

**Queer Newark Oral History Project**

**Interviewee: Pucci Revlon**

**Interviewer: Whit Strub**

**Date: May 31, 2017**

**Location: Pucci Revlon's Apartment, Newark, New Jersey**

*Whit Strub:* Ok, so we are recording a very short round 3 with Miss Pucci, Whitney Strub here on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Really I just have the 4 follow-up questions because we ran out of time. So, for "Paris is Burning" if people wanted to track down where you show up, could you just clarify where we would see you? I'm not sure I quite grasp that.

*Pucci Revlon:* I'm just walking through the ballroom.

*Whit Strub:* Do you remember which scene? Like if I were trying to track it down—

*Pucci Revlon:* No, I don't remember which scene.

*Whit Strub:* Oh, ok. So it's tough.

*Pucci Revlon:* Yeah, it's tough. You'd have to see the movie to actually see it.

*Whit Strub:* Ok, I've seen it many times, but I guess I'll have to watch with an eagle eye, huh? Alright, fair enough. So the second thing I was going to ask about was the emergence of trans activism in the 90s and how you perceived it, whether you were part of that, just what you thought about this sort of rise in visibility.

*Pucci Revlon:* The visibility was there. People weren't afraid of being themselves. They just came out the closet. That didn't start in the 90s. That started in the 80s. Yeah, because somewhere in the like early to mid 80s, everybody was just out walking around out with themselves. They wasn't hiding, that's when punk was out and everybody was blending in together.

*Whitney Strub:* So you see a connection between trans-visibility and punk?

*Pucci Revlon:* Yeah.

*Whit Strub:* Oh yeah.

*Pucci Revlon:* A lot of the same people hung out together, the gay kids and the punk kids, all hung out in the same club atmosphere. And hung around together in restaurants and stuff like that. They all emerged, because I don't know what the punk views but thinking about, but back then it was lively colors, the pinks and the neon blues and greens and stuff. And the gay kids, some of them wore clothes like that in all of the clubs that they had downtown. Whether they were straight or gay, that's where the party was, that's where everybody went.

*Whit Strub:* So were you into punk music?

*Pucci Revlon:* Not as much into music, as into the colors of the clothing.

*Whit Strub:* Ok, that's interesting. Did you feel like punk kids were sort of queer positive in general?

*Pucci Revlon:* Yes. They were.

*Whit Strub:* Ok, that's interesting. So just picking up on the thread of visibility, the word transgender itself kind of comes out in the 90s, right?

*Pucci Revlon:* 2000s.

*Whit Strub:* Yeah. So I'm just wondering, what's your relationship to that? So you've been living trans for decades and suddenly there's this word, transgender.

*Pucci Revlon:* No, I was never living trans.

*Whit Strub:* Oh, ok.

*Pucci Revlon:* I was never living trans. I was always living as a woman.

*Whit Strub:* Ok, ok.

*Pucci Revlon:* I never lived as trans.

*Whit Strub:* So what's your relationship to the word transgender then? As an identity is it something –

*Pucci Revlon:* It ain't my identity. All my IDs say female. [*chuckles*]

*Whit Strub:* Ok, so you never used the word trans for yourself?

*Pucci Revlon:* No.

*Whit Strub:* What do you think of the sort of rise of celebrity trans activists, like Laverne Cox –

*Pucci Revlon:* That's been in the past few years or so. That's something new that's been coming out because of having a tolerant president. I think since Barack Obama, even George the second, Bush was more tolerant of gay people because of Newt Gingrich's sister and stuff like that. That came from that era. That made it more positive to be yourself and not worry about what other people say, cuz since then gay bashing and stuff like that is a crime. It's a big ol' crime now. And we didn't have to, we had it, but it was only by a certain group of people growing up, but like in my neighborhood we never had that problem.

*Whit Strub:* So then what's your perception of the youth generation of self-identified trans activists? Who are often kind of radical and rethinking gender and identifying as gender fluid or gender queer, non-binary, [00:05:00] what's your take on that kind of –

*Pucci Revlon:* I think now it's more like everyone is being themselves. They're not, they're not putting labels on it, like a lot of people are. And the young kids, they just pop out of everywhere. They don't care no more. It ain't like they gotta hide it, they let their parents know at 2 and 3, or they'll see it as they're growing up and the parents are more tolerable. I guess like mine was.

*Whit Strub:* Yeah, I was going to say—[ *cross talk*, 00:05:37]

*Pucci Revlon:* My parents were very tolerable with me, they didn't – I had the same chores as everybody else and got the same punishment as everybody else, and I wasn't treated no different.

*Whit Strub:* In a lot of ways it sounds like you anticipated this generation, it sounds like there are a lot of similarities in what you describe as not clinging to words for identity and things like that.

*Pucci Revlon:* My family don't tolerate that neither. Everybody calls me "she," nobody calls me "he." Some of the distant relatives may end up making a mistake, but they can't do it around certain relatives or they'll "girl get up outta here."

*Whit Strub:* Yeah, since you talked about politics, I just have to ask, now that we have Donald Trump, thoughts on –

*Pucci Revlon:* The man's a idiot. That man just – I think he just tryin' to turn, I'm gonna say this here and you can keep that in there and this is something that's coming out of my mouth. That slogan, "Make America Great Again," I think that slogan should mean, "Make America White Again." Because he's really twisting a lot of things. He's really trying to do everything positive that Barack Obama did and turn it into a negative. Now healthcare is for everybody, he's trying to take that away from people that actually need it. [*cross talk 00:06:13*]

*Whit Strub:* Yeah, the Paris climate agreement –

*Pucci Revlon:* The first black president, knock on wood, thank god he was there, that did something, that made it more tolerable for everyone, he's trying to destroy. That's the way it seems. And then he has the attitude, "You have to do as I say." That attitude don't work with the presidency because the presidency isn't just one man. He don't seem to notice that. He's trying to be a dictator and it's not happening.

*Whit Strub:* Hopefully.

*Pucci Revlon:* Oh no, it ain't gonna happen. Oh no no no. I don't even think Paul Ryan gonna let that happen. Paul Ryan is the House Speaker. I don't think Paul Ryan is gonna let that happen. No, I think Paul Ryan is gonna be the first one to start the impeachment. Yeah, Paul Ryan is too much of a conservative liberal to let this man become a dictator, because he's really trying to become a dictator.

*Whit Strub:* It's pretty sad that we're relying on Paul Ryan but – Just one more political question, what about Caitlyn Jenner who is probably the single most visible trans person and has been a Trump supporter, what's your

take on what we should think about Caitlyn Jenner's role in society, positive or negative?

*Pucci Revlon:* Well, Caitlyn Jenner is an activist and she's supported Trump in the past, but now she's actually speaking against him because of some of the things he's trying to undo that Barack Obama put in place. I was tellin' you those transgender people, and I think Caitlyn Jenner will be a very positive person who will actually make a difference, especially if she run for political office.

*Whit Strub:* Oh boy, I mean that would –

*Pucci Revlon:* That's a good move.

*Whit Strub:* It would be interesting. I'd be curious to see what kind of platform she would run on. *[cross talk, 00:09:25-00:09:31]*

*Pucci Revlon:* That would be ...

*Whit Strub:* Ok, final two things, just tell me a little about aging, because we talked so much about your life and the club scene, ballroom, kind of vibrance of youth, but what about –

*Pucci Revlon:* What about aging? We all age.

*Whit Strub:* Oh believe me, I'm feeling it too. Just tell me your own narrative of aging and what it's been like to age, how has it impacted the way you engage with the medical system and hormones things like that, or are there aspects to aging **[00:10:00]** while trans that people don't think about?

*Pucci Revlon:* Ok, go over that again cuz that –

*Whit Strub:* Well, I'm just curious... how to rephrase it, I'm trying to think on my feet here, like say medically, we talked a little bit about how when you were young and getting hormones and things, does that change over the years or how have the sort of medical requirements of your life changed?

*Pucci Revlon:* They haven't. I just don't need hormones anymore. Cuz of my age.

*Whit Strub:* When did that become the case? How old were you – I feel like this is a history most people don't really know.

*Pucci Revlon:* When I stopped taking hormones, about 50. It's been about 8 years since I've had to take hormones. My doctor wanted me to stop way before that. She said there was no need to.

*Whit Strub:* At that point, pardon my ignorance here, but your body had achieved a kind of equilibrium and you no longer needed them?

*Pucci Revlon:* Yeah.

*Whit Strub:* Ok.

*Pucci Revlon:* I no longer needed them.

*Whit Strub:* What about community? It seems like you've got a sense of community with Craig and Bernie. Have you felt engaged with part of both Newark and the LGBT community as you've aged, or has that changed in any way?

*Pucci Revlon:* I never hung out with the LGB community. I know of the LGBT community but I ... lines with everybody. That's a whole different story,

that's something I can't really answer, because I never – I hang out with certain friends both straight and gay, and we all got along. Whether it was men, women, I had more straight friends than I had gay friends and that's just the way it was.

*Whit Strub:* Has it changed?

*Pucci Revlon:* It hasn't changed.

*Whit Strub:* Ok then, I guess my final question is do you want, if you want, to talk about your current health and how you're doing –

*Pucci Revlon:* Pancreatic cancer. I'm doing fine.

*Whit Strub:* What's the prognosis?

*Pucci Revlon:* Well there's no cure for pancreatic cancer so— They're just holding it at bay, with the chemo, just to keep me alive as long as they possibly can. So other than that—that's it.

*Whit Strub:* How's it going?

*Pucci Revlon:* It's going good, I mean I'm talking, ain't I?

*Whit Strub:* Yeah, I mean that's great. I'm very happy about that. Any other closing thoughts or have we covered everything? Is there anything I haven't thought to ask you in these multiple sessions that I should have been asking about?

*Pucci Revlon:* No, not that I know of.



*Pucci Revlon/ Whit Strub*

*Whit Strub:*            Alright, then I will stop recording and we can look at pictures.

*[End of Audio, 00:13:30]*