerized that they would take their body as a man and transform it to make them look as feminine as possible and through padding you know a little tuck and pull here and makeup..Lots of makeup so I.. at first when I started doing drag my drag was awful awful awful it was..My makeup was a mess my hair was..My wigs were..Ratted rats nests is what I would call them but over time you learn to perfect things and you ask questions and then when I moved here I wasn't doing drag at the time but I started seeing some shows that were up and about..Miss Danielle Dior was the host of the show this coming Thursday..Wednesday the 22nd she was who got me back into the idea of doing drag cause I was at every drag show and she goes you know the words to everything and I see you flit around here when Proud Mary comes on which is my favorite song to do in drag...She's like why don't you do a show? I was like oh my God I haven't done a show in forever well in the case because I believe when you do drag it's very different than being on stage doing a show that you're doing with a bunch of people you are there alone on stage and that is a very..Especially here because at Blackstones people are literally right in your face so if you miss a word or or if you look messed up.. Your face isn't so to say beet enough people can be a little judgy and a little harsh thankfully I've never experienced that but I have witnessed it with other queens..But Danielle has always been so great and supportive she asked if I would do..My very first show was the night before Thanksgiving probably like 5 years ago I was like oh I'm just

Blackstones.

Equality Maine.

doing this one show..Just this one and before you know it this is what my 4th show this year and Danielle was like girl what are you doing what is all this drag? I was like I know I've even gone out in public to to benefits for the EqualityMaine out in drag..Yeah..It's fun it's freeing I get to be...I sort of get to be a completely different person..but I'm still..I'm not fresh nor am I forward I'm not too much just the right amount of it..I'm still very much a lady. A lady in drag

Drag

MM I guess what are some of the challenges like when you start..You were saying about how you know trying to perfect your makeup and being in front of an audience like..I think you're a natural performer

Drag

TS In that sense yes but drag is not cheap its expensive it is very expensive buying makeup when you think about makeup and the cheap makeup does not work it does..You can paint a beautiful face with cheap makeup but it's not gonna stay it's not gonna last it's not gonna hold up.. So it takes me about 2 1/2-3 hours to get myself from Thomas to Miss LaJoy

26:28

Blackstones. Rum. Liquid Liar.

TS So you know it's I have to shave my face I have to shave my chest and then I wait an hour or two and then I come back and hit it again just to make sure it's as smooth as possible and then you start it's you know the foundation..foundation for me I figured out that for me its Mac foundation that works the best. Now Mac is not cheap it's not cheap and I have to cake it on ...Because I have to sort of create a softer image of this manly looking face so you know I have to just cake that stuff on that would probably be one of the biggest challenges is that it's expensive and two there really aren't a lot of places in town that we can do this which scares me I hope that Blackstone's stays open and you know as right now the only gay bar in town there are other places that have started doing things like theres drag bingo at RUM Liquid Liar did a drag show a couple months ago so

I just think that it's a it's definitely as far as this community goes lesbian gay and the rest of them I'm gonna miss a bunch of them LBGTQ

MM I A

DW Alphabet soup

TS Drag is you know it's a big part of our community and for Blackstone's to be the place that's still on a consistent basis does the drag show that makes me very happy but it's also difficult because our community of drag queens is pretty large Danielle has a number of people that she knows in the drag community so there...I..thankfully I am blessed to be in many of the shows that happen at Blackstones I guess it's considered my home base as far as shows go I just wish and pray that Blackstones does not close..Its not planning on closing anytime soon but it is definitely our primary hub to do that so I think that's a little hard too I would love more ...More places and more spaces to do shows and perform

MM Definitely

DW How did you come up with the..Your drag persona?

TS Miss Spreda LaJoy? Well I have a cousin whose name is Lajoy and I always loved the name Lajoy so Spreda came about another drag queen in town Vanelle Honeybush actually she doesn't live here anymore she's like girl you gotta spread that out we were literally sitting there at Blackstones one day drinking as Thomas and Ryan talking about my name and so I was like Spreda..She goes yeah Miss Spreda Lajoy! Thats it..Thats it. So Miss Lajoy has always been here but Miss Spreda Lajoy is what it's become but most posters everyone puts just Miss Lajoy..when I say my drag name I always put in Spreda because it's part of my drag me...So to say

MM there's so many things I want to ask..Blackstones you know like do you think

Blackstones.
Drag.

Gay bars.

Portland needs more gay or gay friendly bars you know?

TS Oh totally..Because there are so many people in this community who for whatever reason won't and don't feel comfortable going to straight bars or bars that are very gay friendly they will only come out to like a restaurant that has a bar attached to it is very different than just a regular old bar but Blackstone's became... It's the only gay it's the only place in town that still is labeled as a gay bar and it's a safe zone for a lot of people..I feel we definitely need other places in town....We need other places in town that are safe zones for everybody not just the gay lovers and gay community you know? There and the trans community has done..represented at Blackstones also but you don't see much of a lesbian presence and that's one thing between the gay community in general that I've never understood the big divide between gays and lesbains...I have many friends that are lesbians and I love them just as much as I love my gay friends but I think most of them are just like yeah I feel uncomfortable when I go to Blackstones and I don't l'm with them there and I don't see why you feel uncomfortable but I'm so oblivious to things when I'm at Blackstones because I feel so at home and welcome there... Now if they are feeling something different I don't pick up on it we definitely need many for sure for sure many other places

MM Why do you think that you know there's very little gay bars? Like we used to have STYX and Sisters..

TS It's so weird so many people feel that you know as far as gays and our rights go that things have progressed in such a way that the designated spot for gay people to hang out isn't needed anymore like the bar atmosphere is were so welcomed and made to feel at home and so many other places and that's very true about Portland there are many places you know wow I feel nothing that I could give 2 hoots that anybody's worried

Divide between Gays and Lesbians.

Gay bars.

Matthews

about my sexuality here in Portland. The only places that I ever felt that way about was Mathews but I was like what the fuck are you at Mathews for anyway?

DW What was Mathews?

TS Mathews is a bar on is it Free Street? Do you know where Dogfish is on Free Street? Where the Children's Museum is?

DW Yeah

MM Yeah

TS So diagonally from the Children's Museum or across the street from the Children's museum is Mathews..Is a and I hate to use the phrase dive bar only because this is now out there

MM It's on the other side yeah

TS It is out there you have to walk forever but that's what it is that's the only place that I've ever gone that I felt anything that's the only places that anyone has ever used any type of gay slur phrased towards me I think I was called fag and I was like okay you know what this is not my place..We did our jello shots and we left but for the most part that ..any place that I've gone I've thats not the case for everybody I do have friends that are just like you know I'll never go to this place because they're such assholes...Everyone around us was taken care of and treated well and we were sort of just like yeah we're a bunch of gays..Yeah we spend our money just..So yeah there are places that..Where was I going with thatOh there are places that definitely aren't the safest and that was your question I don't know if.. I'm such a

MM I guess I was asking why there are fewer...

TS Oh why cuz there's so many people that feel there's not the need for them I think I said that..That you know...We feel so welcomed in so many places but then also running a gay

Mathews.

STYX

bar isn't cheap you know?

34:08

TS And if the gays don't come out and spend money at the bar or people in general don't come out and spend money at the bar you can't keep the money you can't keep the bar open with nothing.. You have to have something coming into it to keep it open I don't know if that's how Joshua was feeling with STYX I also feel that it was just he'd owned it for so long that it was just..He was ready for it to be done and it's a lot of work. There's a lot that you have to try to..You gotta keep people..People are judgy so if your place gets dingy or worn down or it doesn't look up to date and it's not you know it's not hip it's not cool not fresh anymore people stop coming so you constantly have to..You know Blackstones I think is just engraved in that it is what it is.. Blackstones..There's so many things that need to change but it's not gonna happen but people get that..They understand that the floor is bumpy and that you know..Yeah they get it

MM They're not there for the floors

TS No. No. But you know people I..I can still hear people talking in my ear oh my god STYX it's so dark it's so dingy it's so this but that's just what it was it was you know? A dance bar and you know most dance bars aren't bright and well lit up.. The dance floor is but people want it dark you know fun loud atmosphere

DW How has the bar scene or the queer community changed from now since you've started living in Portland? If it has.

TS The bar scene well that's changed one because you're seeing more of a mix of people in the bar now because it's one of the only places that everybody can go...Lesbians trans people can go to Blackstones before...There was a time I remember Blackstones was just..It was nothing but men because there was Sisters there was somewhere else which was sort of a mix of

everybody there was STYX which was a gay bar but a dance club so everybody...Blackstones so now it's the only place that's definitely changed since..that it's more...There's a mix of everybody there what was the other part of that question? something about the community?

DW Just has the queer community changed at all since you move to Portland?

TS Oh gosh yes since I moved here it's...For the queer community it's definitely more progressive more vocal they are definitely more out there... I will say I maybe new to trans people when I first moved here but I have so many friends that are part of the trans community here which I think is amazing because it's definitely a place that they feel welcome to be who they are...And we are given wonderful..I mean as far as rights go Portland is such..I consider Portland a great..Speaking for myself, a safe place..Our community is definitely like...Definitely part of that now within the community..The gay community the lesbian community the trans community I wish we were all more together instead of so separate...Thats I haven't seen much change in the sense I don't see much that..Of everybody joining together collectively as one I would love to but I'm not sure how that comes about and it's definitely.. I see more mingling of everyone now than I first..The only time I can see that we are all together cohesively as a group is for Pride. And then it's like Pride is here ahh! we here friends here and then Pride is gone and everyone is gone so that change is sort of the same but it is I believe people are more inclusive now which is good I would like to see more though

MM So Portland is sort of like a safe zone for the LGBTQ community here in Maine?

TS Yeah I mean Portland and other cities but the further out you go not so much definitely not so much even though..We're getting out there ..We're getting out there but definitely Portland, South Portland, Westbrook,

Community.

Pride.

Portland. South Portland. Westbrook. Saco. Biddeford. Ogunquits. Wells.

Biddeford, Saco and then the further out you go from there Ogunquit yes, Wells yes but I would say Portland is the hub of it all for sure

MM Southern Maine

TS Yeah yeah yeah..Well yeah Southern Maine..I'd say Portland

MM I had a really good question...About you know why I guess different groups between the LGBTQ community like..Do you think because they might have different issues? And therefore they tend to you know just stick together within their groups?

TS Well you know

MM Any issues that intersect?

TS I've always wondered if people always tend to like stick with like..Do you know what I mean? I don't know that it's even that simple...What's the question?....I don't even know how to answer it I mean I think... I think the best answer would be I just think that people tend to stick with who and what they know ..Yeah

Sexual orientation.

DW so I just want to kind of switch gears and I want to talk to you about your family so but before I do that I just want to ask what your sexual orientation is before we...

Coming out.

TS I would consider myself most definitely a gay man

DW Okay..Awesome so when did you come out?

Denver.

TS I officially said to somebody that I'm gay when I was 22 but I think anybody who knew me prior to that would say there was never a need for me to actually say those words I may have..I think it was probably 16 or 17 when I told my mom that there was something different about me but it was never something that we really talked about ..Discussed..Brought up yeah...So I was 22 when I well no. no no no no no. I had to be

like 21 just recently....Because I was in Denver in Americorp ...Wow so long ago

DW Now you said that you have a mother and father and siblings did you ever feel the need to come out to them? Did you tell them? How did they take it?

TS I mean I eventually wrote my parents a note...My sexuality at home was just that it was that which we don't speak of it you know..Yeah I would sneak to go to meetings in DC to chat with other young gay lesbian bisexual youth and of course I never told my parents about that but yeah it was pretty much that which we don't speak of it... I mean I can recall my mom and dad and I having some heated discussions and arguments about it but eventually I think it was just known that I was gay I mean I told my sisters and both of them are fine with it..if my parents aren't upset with me they're not upset with me I guess that's the easiest way to put our relationship...But I dont go home often I always feel like I'm a different person when I'm at home...I'm me but I have to be a different me it's sort of like

MM Like a mask

TS Yeah I have to walk a certain line..I have to...I just have to be somebody I'm not but then again there's other members of the family I just get to be me with but at home it's always it just feels different I think I've been away for so long I think I left home at right after....Right after highschool so 18 or 19? and I've not lived back in the area since....Well I came home for a short spell to work at a pool over the summer and then that was that but yeah...My family, I love my family we're very close but I think we're as close as we're going to be... If I lived there maybe things would be different but I feel since I live so far away that
45:16

Coming out to family.

Leaving home at 18.

Relationship with family.

TS ... Umm I-I don't want to say that I was the forgotten child. I'm just, you know, everyone assumes I'm great, I'm good unless I call and say something's wrong, yeah.

MM So you know the adage, when they say that "Friends are the family you choose" and so who makes up your support system right now?

TS Wow. My, uhh, (chuckles) That's a big question. There's so many people I consider part of my family. As I said earlier, I've been a nanny for the same boys for... Let's see, Max is 13 and he was 6 months old when I met him. Umm so his mother's, definitely are part of my family as I am part of their family, him and his brother, Miles. Here, I have people that I've just, I've known for so long that I feel as though I've known them forever. And then I've friends I've known for 3 years that people are like, "How, you must have known, you must have grown up together," and we're like, "No." I have 3 friends that we take a trip together every year for "Spooky-bear" to P-town (Provincetown). Tommy, Jason, and Scott. And they're probably my most intimate of family. Umm we spend Thanksgiving, like we have Friendsgiving on Saturday together and then we'll do something over the holiday. We are planning something for my 40th, I don't know what. But then I've got my theater family of people who I don't see even often but every time we reconnect, I feel as if not a day has gone by. Umm and then I have a dear friend of mine, Kristen, Kristen Reilly, who, she's just you know... Kristen and I have known each other for, 8/9 years. No, "Rag-time" was 11 years ago as Miles is 11, so 11 years and it seems like we've known each other forever. Forever, forever, forever. I mean there's older, there are older men in the gay community who have just been so warm

Distant Relationship with Family members.

Family He Chooses

Friends As Family

Theater Family

Kristen Reilly

Older Gay Men as Mentors within Gay Community in Portland

and welcoming and friendly and you know. They taught me so much about the community as a... General as Portland goes, but then the community and the whole gay and lesbian community be. I've learned so much of the AIDS epidemic. I've learned so much about how older people are, in the gay community feel and how the younger gay people feel about the older people, yeah, yeah. My life here has been blessed with people and, and friends. They are definitely what keep me here. Because I've always wonder if I didn't live here, where would I live? Umm.. I would possibly live back in Pittsburg again, which I love, Pittsburgh. Denver, is another wonderful spot but other than umm home, the only other place I've lived for so long, yeah. There's been places here and there but this is definitely the place.

MM So do you think this is the place to maybe, one day, start a uhhh...? (laughs)

TS A... family? Oh gosh no! That is not happening! (laughs) I laugh and tell people I'm barren and I shoot blanks. (more laughter in the background) And no babies. Having been a nanny for so long, I-I just, I love the idea that I get to spend time with my little ones and then give them back. For all intents and purposes, Max and Miles are my children. They're not my kids but I just... Their behavior around me is very different than me being a nanny. It's just like, "Oh Thomas is here, you know. We have to listen!" Whereas, like my Bella and Evelyn definitely, they're just like, "What? Pssh! We're not listening to him!" Like, "Bell, I know you heard my words!" whereas Max (is like) "Buddy. Please." and he's like, "Okay!" It's very different. It's sort of like, I am such a part of the family that it's, it goes, there's, "No. Susan will say no. Mary will say no. Why, why are you asking me?"

Gay and Lesbian Community

AIDS Epidemic Education

Disinterest in Starting a Family of His Own

Nannying vs. Own Kids

(laughs).

MM You're like a third authority figure.

TS Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah. That, that has been an absolute joy. Yeah, I do not... Who knows? Who knows... I am only going to be 40. I may meet somebody and settle down and we decide to have children. I know I will not have an infant. Or toddler. That will not happen. I would probably adopt an older, elementary school-aged child, or an older child if... But I will not have a baby. (laughs) Mmmm... No! (laughs) I love them but I-I just don't see that I could. I don't think I can do it again. Although, I've been interviewing with a family to take care of their child and they have an infant and he's not even here yet. So the thought that I would have an infant again just blows my mind as I've gotten every child, as of late, that I've nannied for have been, you know, 17-18 months so... Right at that lovely toddler stage. They can walk. They can sort of talk. They can sort of explain what they're feeling, what's going on inside. Umm.. But an infant who needs... Everything has to come from you. There's nothing they can do on their own other than sleep. And in some cases they can't sleep unless you don't rock them to sleep (laughs). So yah, definitely no baby. No.

DW I umm, just a reminder that like you don't have to answer any question that you don't want to. Umm when was the first time that you've felt that you fell in love?

TS (Takes a deep breath) Wow... That's a beautiful question because I've loved a number of people but fell in love with somebody. I would say part of what kept me here was a gentleman by the name of Jimmy Neil or James Neil. Umm... There's a

Open to Possibility of Settling Down

Open to Adoption of Older Children

Interview for Nannying Job

Nannying for a Toddler vs. Infant

First Love in Portland

James Neil

particular kind of love that I hadn't felt for Jimmy that was very different from any other person that I've ever dated so I would say that he was probably, truly the first person that I fell in love with. Umm.. and that was 14 years ago. Yeah that was right, right, right after, right around the time that I moved here. He owned a, he and his business partner owned a store on Congress Street called, "Drop Me A Line." Umm.. It was a card shop. Umm... And that's, that's where I met him but that was, that was so so so long ago. Wow. 14, 13, I don't know, 14 years ago. Yeah. Yeah, and I would say that he still holds a very very special place in my heart. Probably always will. I'm a firm believer that you can't have loved somebody and not always hold a place in your heart for them. Like I, I've friends that have split from their exes and just like, "I hate them! I never want to see them!" and I was like, "You don't actually." (laughs) Right now, you probably do hate them and you don't want to see him but you can't always feel that way. I don't think or I hope not. I would hate to have someone who carry that much hate and anger in their heart. Umm but yeah, I yeah. He'll always have a very special place in my heart. That was a beautiful question too. (laughs)

MM I'm going down to the nitty gritty activism umm part/section of this interview. So umm, I guess when did you first heard about HIV and AIDS epidemic?

TS Well, I was in umm probably in middle school when I first... It was something that we wouldn't even talk about in school. It wasn't until umm high school when I saw the AIDS quilt for the first time that it really hits and registered. And I know I was in college when there's a umm an older gentleman that I met living in Pittsburg who died of HIV. That's

"Drop Me a Line" Card Shop

Breaking Up

AIDS Awareness in High School

AIDS Outreach in College

Early Activism in AIDS Outreach

when I got involved in, you know, doing stuff and putting out the word and at the time I worked at the health center, I would do what I did here for the Frannie Peabody Center actually. I would go to the gay bars and pass out condoms, talking about safe sex and you now, and like should people use them and they could go to get tested and umm I did the same thing here for the Frannie Peabody Center. As an outreach counselor, going to the bars and passing out condoms and umm talking to people about safe sex, stocking Blackstones with condoms. But it was probably, I think, elementary, elementary or middle school, I would say middle school for something that we heard. Umm I'm trying to figure out how old was I when the whole Ryan White story came out. That was the young boy who, or a young man who contracted HIV from a blood transfusion.

MM He was a heterosexual right?

TS Yes, yes. He was a hemophiliac. But umm, yeah. And now I... There's so many things that I do. But well, what we do for the drag show is one thing that we do, that we're doing now to raise money for the AIDS awareness. And I worry, big time, about the young community here. That they're still taking too many risks because the number (of) newly infected people are people in their 20s and you find people in their 20s and people in their 50s coming out of marriages having men who have sex with men. So I, as just me as a person, I always tell to my younger gay friends about, "Hey! Are you using condoms? Make sure you use condoms!" You know, they'll say, "Oh, I'm on PrEP!" and I'll say, "Don't get me started on that one!" I'm happy that you're on PrEP but you do understand that PrEP protects you from one thing. You have a world of STDs

Outreach Counselor for the Frannie Peabody Center

Ryan White

Drag Show at "Blackstones"
Fundraising for Frannie Peabody Center

Worry for Young Gay Community in Portland

People Infected with HIV are in Their 20s and 50s

Complacency due to Availability of PrEP

STD Prevention as part of Outreach

you can possibly get as well. I'm such a mother hen. (laughs).

MM Somebody's gotta be.

TS Yes, such a mother hen.

MM Umm so, one of, I guess the vision for Frannie Peabody is sort of to put an end to AIDS by 2030. I think I heard that from the website but knowing what you know now as an outreach counselor, do you think that that is an attainable goal here in, I guess, Portland Maine?

TS I-I would say it is definitely an attainable goal, you know. As long as people continue to have the conversation and the real conversation about HIV and AIDS and you know, that it definitely, it takes one time. And we-we hound that fact. And the resources are there for people to get educated, to be tested, to make sure that they're being safe with their bodies. So as long as people continue to use the resources and we don't lose funding and we don't lose uh sight of the goal, I believe that it is definitely an attainable goal.

DW Earlier you had said that there are a lot of young people that you know who maybe aren't using condoms. Why do you think so many young people are not using condoms and protection?

TS (Sighs) One, I think they're stupid and bull-headed and they feel that there's this level of magic drug out there that you know, they don't have to. They're somehow immune. And I am a man who's on PrEP. I take my little blue pill every morning, umm but I'm still, I still believe in the fact that you and I are not exclusive, we are not... I-I don't know if you're the only person that I'm sleeping

End to AIDS by 2030 Goal

Resources at the Frannie Peabody Center

Young Gay Not Using Condoms

Complacency in Younger Gay Population

Being on PrEP

Taking Precautions in Sexual Relationships

Complacency due to HIV Medication and Low

with-I don't know if I'm the only person you're sleeping with and you're the only person I'm sleeping with. You don't know these answers so we can't pull that plug. We can't say, "Hey, let's not use them." And umm, I just think that they, they feel, and some of them from conversations I've had, they're just like, "Well, there's medicine I can take." So because we've come as far as we have come with meds for HIV people to get them down to that undetectable rate and things of that nature, some of these kids just feel like they don't have to, you know, that they're immune, that they'll be taken care of, "Why I can take this drug and live forever." Okay... Why not don't get the disease in the first place? (chuckles) Why don't we start there? Keep your body safe and wear a condoms?" Or they get into relationships with people then they're not safe with each other and then they open up their relationship way too soon and yeah, yeah. I just think that they believe because some of them, a lot of them take PrEP that they're immune to anything and everything out there.

MM Do you know anyone who has suffered from HIV or AIDS?

TS Don't/Oh there's many people. There are many people I know, there are many people I've lost. There are very good friends of mine who are HIV positive. Umm I've watched them struggled with you know, money and you know, being worried about work and uhh the stigma that they get from the community in the dating sense that you know. They're considered unclean and unworthy to date because of their status. There's so much that I've witnessed. But yeah! I... Many people that I know.

DW Now I know that on the dating app, or as some people refer to it as the hook-up app

Rates of HIV

Prevention vs. Treatment

"Immunity" due to PrEP

HIV Positive Friends

Struggling with HIV

Stigma Faced by HIV Positive People

"Grindr," Technology, and Disclosing of Sensitive Information

People Do Not Disclose Sensitive Information on "Grindr"

"Grindr," has umm a lot of information that people can choose or not choose to disclose, such as like, are they positive for this that and the other etcetera etcetera. Do you think that that's helpful or do you think...?

TS It is if people use it because I know a number of people who use Grindr who don't put out there that they're positive because of the negative pushback they receive from it. Umm and they believe in the philosophy that people should always ask. It's, you know... As an HIV-negative man, umm I-I really don't, I can't say for sure what goes through their heads but from the conversations and the honesty I've received from a few people, they feel that it is everybody's duty to ask, not their duty to tell. And I may receive pushback from anybody that listens to this. I feel differently. I feel it is your job to tell me as much information about you just as much as it is my job to tell you as much information about me, that we need to know going into this sexual relationship. So if you are a (HIV) positive person, I feel that it's your job to tell me that you are. Not wait for me to ask the question or somebody to ask the question. Because somebody may not ask the question. Umm so yeah.

DW Umm so I want to ask you about another part of activism, the Black Lives Matter movement. What is, what is that, how are you involved in that movement, I guess, is my first question?

MM What does it mean to you?

TS Well it, this subject has gone and blown way out of proportion and out of track, off topic. It means to me that, you know, everybody, be it a black person, white person, whatever person, we are all people. So all

HIV-Negative Perspective

"Duty to Ask"

Both Parties Duty to Disclose Sensitive Information

Black Lives Matter Movement

People of Color Treated Unfairly

Black Lives Matter Rallies in Portland

people at this time point in time, in this country should be treated as equals and that's not the case. It's not the case here so this prose has started because of the fact that so many people of color have been treated not fairly. Umm I, when we were having rallies here in town, I attended some of the rallies. There was, I forget, a stand-in down on Commercial Street. I attended, I went to that. You know, I was pretty vocal about my stance on this when this first became, I think, what is his name? (Taps fingers on table) The first person to kneel on the football...?

MM ... Colin Kaepernick?

TS Yes... Yes... I praised him and so many people did not. But as this has gone on, I've said that, "Yes! I definitely stand with all of them!" Umm and it is not about disrespect. It is not about, you know, not honoring people. It is about making sure people see and know that our voices are here and our feelings matter. We as people in this country and this world, matter. Umm and I think most of my friends, and if they don't, they haven't said anything to me but most of my friends would probably feel the same thing. But if they don't feel the same way, we've never had any disagreement or argument about Black Lives Matter. They've all been very much supportive.

MM I guess like, I guess one of my questions here is about like, what it's been like for you, being a black, gay man in a predominantly white state?

TS Well, just being a black man in Portland in general has not always been easy. Umm there, there are a few times in this-this city that I have felt, because of my race, uncomfortable in places. Not because of my

Colin Kaepernick and #takeaknee

#takeaknee

Conversations on Black Lives Matter Movement

Being Black in Maine

Being Black in Portland

Uncomfortable due to Skin Color

Only Person of Color

Being Gay and Black in Portland

sexuality but because of the color of my skin. There are a number of times that t I have gone to places and I'm literally the only person of color in the entire room, or in the entire, you know, the theater! Or.. And that doesn't bother me but there I see, there are people who I can feel that they're uncomfortable at times when certain situations of that come about where I'm the only person of color in a room uhh. As a gay man, as a gay, black man in this community, it brings up so many, so many things. One, the racism that is within this community with gay people. And I probably say more primarily gay men than women. Umm I've had people who have said, point out, that, "Yes, I am totally do-able. I can totally have sex with you but I could never date you!" and I'm like, "I'm sorry?!" You're looking me in the face and you're saying this? "Explain to me why." "Well, I could never take you home. My family would never understand." And that just, that hurt me to my core, my being. It's like, I don't believe that you would look me in the face and say these words; That I'm good enough to have sex with but I'm not good enough to date. Am I just a piece of ass to you? Uhh so the gay community, I-I, there are times that if you're not white enough, you don't make the right amount of money, you don't have the you know, the most popular friends, you don't this, you don't that. You're like invisible. Invisible. Umm yeah. Dating in this city as a black man is not easy. Umm dating for me in the city, in general, is not easy because everybody knows me and I'm.. (laughs) And everyone knows everything about everybody in some cases. But not that there's much to know about me. But I find that people just, they're uncomfortable dating a person of color, for whatever reason. Uhh I, one of my dearest friends who moved away just a couple of months ago, Elmer Shelton, umm,

Racism Within Gay Community

Superficial Gay Dating Scene in Portland

Dating as a Gay, Black Man in Portland

Well Known in Portland

People Uncomfortable Dating People of Color

Elmer Shelton

Dating is Tough for a Man of Color

is also a man of color in town and we would have a number of conversations about, you know, the fact that, you know, how difficult it is to date and when you're dating people how, you know, they're just like not, how do I phrase what I'm about to say and not sound like an asshole... Alright, alright, I'm just going to say yeah! Dating in general in this city, for me, as a man of color, has not been easy! I'll just leave it at at (laughs)

MM So, was it my little like, chuckle, that made you go, "Mmmm, okay! Better not say!" Sorry...

TS I could tend to, sometimes, get a little umm pot-mouth but yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MM Do you want to ask next, or do you want me to do it?

DW You can ask him another question!

MM It's still about race. If that's okay with you?

TS Mm-hmm.

MM Do you think people look on to you to comment about what's going on with like, Black Lives Matter? Do people like, seek you out?

TS I find, more-more than anything, I will say, people are more cautious of what they say around me because they don't know what I might think or how I would react.

DW Does that bother you?

TS Umm! It definitely does! I will tell people, "If you have something to say, say it!" We can only move forward as people if we say what

Conversations as a Black Man in the context of Black Lives Matter

Challenges People to Have Conversations on Race

People Making Assumptions About Him

we say. Own it! Mean it! Own it! But if we can't talk about it and move past it, then we've gotten nowhere. So, you know, say what you need to say. I might not, I might not like it but then it opens up a place of discussion for us. Umm and there-there was a time where, you know, something would happen in the country, race related, and people would be like, "Oh my god, Thomas! Does that make you mad?" And I was like, "The question you're asking makes me mad!" (laughs) The situation at hand, yes, it makes me mad but the fact that you had to lead in talking to me, asking me "Does this make me mad?" That makes me mad!

MM Instead of assuming...

TS So then it leads me to my question, how does it make, right, how do you feel about it? Does it make you mad? Are you asking if I'm okay or angered by it because you're going to shape it, you know, judge how you should feel based on it? That should never happen. You, you know, own your stuff and I'll own mine and you feel how you feel. If you don't feel the way I feel about it, that's okay! (laughs) I've had to have a few of those conversations.

MM Well one of the questions is, can you tell us about one of those conversations?

TS Uhh, well umm... Oh god, there's... The young boy who-who was shot. Treyvon...

DW Treyvon Martin?

TS Yes, yes. There was a very heated conversation that happened at Blackstones. And I'm not saying heated as an argument but people were being very real about their feelings. And I basically had to tell somebody

People Gauge How To Feel About a Race Related Issues by His Response

Differences in Opinions

Treyvon Martin

Race Conversations in Blackstones

Disagreements on Treyvon Martin's Death

People Missing the Point About Black Lives Matter

that it is okay to choose to disagree here. I'm not going to judge you or be angry with you because you feel like the man who shot him had every right to do so and should totally get off. I disagree with you a 100 percent but that is okay! (laughs) We are able, as humans, to disagree. We're allowed to disagree. And we should be able to move past that but umm they would not let this go. Would not let the fact that, you know, that every time a black man dies, do I feel, I should feel for them and not for the person, the other person involved? And I was like, "That is not what I'm saying at all! You're completely missing the point!" And I was like, "Okay, finally! You need to stop talking and you need to please get out of my face." (laughs) I do not want to have a conversation with you anymore. And since then, we have had a very healthy conversation about a many of things but uhh that is one case in point.

MM Do you think that you have been, like I guess with discussions about race, have increase, you know, after the elections, during the elections or do you think that this is an ongoing thing that has been happening?

TS More, I find, that more people want to know how I feel about subjects race related now that the elections has taken place because we have who we have in office and there's just so many awful things that have happened in this country that people feel are directly related to the fact that he was elected. So for sure I've had more conversations as of late because, directly because of the election. Yes.

DW How do you, well I mean, how do you feel about the rise of the Alt-right in this country? It appears that they have become more brazen with their approaches to just

Discussions About Race After the Elections

People Are More Curious About His Perspectives on Race after Elections

Rise of the Alt-Right

White's Protesting the Lack of Rights

People Embolden By What They Watch on Television

Expresses Frustration About People's

<p>about everything.</p> <p>TS You know, as a person, it definitely alarms me because I feel it's just bringing up stuff that was never really squashed to begin with. There are complaints that have been brought up and things that have been said that have continued to be said throughout this country for years, but just said in a way that people didn't take such offense to though. But now that some people are feeling that they are just okay with putting their thoughts and feelings right out there umm... I am definitely alarm. And I'm a little alarmed by the fact that the comments I hear from people in conversation, being on the television or in conversation where people's thoughts and opinions are sort of switching to that direction. I was like, "What, are you stupid? How can you.. What are you... Ahhh...!" Umm it just makes me know that as a country we've come far but we still have so much that we need to accomplish and do. So it definitely makes me think and worry, for sure.</p> <p>MM I guess this segues into the (topic) of first amendment rights issue that you want to take about, that you have put in the biography information that you sent to Professor Chapkis. Like do you think that it is, as an American, that yes, first amendment rights are important but what are your thoughts about that?</p> <p>TS I mean, yeah, they're definitely important as long as what you say... When you... (laughs) Definitely important for sure but... When the words you use cause people to have actions that are harmful or hurtful to others, then we really need to go back and look at what we say and how we say what we say. Yeah, people should have the right to say whatever they choose to say. Let it out,</p>	<p>Impulsion</p> <p>First Amendment Rights</p> <p>First Amendment Rights</p> <p>Hurtful Opinions Have Repurcussions</p> <p>Calling People Out on Their Bad Behavior</p> <p>Having Constructive Conversations</p>
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yes that is true. But when your words directly affect another person's life, no! It's such a sticky subject in some ways. Yeah, I still believe that people should be able to say what you say, own what you say, and have- have the education to back up what you're putting out there. Umm but then also people should feel okay with calling people others on their shit. Be like, you just said this. Now we need to talk. Why did you say that? If more people did that throughout conversations, I think we would really get a lot further than where we, where, we would get a lot further in a lot of sense, in a lot of cases. Umm if a lot more people call people on their shit. And granted it might cause you to have a more uncomfortable conversation or situation between another person but it definitely puts every shit right out there so we're not sort of just, you know. Okay, you said this so let's, let's put it on the table. Let's lay it right out there and let's get to the bottom of why you feel this way. And if more conversations happen in that sense, I think we would really push a good movement in this country. For sure. But, then again, I mean, I should also, I should practise what I preach too (laughs) I should be more... I hear things and I just wanted to say... Hmm. I'm not part of that conversation but I really want to go over there and be like, "I'm sorry, yeah. Why do you feel this way? Why did you say that?" But I don't! (laughs) One, because I wasn't part of the conversation but then two, you know. Who does that? More people should! But who does that?! (laughs)

DW Umm so, we're just getting right into that activism and the nitty gritty topics. Another thing you had said that you wanted to talk about was the right to bodily autonomy, specifically like, abortions and how do you feel about people who are pro-life versus

Pushing a Good Movement Across Country

Harder to Intervene and Correct Misconceptions

Right to Bodily Autonomy

Pro-Choice

Planned Parenthood

Parents Bringing Children Along to Protest

Nobody's Right Tell Others What To Do With Their Bodies

Supreme Court Decision on Roe v. Wade

people who are pro-choice?

TS I have always been a pro-choice person. A 100 percent. I-I. On the days that people stand outside of Planned Parenthood on Congress Street with their children, pulling pictures. One, that is a child! This child has nothing to do so with this! Keep them home. If you want to have that conversation with people then you have the conversation with people. Don't subject your children to it. I am a firm believer that it is not anybody's right to tell me what I can or cannot do with my body nor is it my job to tell another person what they can or cannot do with theirs. And I have so.. I have had a number of heated arguments about this subject. I will always be pro-choice. Forever. My stance on that will never change. Umm and I, the fact that we continue in this country to go back over and over and over, over a subject like that, that we have decided on. The Supreme Court decided on years ago and the fact that we continue to fight about it does nothing but piss me off because we're getting nowhere! We're going nowhere! Like the poor girl, the uhh girl who's being held umm for the, where was she from? It was just in the news where ... She was an 11 or 12 year old girl who is pregnant and wanted to have an abortion and all of this fighting that went on. She was an illegal immigrant and all of this went on over and over and over and over. People making decisions for her. This is her body. Yeah, she's young. Maybe she might have been a little older than that but still. It's her body. She is clearly able to, after you talk with the doctors that you talk with and the people you talk with, they deem you sane enough to make the decision to abort your baby then how is it my place to tell you not to?

DW And that leads me to another question

Young Pregnant Illegal Immigrant Detained in Federal Detention Center in Texas

Discussions About Her Body and Right to an Abortion

Who Gets a Right to Speak on Specific Issues

Men Have No Right to Weigh In On Abortion If It Doesn't Directly Affect Them

Men Pushing Abortion Agenda

about that. Do you feel that there are some people who just have no right to speak about this, such as, men? I know that a lot of people feel that men don't need a voice in this conversation.

TS Well, if that man is not directly related to what is happening to the person who is thinking of having that abortion, then no. They shouldn't be involved with this. This is not a, not something that concern him. It's not something that we're ever going to have to do. I'm never going to have an abortion, so how can I tell another person that they can't do something that in the long term may end up being the best thing that ever happened for them? Umm yeah. So no. I don't, I don't feel like we should have a voice in this because of that's, a lot of what's happening in this country with people pushing this agenda forward. I mean, there are many women involved (laughs). It's bull-headed men so won't keep their mouths shut and stay out of it.

MM Has anyone told you anything about your own body?

TS That I could or cannot do something with my body? No. I would dare for them to do so. (laughs) I would dare for them to do so! When you walk a day in my shoes and you live in this body, then you can tell me what I can do with it. But until then... (laughs) You're cute. No, no. I mean, people have, there are people who have commented on my sense of dress. The other day, someone was like, "Take that spoon out of your ear! Is looks stupid!" I was like, "Well, the last time I checked, it wasn't your ear! And so I'm going to tell you to mind your fucking business!" (laughs) The spoon stays so... I don't care!

People Commenting on His Style of Dress and How He Presents Himself

Grassroots Movement in Portland

Political Representation

Represented as a Gay Man
Unsure of Representation as a Person of Color

Black vs. African American Community

Being Black American is Different From

<p>DW I think it's really cute.</p> <p>TS Thank you! I can't believe they even said that knowing who they were talking to! Of course I'm going to tell them to shut the fuck up. Shut up! (laughs).</p> <p>MM I'm glad we got that out. (Incoherent joke) Umm how do you feel about the grassroots movement in Maine? Do you think that umm, do you feel represented here, in Portland?</p> <p>TS In Portland? Do I feel represented from the grassroots movement?</p> <p>MM I guess, politically, do you feel represented?</p> <p>TS Oh well! As a gay man, I definitely feel represented. As a person of color, umm yes? No? Sometimes? I just feel like, there, I-I feel that there-there's a black community and then there's an African community, an African American community. And I consider myself black American because I was born in this country. My parents were born in this country and their parents were born in this country. And now I think of the African American community as people who came over to this country from Africa, the immigrants and what have you. So I feel as a black person, as a black American, I don't necessarily feel like my culture, me as a black American, is truly represented here in Portland. But then again that culture and that percentage of people here in Portland is so tiny. So like, I probably have 10 black friends in town and you know, 15-20 African American or African friends in town and the whole mix of everyone else. But the people who look like me, were born in this country like me, and lived in a culture that sort of similar to me, I don't feel that it's necessarily always represented.</p>	<p>African American</p> <p>Not Represented as a Black American</p> <p>Small Population of Black Americans in Portland</p> <p>More African American than Black Americans</p> <p>Do Not Like Talking About Family</p> <p>Church/ Religious Affiliations</p>
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<p>(20 seconds of interruption)</p> <p>DW So we got about 5 minutes left. Is there anything specifically, as we near the end, that you want to particularly take about?</p> <p>TS No! You two have asked some beautiful questions (laugh) I feel at times I've shied away from some of them, family in particular. I don't particularly like talking about family. Umm but no! I mean, the mix of questions have been great. I, yeah, no.</p> <p>DW I guess my question that I wanted to ask you earlier and I just never got to it was umm. At one point you had said that you, one of the many places you used to sing was at church. So are you particularly religious or is that just when you were a child?</p> <p>TS I am... A religious person. Yes. Umm but not, I don't go to a place of worship right now. I mean, I pray, I'm comfortable talking about religion but I don't particularly have a place that I go for worship now. I think because religion was, you know, we had to go to church. We had to go to sunday school. We had to do this, we had to do that and I umm yeah. (laughs) I'm distracted. There are some places that I would occasionally go to every now and then. If I want to go to church, I would go to the First Parish or Saint Luke's. Because it brings back memories so to say. I do go to church (on) Christmas Eve mass. I do go Ash Wednesdays. I do go for holidays that I'm supposed to but not as much as I used to, no.</p> <p>DW And has religion impacted your life, or your coming out experience at all?</p> <p>TS Mmm... Not really, not really. There was a</p>	<p>Sunday School</p> <p>Going to Church for Nostalgic Reasons</p> <p>Going to Church for Christmas</p> <p>Religion and Sexual Identity</p> <p>Parents Quoting Scripture to Judge Him</p> <p>Improvements for the Black Lives Matter Movement</p> <p>Disorganization Within the Black Lives Matter Movement</p>
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time when in conversation with my parents that, you know, the Bible says this and the Bible says that and you know, you're going against the lord's words and I have always been a firm believer that, you know, this is how He created me. And I believe it says that He created me in His own image and likeness. And if this is how He created this person and this is how I'm supposed to be so it's not your place to try and take the Word and twist it in your way so that you can make me feel bad about me. So to say.

MM Last question. But I don't know if it's too big (general) of a question but it's going (back) to the Black Lives Matter movement. Do you think... There are some discourse, discussions, out there that (Black Lives Matter) is disorganized as a movement. Do you think that it is an effective movement or not?

TS Umm I believe that there is some disorganization about the movement because if you ask 4 different people what the movement stands for and means, you will probably get 4 different answers because people have taken the Black Lives Matter movement and tied it into so many other movements and things that it's as its own, it sort of lost weight of what it stood for to begin with. Uhhh yeah! I know I finished every question with a "Uhhh yeah!" (laughs)

MM That's actually 90 minutes.

DW So thank you so much for talking with us.

TS You're welcome, you're welcome!

DW If at all you feel like you wanted more time or anything like that, we could definitely schedule another interview and add it on to

Message of the Black Lives Matter Movement
Seemed Distorted and Lost

this one but as of right now, I will hand you the release form and deed of gift. Just read that over and I will stop this right now.