

Whit Strub (WS): Come on in. Hey. And then one of the co-directors of the Queer Newark Oral History Project, which is how I met the fabulous Miss Pucci Revlon, who is kind enough to come visit us tonight for a sort of Q&A and discussion and so while Miss Pucci gets situated, I'm just gonna make a couple of announcements because I figure anybody who's in this room now might be interested in a couple of other events that are coming up. And let us know about voice projection. I'm kind of shouting to try to project my voice but if it's too loud let me know. I can, you know, sort of talk at a more moderate pace. This room has odd acoustics because of its size. But basically we've got three events I just want to announce briefly. This is part one of two of LGBT History Month events that we're doing with the Queer Newark Oral History Project—well, at Rutgers Newark, indeed, indeed, and tomorrow at 5:30 p.m. is going to be a speaker, Sue Ferentinos, talking about LGBTQ public history as a kind of public and academic discipline, and she wrote a really important book on LGBTQ history and monuments and historical preservation and public history, so she will be at the Dana Room, which is the fourth floor of the library over there, Dana library, so again that's at 5:30 tomorrow night for anybody who's interested. And then two events really quick that I'll announce coming up at the Newark LGBTQ Community Center, these aren't Rutgers events, but they're very nearby, for anybody's ever been right down off Halsey and Central, you know, our one and only LGBTQ Community Center in Newark, we've got two events coming up that are both fundraisers for the center. So on Monday we have a murder mystery dinner from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in which you can eat dinner and try to find out who the killer is. Tickets are twenty dollars. That's to raise money for the Center. I would actually be performing in it but I teach that evening so I will not be there acting, but plenty of wonderful people will so that's this coming Monday, the 30th, and there's some flyers up there. I'll leave a couple of here too, and then one other event is drag queen bingo, coming up on Friday November 3rd from 7 to 9 p.m. over at the Community Center, another fundraiser in which our dear friend and community member Aaron Frazier will—will revive his ballroom persona Miss Una for the first time in nearly two decades for a drag queen bingo fundraiser. So also sure to be a lot of fun, and less academic than the stuff we do at Rutgers in a good way. So those are the things I was going to announce, and without further ado, I guess we can get started on tonight's event talking with Miss Pucci. I'll sit down, we can pass the mic. Normally I would give a sort of biographical introduction, but since that's what we're going to be talking about is your biography, I will simply say Miss Pucci Revlon is a transgender pioneer of Newark who has been out and proud for many decades, which we'll talk about here in a minute, and is going to tell us about her experiences growing up in Newark, about some of the forgotten

history of downtown kind of LGBTQ life and whatever else we want to talk about so give me a round of—join me in a round of applause for Miss Pucci Revlon.

[Applause]

WS: So thank you for being here and, you know, just to set the stage, Pucci and I have done—what, how many hours, like, six hours worth, maybe five hours, of oral history interviewing, which is all up on the website of the Queer Newark Oral History, that's how we met one another. I think this photo is from that eventful day and so, you know, we—we—we've spoken a great

Pucci Revlon (PR): That's my living room.

[Laughter]

WS: Well, it's your old living room so, you know, we've spoken in a great detail and we're kind of gonna do a little bit of a Greatest Hits, I think, of some of the basics of our interview, whatever else you want to talk about, and then we'll open up to the crowd and whatever, you know, you want to ask about, we'll field, if that sounds good to you. So to get the ball rolling, maybe you can tell us a little bit about your family and your sort of family background as a Newarker.

PR: Well, I grew up near Irvington. I came from a very moderate family. Both parents worked and that's all I knew and the things—I can't go that way. That's gonna drive me crazy. Okay. When I was younger, I didn't have a lot of progress because I had two parents that worked so anything we wanted, we got, and I lived in a very open community where nobody bothered me because they knew who I was growing up and things like that. And I had a very eclectic as far as racial background because where I grew up, I had a lot of Spanish people, Italian people, Polish people, Chinese people, African people, Jamaican people, there was a few Haitians, and we were all in the same area, and I was like one of three little drag queens running the neighborhood back in the day. And they knew who we were. We never had no problem growing up in that type of neighborhood so I used to put on a nightgown and next day, me and my girlfriends, we used to walk up and down the street at night and put our little facial masks on and up and down the street and it was a very—even the police didn't bother us. But when I talked to some of the people that were older than me, I found that the police in Newark and, well, around this country wasn't very good to gay people and I think this had to be somewhere around the time of—after Stonewall and whatnot because then they were talking about hopping fences in people's backyards and stuff like that. I'm sorry, I wasn't doing that I was a lady. That wasn't going on.

[Laughter]

PR: Yeah, and like I was telling Whit one time before, I knew, like, Bobby White and Paris Smith and stuff like—cause I used to work for Bobby White in the Dollhouse on the weekends and there was like like several other clubs he had but I can't recall most of their names except for one called the Continental and Majestic, that was—which was up on West Market and the Continental, I think was the one that was on Elizabeth, and those type of clubs were very few but we drew a crowd. Not only did we draw a crowd of the—the gay kids, we had the straight kids coming in trying not to go home. We had actually close the club down sometime at night and just, you know, start leading people to the door because they kept the music going and entertainment because Bobby White was a premier entertaining here back in the late—late 70s to around the early 90s. And Bobby White was the entertainer from Newark because Bobby White played all the clubs, and I mean the straight bars, all up and down Broad Street. Like, there was a—the Centuri, Centuri, the Santana Bank, next door, there used to be a club called Midas Gold. Bobby White was a headliner there for years.

WS: A straight club?

PR: Yes, a straight bar. He did all the bars. He didn't do clubs. He did all the little local bars and stuff like that. They called him Mr. Entertainment and Bobby White put on a good show and—matter of fact, he did a lot of this for me and Kim—Kim Gibson back in those days, as well as the City Council, and I know he was running between here and Trenton, doing shows all over the state. And back then, and I was thinking about this tonight at home, we as transgender—well, let's say trans—transgender people, we didn't hide. We just tried to get by because if you got spooked, you had to learn how to do the saver dash, cause as long as you looked like the person you were or dressed like, nobody bothered you, but if you walked out there, "oh, hello, hello," then men started to say, "oh, hey." You better start running cause they will chase you. Cause we had problems with the Wild Bunch gang back in that point and a couple of my relatives was in that little gang too. I threatened them afterwards after I got a little older and a little weight behind me, I can fight them back because they were actually attacking people.

WS: Can you explain that, who the Wild Bunch was?

PR: It was a group of young men in the Clinton Hill section that were never very fond of gay people. They were not fond of, whether you was a woman or man, if a woman came outside and she had on too much makeup, she could get pay for a beatdown. These boys did not care but they attacked a couple of girls I've known because of the eyeshadows and stuff like that and sent a couple of them to the hospital. Matter of fact, they send a couple of the gay guys to the hospital too because they've gotten beaten so bad in that area. Because when I was at Essex County

College they threatened us, but there was a bunch of us that wasn't having them coming into the college. Matter of fact, we also had the back of the college cause the security people stayed on with us waiting for them to come that day, because these boys were determined to attack anyone that was different from them just from walking the streets or just for being who you are. Now today the children a little bit more both, and then you probably get away with it, but back then it was not something you normally did on these—on some—on the streets of Newark because Newark was very forgiving if you're known in your area, but when you stepped outside that area is when you have problems. Then you can just go all over the place hopefully and don't have these problems. I haven't heard any of that in lately.

WS: Well, there was the recent incident at East Side High School. They attacked a young trans woman.

PR: Oh, yeah, that was—

WS: Yeah, that was a reminder that this history carries through the present.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: I went to that protest.

WS: Yeah, yeah, there was a big rally.

PR: Oh, okay. Well, yeah. You know, down to one incident. I've seen lots of it. I've seen when you had to actually—if you stepped outside of your neighborhood and went into a cross neighborhood, like, we had several groups of people that live in some different blocks of each other and we went from, like, Ellis Avenue and Springfield, 21st, 20th, up to about 16th Street, over about five blocks. In that area, we was—we were safe in that area. Yeah. But we used to take Roz. Roz was our protector. Her name was Jerry Lofton. Matter of fact, she graduated from Rutgers University.

WS: Oh yeah?

PR: Yeah. Roz graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in 1972. In drag.

WS: From Rutgers Newark?

PR: From Rutgers Newark.

WS: Really?

PR: Yes. You can probably find it in the archive. Lofton.

WS: Okay. So what are the details from the Essex County College kind of battle that—that you mentioned that sticks out to me from the oral history we did is I believe you carried a hatchet to—

PR: I sure do. I got a hatchet in my bookbag.

WS: Tell us a little bit about that, about how fought back against the attacks.

PR: Oh, no no no no no. See, I don't like to be hit. Now I'm not gonna be hitting then just sit there, be hitting, don't think. But when you come out, a gang of people coming at you, I went right up to Sears. They had a Sears in Irvington on Springfield Avenue right after Grove Street and got me a nice big silver looking hatchet with a black handle. Used to stick it in my bookbag every time I went out to house to go to school. I took that back to Essex County College with me because we're—back to dealing with the Wild Bunch, I think—I can't think of any other gangs I can compare this group to

[Unintelligible Audience Talk]

PR: Yeah, maybe the Crips or the Bloods, yeah, yeah, now that I think about it, yeah, cause they're very vicious, like, they wasn't dealing with the—the economy side of it, but the dangerous side of it, like, jumping them into the games, that's where they was just jumping the children back then, just for the fun of it. They was jumping these kids just for being themselves, but the way did you get jumped into the gang and you get beat down that way, that's the way they were doing the kids back then, and it was it was very hard to see some of your friends beat up to a pulp, laid up in the bed, and we had—I saw two people, I think, that was in intensive care back in that day.

WS: Yeah, and it—it always came from the gang and not from the police.

PS: No, the police didn't bother nobody back then. Because I think at the Stonewall, a lot of that reennervated all over the country because we didn't have that problem back in—now the people before me, like, there was a girl named Sahara and Roz, they used to talk about when they first came out, the difficulty they had with the police. But time I got along, and I'm 60, we didn't have that problem. Did we, Miss Sherry?

[Laughter, unintelligible audience conversation]

WS: So let's keep this, I mean, you know, you mentioned Stonewall a few times. I mean, so you're—you're a young woman in Newark in 1969. When Stonewall happens in New York City in the summer of 1969, does that get immediately—does that immediately mean anything to you or is it only after the fact that that becomes important?

PR: It was after the fact. No. They didn't—1969, I was a child at home. Trust me, I think I was in seventh grade.

WS: Yeah, so did you even hear about it then or only later?

PR: No, I heard it over the news. Over the news.

WS: Oh, okay.

PR: Over the news, yeah. My—we had TV in the house, so we saw it over TV. Over the news, yeah.

WS: Okay. So here—I've got a sort of historical question about language for you, because, you know, we use the word transgender now, right, but I mean, this is a word that only begins, really, in the 1990s and so—

PR: We were femme queens.

WS: Okay, so that's—I guess you—you—you—you answered my question before I finished it. So okay, so—so the language you would use would be—

PR: You know, we were—we were considered femme queens. Then there was the butch queens, then there was the—the butch girls and the femme girls. We didn't—we didn't put too much on title. We just called everybody by their name.

WS: Yeah.

PR: Yeah. That only happens in the ballroom scene.

WS: Oh, okay, which is a topic I want to come to in a minute, actually, because I know the ballroom scene, we've got some photos from it that we'll put through as we talk, but before we get there, you know, you mentioned Bobby White and the Dollhouse. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about what downtown Newark, what kind of LGBTQ downtown Newark looked like in, say, the mid to late 70s or moving into the 80s. You know, where—where do people hang out and what was it like?

PR: Down on the—in the club, and then you had the ground, you also had a working girl

Audience Member [Offscreen]: The stroll.

PR: Huh?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: The stroll.

PR: The stroll.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: By—by the—they built the Prudential Center, all that was—still girls—the girls still—

PR: Honey, Broad Street was the stroll.

WS: Okay, so—

PR: You can calm down. They used to have a hotel down here they used to call the Stinking Lincoln. Yeah, the—the girls would be out there and the phone company right down here on Broad Street down here, before they put that little train thing, that was the spot. I didn't do that cause I used to have a job, because every time I go downtown, I would have a problem.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: You were down there a lot. You were just down there helping the people?

[Laughter]

PR: No, I went for transportation.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Thank you for the clarification. I'm sorry.

PR: No, I was down there. No, I—I couldn't tell—listen. Now, listen. I did a little—I did a little bit of the strolling thing out there but I didn't do it a lot. But I was a working person. I've been working ever since I was 14. Let's lay this out here. I had a job with Speedy. Not only did I work Speed, I worked it on Spira. I worked in a bilingual speaking land company because [speaks Spanish]. Let's get this out here. And I got that job at 16 and and they thought I was from Panama being a Black American person.

WS: Yeah, that was actually my next question was—

PR: Then I became a home health aid at the age of 17 and I worked that job two years, dressed as a boy. Then I turned it out because the third job I got I went in full women's clothing and I've been doing that until I retired. So don't say I've been working the stroll all my life.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: I didn't say—

[Laughter]

WS: So for folks who are unfamiliar with the language, I mean, what are we talking about?

PR: The stroll means walking the beat, walking this strip, you know, picking up dates or they even put a little coin that they don't give—that's not gonna pay my rent. Are you kidding me?

WS: All right. So, okay, let me go back to the downtown scene and the Dollhouse, which may—if our crowd stops heckling us momentarily.

PR: Bernie knows.

[Laughter]

WS: Oh, I know. But—but you had—when we talked about the Dollhouse earlier, you know, tell us where the Dollhouse was, what it was like, and I remember you talked about some plays that were put on that were pretty memorable. So tell us about that.

PR: Bobby, like I said, Bobby White was an entertainer. Bobby was—Bobby White and Paris Smith. Ooh, that's a story in its own. Paris Smith. This is—Paris Smith is the oldest of eleven children, I think, or ten, seven of them boys—no, seven of them boys, three of them girls. Paris is the oldest. Paris left home because he didn't want to influence the other kids cause Paris was gay. Paris came back, her mother said, "you're too late." Five out of seven boys were gay, and one girl. The women had nine kids and six of them was gay. There was Paris, Delilah, Dee, Samantha, and Sean, and underneath, all turned gay. The mother couldn't figure it out. She blamed the father. And this was a Black and white couple, a Black man and a white—an Italian

woman, and all these kids turned out gay like that. She was just too through. Okay. Now getting back to them, they had a vision about doing plays and stuff like that. Like, okay, Bobby White's like an entertainer, now beyond—one play—I mean, we did *The Wiz* on rollerskates inside the club and Bobby White played on the Diner Royals Park, being the starter club, I played the mother. I'm trying to—y'all know Angie. What's Angie's last name?

WS: Angie Raine?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Angie? Miss Angie?

PR: Yeah.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: What's Angie's last name? Angie, that works at the—

PR: Angie was in the—I think Angie was there too.

WS: Yeah, yeah, she was there.

PR: Yeah, I think Angie played—Angie played in that play too. Yeah, Angie was in that play too, but she was also part of that club.

WS: Did anybody ever videotape this? Because this would be amazing to see.

PR: If you did, they are long gone.

WS: Yeah.

PR: But I wouldn't know where to find any stuff like that. I mean, Angie was in the—we did them *The Wiz* on roller skates. We did on a play called *Is—Mom Is My Whole Family Turning Gay*. We had another gay award.

WS: Wait, tell us about *Is My Whole Family Turning Gay*. That—that needs a little explanation.

PR: Okay. I played the mother in that play again, here's another. I played the mother in that play. I had a little skinny son. Angie might've been—Angie might've been my daughter in that play. And I had a hug—no, Angie was the next-door neighbor and I had a husband and the husband was sleeping with the next-door neighbor. The—my son was sleeping with the neighbor's son and my daughter was running the streets. And by the end of it, and I was drinking wine, sitting in the chair, and giving off the titles. But it—it went on and on. We went—it was an ad-libbed play that lasted about two hours too long.

[Laughter]

PR: Yeah, we had that whole club that night. We just—it kept going on and on and kept turning back in and closing the curtains and opening back up. I was on in the cape. I had my mine. Then we took it and put it on one of the players and then a James Brown song. And it—it was just fun. It was just wholesome fun. That's what Bobby White and Paris wanted. They were just wanted wholesome fun.

WS: Yeah, and this is the late 1970s you're talking about?

PR: Late 70s, early 80s.

WS: Okay, yeah, and so any other memorable clubs or bars in downtown Newark that you think are worth mentioning just to remember that—that aren't here anymore?

PR: There was Branford Place, the Music Room.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: The Music Room. Majestic's. SRO. SRO.

PR: Majestic's. SRO. Yeah, that was that other club that used to be over there across the street that they keep moving?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Burke's? Sensations?

PR: Sensations. And the cafe, Burke's Cafe.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Wasn't there a gay bar by the Prudential, Murphy's, something?

WS: Murphy's, yeah.

PR: Oh.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: That goes without saying.

PR: Yeah, that—that—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Murphy's was everywhere.

PR: The first time I went to that nightclub, they wouldn't serve me no booze and I was about 47 years old. Murphy's?

WS: You didn't have ID, or what?

PR: Yeah, I had ID. They wasn't serving me booze because I was in drag. But do you know what happened?

[Unintelligible audience crosstalk]

Yeah, they wouldn't—they wouldn't serve me no booze. I was upset. They would not serve me no booze. But do you know what happened? I gave the money to a little fourteen-year-old boy that was hot in that club they let in there. He went and brought my booze and I cussed everybody out. Oh yeah.

WS: Did that—did that change the policy or not?

PR: It changed it for me, it did, because I went off cause the next time I went in there, I was served.

WS: Oh, good. Good. And when—when would that have been? Was that the 70s or 80s or?

PR: Yeah, around the 80s.

WS: Yeah.

PR: I couldn't believe they wouldn't serve me in that place.

WS: Yeah, yeah, that's—that's really unfortunate. And so it's around that time, I think, that you get involved with the ballroom scene, right?

PR: No, I—the ballroom scene for me began like '79. They were here.

WS: Okay.

PR: Yeah, I think the first ball I went to belonged to—there was a girl named Sahara. This was on—this is also—I think—I can't remember Sahara's name, but I think she graduated from Rutgers too.

WS: Oh yeah?

PR: Yeah. A lot of the kids went there.

WS: Oh, that's great.

PR: Tweety got a nursing degree. She started her nursing degree here. She got it from Texas Tech, she did her associate's but she started here. Arlene has associate's—a bachelor's degree from here I think in education, called Arlene, and Roz—Arlene and Roz also went here. Roz is the one I talked about before, Jerry Lofton. Got arts degree here. I think Scoo—there's a—Chrissy, I think Chrissy went here too.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: From the Board of Ed?

PR: Yeah. I think she's graduated from Rutgers and there was—think it's Chris Pato. Lot of the kids, lot of the trans girls went to school here. I don't—they enjoyed it here. Rutgers was good to them back in those days.

WS: That's good to know. No, that's great. And so for students of today who might not know what the ballroom scene is, can we—can you tell us what the ballroom scene is and how you got involved in it and what it meant to you?

PR: Okay, the ballroom scene shows competition between each other without—well, back in the day, when we first got—it—it showed competitive—competitive journey between each other without fighting, you know, you tried to outdo your friends in outfits and back then the scene was realness walking down the street looking like a real woman or butch girl walking down the street looking like a man. They had, like, business attire for the—the butch queens, which are the regular boys, then they had the time for the femme queens, then they had face for the femme queens, and face for the, no, the butch queens. They had masculine face for the women, for the—the butch women, started—what do y'all like to be called these days so I don't make no mistakes?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Who? Us?

PR: Well, the gay girls but the butch ones. What do they—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yeah, Sherri, you a butch. What do you like to be called?

[Laughter]

PR: Cause I don't want to make no mistakes and call somebody something that was—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: What did you used to call them back in the day? We used to call them, like, the butch—you a butch.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Dyke. Bulldagger.

PR: No, we didn't say that.

[Laughter, unintelligible audience conversation]

PR: No, the straight people did that. We didn't do that to each other. We wouldn't call nobody no bulldagger.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Back, way back, yeah you did. You didn't, but everybody around you did. It was dyke.

PR: No.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yeah.

PR: That's wrong. You can't do that. Baby, if you would have—if you would have called Miss Shirley Walker a bulldagger, you would've had to fight, and that girl can fight like Mike Tyson. Oh yeah, she'd knock you out. You didn't call her no bulldagger.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Who's Shirley Walker?

PR: Shirley Walker from 17th Street.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: That's my cousin.

PR: That's your cousin. So you would've called her bulldagger?

[Laughter, unintelligible audience conversation]

PR: Uh-uh, honey, you couldn't call her no bulldagger.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: But again, it wasn't politically correct either cause again, you could—we call things—we may not do it now, but then, you was a butch, you was a bulldagger. Yeah. We may not have said it to Shirley's face—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: That's right—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: But when Shirley turned that corner, Shirley, where's Shirley, oh, you mean the bulldagger?

PR: Oh, honey, but—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Unfortunately, but we didn't have—we didn't have those—it wasn't considered really derogatory. It just—it was, and we accepted that it was.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: It's in the dictionary.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yeah.

[Laughter]

WS: Oh, man. So the story in here, I don't know what to say except to—

[Unintelligible cross]

PR: So you had your butch—I'm going to go with the butch girls. We had the butch girls, you know, walking for masculine face and past butch realness. Then you had the—the big flamboyant thing walk for the grand prime. That's when the feather boas came out and the big headpieces and the long gowns or the bikini or they came out in a mermaid costume, you know, trying to win the grand prize of it all.

WS: So what—what did the ballroom scene mean to you? I mean, what was its attraction and like, what did you get out of it?

PR: Competition.

WS: Oh, okay, so

PR: It was just competition. Yes, ma'am.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Can I add that the ball scene was also a place with girls and anybody that was gender non-conforming at that time, they—they didn't call it gender non-conforming or queer people or trans or whatever, it was—it was a family. Cause, like, when I was growing up—

PR: Ooh, no, no, no, no, that—not back then.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Not back then?

PR: No, that didn't start and the houses came in on—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: 78, 75?

PR: In the—no, they were in New York but in Newark they wasn't here until—until about maybe 80, but in New York, they had already had houses over there.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yeah, that's what I was saying.

PR: Yeah, they had those houses, you know, House of LaBeija, House of Dupree, the House of Christian, the House of Dior, House of Princess, and there's about seven, eight houses. They all competed in those balls over there. They didn't care too much when the Jersey girls came over there, because most of the femme queens, like I said, we walked around trying to be women, you know, we was trying not to get spooked. And we had a couple over here that went over there, does—said it a little bit, like, there was a—she was a nurse. She wasn't really into the ballroom scene but she was half Black and half Puerto Rican, and her name was Tweety. Very pretty. Back in the—

[BEGIN SEGMENT 2/4]

PR: 70s, and very thin, but she had the most beautiful face. Very cultured, graduated from Essex County College of Nursing, and she went over there and they didn't care for her too much. Then we have Miss Pepsi. She was tall, slender, light-skinned, very pretty. Tracey Norman, which in you might know of as the model. They didn't care for her too much because she was very dark and pretty. They didn't care too much for the Jersey girls back then. Then once we started going to the balls over there and they start coming over here, which they start coming to Miss Donald's ball because the Donalds have a ball and she used to have it in the Content—Continental Ballroom, which is now Newark Emergency Services, or the Irvington Manor where David Burns used to be. And she just—and what she did to get them to come over here, she started with a \$500 grand prize back in the day, which was unheard of. Then when she raised it to \$1,000, them fuckers was coming over here by the busload. You couldn't—you couldn't tell me that there wasn't a lot of people inside of that Continental Ballroom. I mean, it was—used to be packed. But then they used to come over here and then they come over here with furs and jewels and stuff, being fabulous, until they met up with a boy called Keith Knox. Keith Knox was one of these persons that never worked a day in his life, but he knew a good piece of material when he saw, or good jewelry when he saw it, cause he'll wait for them girls outside and get they stuff.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Was he like an [unintelligible] dude? Like, he was like a—

PR: He was a date—he was a date—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: They do like a trade?

PR: Oh, no, that was Miss Kim Hawe, honey.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: [Unintelligible]

PR: Well, he dated—well, he dated—he dated—he dated Miss Kim Hawe, and Miss Hawe, Miss Kim Hawe was one of the most statuesque Black beauties you ever wanted to see. Yeah, she was very curvaceous, very voluptuous, and she the only one who could calm that fool down cause he will rob you for any piece of gold, diamond, fur that he could find.

WS: Well, so what—can—can I just interject.

PR: Right.

WS: I mean, as you're describing all these folks, one of the things Miss Pucci has let us do is digitize some photos of the ballroom scene from the 80s and these are mostly in New York City, although some in Irvington Manor, I think, and a few in Newark, if I recall. You know, we—there's a hundred and one photos, so we don't—we can't really go through each of them systematically, but—

PR: And Danielle.

WS: Oh, yeah, see, we recorded ourselves.

PR: See Danielle?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yeah.

WS: Going through them and a lot of these people are no longer with us, you know. We—we went through them one by one and Pucci recalled who they were for me and, you know, there was a lot of, you know, a serious proportion of these people have passed away and so I wonder if we can talk about the role of the AIDS epidemic in both the ballroom scene and LGBTQ Newark history, you know, as you experienced it, so, you know, especially as a—

PR: I lost a lot of friends to that. In—in—in Newark, the first person I'd known to die from what they said back then with AIDS was—was Pepsi, the one I was just talking about, tall light-skinned girl, that we knew that had, that we knew with it. In New York, for me, it was Margo Princess. And I don't think I have a picture of Margo.

WS: It's just kind of randomly scrolling every now and then.

PR: Okay. And from when Pepsi died, boy, I could say, besides Una, Bernie, Reggie, most of the people I know have passed from back then, from—a lot of them passed from HIV, some of the—quite a few were killed, too.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yeah.

PR: Yeah.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yeah. Newark was very—it was very—very well known at one time it, you know, it was easy to get here to Newark.

[Unintelligible crosstalk]

PR: A lot of people in New York slept around. Lot of people here got it from Cardenas. Cardenas was Essex County Correctional Center. It was not always in Newark. It used to be up in Caldwell, off of Bloomfield Avenue, and they called it Cardena's. And once, you know, the people get arrested and get locked up, anybody slept with everybody up there, so they was passing it around up in that place like no tomorrow because the jailhouse had no place— had nothing else to do so anybody was sleeping. Now far as women go, I knew very few women that died from HIV unless they were into drug use, you know, shooting up with needles and stuff like that. But most of them, the transgender people, died because they was sleeping, sleeping with each other's things. I never understood that cause I couldn't do that to save my life. I ain't having nobody's sloppy seconds.

[Laughter]

PR: I mess around with that department once. I can't do that no more. Yeah. And everybody was sleeping with everybody, and that's why most of them didn't like their neighbors doing that in New York City. I found that part a lot because a lot of them, they talk about each other behind each other's backs, a lot of gay people do that, just, you know, especially those are competing in the ballroom scenes and stuff like that. And so if I'm dating you and we're close, but then all of a sudden you catch eyes with somebody else, that person is gonna tell that person and they're gonna tell that person and tell that person and then keep doing it, but then everybody's gonna try to sleep with you because they heard you's good in bed. And it goes on and on, and that's how this—they kept spraying stuff all over the place. But up in Caldwell, it was just whoever could sneak out their cell. Yeah. Cause I used to get all the dirt cause I ain't never been up in there. I went to visit a guy in in one time and that was all she wrote. That was the most craziest place to ever go up there. Cause I don't know how they get locked up in there. You go in one door, they search you, you go to another door, they search you, and before you go up to see the person, they got you locked in the stairwell. That was enough visiting for me. I went up there once, ain't never went else. I ain't visiting you again. And they're all up in there sleeping around up in that place. That's how they spread that HIV up in there.

WS: So—so—sorry, Bernie, go ahead.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: You know what also, too? This was a transsexual trade back in the day. I don't know if they're still doing it. If—if there was one real dude and he dressed like a guy who was straight acting, you know, he was the man. They all wanted that particular man.

PR: That's what I was just saying.

[Unintelligible crosstalk]

Audience Member [Offscreen]: That's how we bring up the Berger situation. Bring it up. Everybody looked because that was her husband, and she was in a fist, fist, fist battle for the husband with Paris Dupree. See?

PR: I don't know that. See, you know what, no, so that's—so that's—see, that's the rumor that got out. Everybody spreaded that whole rumor, that it—that Paris and Berger—at the time that we, me and Paris, me and Berger was together, Paris and Berger was not together. We were—I wouldn't give a damn. I hope he's in hell.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: You loved Berger.

PR: I hope he's in hell. No, that's a whole different story. We won't go there. That was the time I got hit over a phone call that I said I won't be hit because that's why I started coming— before I—that came after the hatchet. That—that turned me against Berger. But me—me, Paris, and Berger lived in the same spot and we did things together. Everybody that came over there to visit, most of the time I'm at work, Berger works in the club that night, and Paris did shows, so Paris and Berger was always together, so they thought there was a relationship going on. That's what Bernie's talking about. But it wasn't, because I could tell you, for the most part, every weekend, we spent the day in somebody else's hotel. We didn't even stay in the house with Paris.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: That's funny. Paris said the same thing.

WS: Alright—

PR: What the hell you bringing it up for then?

[Laughter]

Audience Member [Offscreen]: I bring it up as an example of how at the time it was popular—there wasn't that many guys that dated trannies openly, so the one guy that did, a lot of

trannies would go after that one guy, and it wasn't like that. Not for you necessarily, but I'm just saying—

PR: Berger—Berger—Berger—Berger messed around, and one corner was Stephanie from Irvington.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: See?

WS: Alright, before we get too far down this road, as moderator perhaps I will intervene to—I just have a couple more questions and then we can kind of turn it over to the crowd and see what people have to ask, but while we were talking about HIV/AIDS as a kind of height of the epidemic, you know, in the 1980s as it emerged, especially for young folks here, you know, who might not—

PR: Condoms. Buy some condoms.

WS: Well, absolutely that, but I guess the question I was going to ask you is, what was it like to live through those early years of uncertainty where people are dying but it's not yet exactly clear what's going on and how did that affect your life and what was that like?

PR: Well, back then, I was a nurse and I worked—I wasn't working in the university. I was working Theresa Gratas when I heard about Pepsi and most of the things that I heard, that it was coming from was intravenous drug use back in the—back in the day because anybody was claiming that they got—they got it from spit and tears and urine and stuff like that, which is not true, which is not true to this day, because there's one thing I know that I know now and it—and it came out in '89. It cannot live outside of the human body, so somebody tell you "you cried on me and you gave me HIV," they lied back then, because they can't live outside in the air once oxygen hit it, it kills it.

WS: Okay.

PR: And then—when then—I worked with people with AIDS, so I didn't care.

WS: Yeah.

PR: And then they—it didn't make me—I wasn't scared of it.

WS: Yeah, because you understood the medical side of HIV.

PR: Yeah, and they just—they just made us wear gloves on everything back then.

WS: Yeah, okay.

PR: Except for a few of the white nurses.

WS: Oh?

PR: They didn't do it.

WS: Wait, they didn't do what?

PR: Wear gloves.

WS: Why not?

PR: Because they thought they was above it.

WS: Oh.

PR: That's why they end up with E coli.

WS: Oh.

PR: You know the thing—

WS: Alright.

PR: Yeah, they never got HIV, but yeah, they sprayed E. coli around a lot in the hospital.

WS: No, that's interesting. And so I just have two more questions for you and then we can open things up to the audience, who might have questions or comments, one of which, just going back to the ballroom scene, we should mention, you know, in the photographs that you have here, there's—there's some scenes that may pop up soon of the crew of the movie Paris is Burning shooting. I knew you'd make that sound. But—but for the crowd, I wonder—

PR: I hate them.

WS: If you could say a word about them, because you—you show up briefly in Paris is Burning,, the famous 1989 documentary about the ballroom scene, and when I brought that up to you, that was your reaction and I was surprised because it's such an iconic film, so can you tell us about your experience with the film?

PR: I hate Jennie Livingston. I hate Jennie Livingston. Jennie Livingston is the producer/director of that movie. Paris Dupree was a magician. I'm gonna lay this—I'm gonna put this out here, and this is one of the—this is why Bernie brought this up because we always—me and Paris was always—magician Paris came to me in the wisdom of—Paris had just got the flyers printed up for the 1988 Paris Is Burning ball, cause there was a ball too, and Paris had got the tickets printed, but Paris just had the tickets in a box. I think she got the money for the tickets from Dorian Corey to buy the tickets, who's also another big lavish person, and Jennie was over at the house and then was going to start this thing and then—I knew they was talking about it, and I came in from work and I had money to buy ten tickets, which I had gotten for some of the friends that's in this—in these things told me to get the tickets from them and they'll give me the money back so I brought the thing and I told Jennie Livingston, "I don't want to be in this movie because I have to go to work and my father would not be happy, and I didn't want my face spread it all over" That heifer did not listen to me because it was on Phil Donahue. That was one of the TV shows that came on at four o'clock and my face covered the whole screen. My parents' phone was ringing off the hook and all I wanted to do is choke that woman, because I begged her not to put me in that film, and I was in there about three times. And that was horrible. Can you just imagine, you don't want to do something, all of a sudden, you sitting at home watching TV and then everybody's talking. I had half the Newark police walk out, walking down the street, "hey, Paris is Burning!" tooting their horns, because a lot of Newark police officers know me, and they kept calling me Paris and they weren't calling me Pucci. They were calling me Paris is Burning, and that was horrible. And Jennie Livingston did that on purpose.

WS: Why?

PR: Huh?

WS: Why on purpose?

PR: I don't know, because she shouldn't have put me in that film, and I mean, I couldn't find her nowhere since—since then. I went over to that New York film school looking for her because she was part of the—that New York film school over here in the Village, and I wanted to talk to her

about that movie because it was a nice movie also, like, you know, you're seeing a lot of old friends when you see it on TV, but I didn't want to be in that movie. That was horrid for me.

WS: Yeah. That would—

PR: It's too late now. Quiet, Sherry.

WS: It's very—it's a very different spin on the film than you usually hear.

PR: Cause y'all—y'all enjoyed the movie. I didn't enjoy it.

WS: Yeah, no, exactly.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: So you didn't enjoy it because at that time—

PR: I was working.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And very passable. You didn't want to be outed. That's what it was.

PR: Yeah, mainly my father. Long as I was dressed like woman and being be low-key, he was fine.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: You good with that.

PR: But to have his friends see that movie on TV, they called him too, and I didn't even live in a house with the man and the man called me and started yelling.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And a lot of people too, Pucci passed as a real woman.

PR: And that was not—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And so when she got on—they show her—I remember
[Laughter]

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And I said, "oh, Pucci, you was on TV" and she just went off. Because again, there was—there were several types of trannies back then. There were the trannies that worked the stroll, and then there was the—

PR: We didn't want to get spooked and we just wanted to walk all the way—

WS: What does that mean, for—?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Outed.

PR: We walked down the street trying to pass as women. We didn't try to—we didn't want to be—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: You wanted to blend in society.

PR: We just wanted to blend in. Yeah. Just keep on going that way. A lot of us did that back then. We didn't—like today, most of the girls are out. And you see a couple of girls, I see—they walking hard and slinging hands and you know who they are. We didn't do that back then.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: It's very rare to find a transsexual woman that was loud back in the day. If she was, it was because she grew up on that block, she had a lot of family, and she was safe. Most part—most part—

PR: Yeah, that's the other—I—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yeah, it was a neighborhood thing.

PR: And it was safe. Like I said, in that little five block area that we grew up in, we knew everybody in that area. When you go outside that area, you had to—you had to really blend in and be quiet.

WS: Okay. Well, you know, there—there's a ton of other things I'd like to ask about but I want to—I want to open it to the floor. But the last thing—maybe you can just—

PR: If they'd just be quiet.

[Laughter]

PR: I mean, were y'all in—who's in his class? Because he go on and on. We have to hear all night long cause honey, we was at my house for hours. Okay, let's go on.

WS: You know, it's—it's actually, you know, for notes lately, you know, maybe, you know, we talked about this before, just saying a quick word about your—your health struggles today and what's going on with you today and how you're doing.

PR: Well, I'm fighting pancreatic cancer. Well, I ain't fighting pancreatic cancer. I'm living with pancreatic cancer. Cause, you know, there's no cure for it, so I'm just dealing with it day by day and twice a month, I go have chemo. So far the markers went down, then they went back up, the Tulips study is not growing anymore, and I'm up and about. The only reason I carry the cane, because I've been walking without the cane for about a month now, is because I'm—they got me on something called Gabapentin, which is a medicine to stop the numbness, but that pill will have you in the house cause I've been sometimes being in the house sitting there and watching

TV and go like this. I said, uh-oh. Then I wake back up, next thing I'm nodding again. I take the cane so I don't fall, but I can't fall on the ground and get up by myself and it's going take a bunch of us. Ooh, Khadija. That girl there was Khadija St. Laurent.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: That's Khadija?

PR: Yes. She was a—she was gonna be a rapper. She died in a car crash.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yes she did. She was on her way to the studio.

PR: Yeah, on her way to the studio to make up, yeah, she died in a car crash.

WS: Well, that's—

PR: Yeah.

WS: Well, on the request of my guest, I will stop talking and open the floor to folks. We have about 20 minutes so if people have questions or comments, you can either shout or we have a microphone, which I guess I can't actually bring you cause it's on a cord so forget it. Yeah, sorry, I won't trip you with it. But—but if folks have questions you want to throw toward Miss Pucci to discuss, there's a lot we didn't cover. I mean, I'm happy to step in for—

PR: What do we gotta cover?

WS: Well, you know, one thing we—well, let me see if other people have questions first.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: What do we gotta cover?

WS: Well, if you don't have questions, I'll keep going, but.

PR: What are you giggling for?

[Laughter]

WS: Noelle?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Were there every any trans girls in non-ball fashion shows, like church fashion shows and like fashion shows at Essex County and stuff like that?

PR: Honey, all over. They did them all over. Pepsi used to model. Tracey Norman modeled back there. Niecy used to model, who's now Nilsa, I think, Dupree, which, we grew up together, used to model. There was a lot of trans femmes and there was a lot of boys that also modeled. Fact, they modeled—yes, Bernie.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Also, too, it was—Jersey and Newark was a little different from the regular ballroom scene. Our ballroom scene was always fashion shows. We were

always known for fashion. We was always known for things that we could do that involved straight people, know what I'm saying? Even Paris's balls in Jersey, not Paris Dupree but the other Paris, and Bobby White and them, made audience with straight people, straight women, because that—that's what we did. I think that with—I would love to ask—piggypack off the question to Pucci is that, you talk about the eras of the femme queens, because I think they came—the looks came in eras, because see what I'm saying, it wasn't—everybody—when your girls came out, everybody didn't have the boobs and then when Danielle came out, they had just started messing with their face and unlike today, with women getting injections and all those things.

PR: Okay, there are two different cities, two different things. Okay, when I came out, we— most of the femme queens was using estrogen and hormone shots that we used to go get off of 100th Street and we will do them here, we injected—that's what mainly we used, but in the New York, they started experimenting with silicone and they were inflating their bodies along with their breasts, mainly cheekbones. That was a big thing for them back then. They would love to go get the little base shots on their little cheeks and get their little cheeks done and then their little chin, then they—then they went from that to the nose jobs. Everybody had to have a nose job back then, but then they started going to different doctors because then their nose stopped looking different because at one point in time anybody had the same nose, You would see the same nose on the same girls. Yeah. Mhm. Cause they was going to the same doctors. Then they started going to get implants. Back then implants was with silicones. They came—they came in like five different sizes back then. I think they started with A to E. E was, you know, being a big—being like a double D cup or something like that and they went up for that. So now they use saline, which I don't know, I don't know nothing about that, because I'm from the old school. I have silicone that has never been messed with or touched and every time I go get a mammogram, by the grace of God it's still good.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Wait, when you got it pumped, or you got it?

PR: No, I have bagged. It wasn't even a big bag back then. the rest of this suggests flesh, but back then I had little small things on my chest because I was trying to make sure I could fit into a uniform cause uniforms only came in small, medium, and extra large back then. They didn't have no sizes on them and most of the girls that had big boobs had to have something put in to their uniforms back there. What else—what else did you add to that, Bernie?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Well, no, what I was trying to get at is that there was—and I—and I remember it so vividly cause I was—the first time I ever saw a trans woman and I said "oh my god, she's so pretty" but then as time went on, beauty changed. The idea of beauty changed for trans women. You could identify with that. It—it just became—once— like the ballrooms, it took on a life of its own cause I remember when Joanne was getting shots in Queens. Remember Joanne?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: She's still alive.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yeah, she was on the news.

[Unintelligible]

Audience Member [Offscreen]: I'm just saying, but that was the life then—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: She wrote a book.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And I was watching them—I don't mean to take up too much time. I was watching Will and Grace, the second episode, when they talked about how the old queens trying to take the young queens and it made me think about what standard of beauty was at that time and how much they would go for you and Sherry, we can admit, I think some of the most beautiful femme queens I met was when they—there was no mones. There was no seal. There was nothing—and I was looking through—and I was like, you were born like this? And really being fascinated by the trans—transgendered aspect of it. But today, it would take—it takes—you can become a woman is six months today.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: If there's not today—can I say something?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yes.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: The difference between back then, you know, like, they were pumping, so they were getting that—that—the voluptuous. Now they want more of a statuesque spin girl. Now they're doing facial feminization. Back then, like, I got all, you know, the pumping here, the pumping here—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: That was the era that you—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: The nose—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: That was the era that and so now, you're from Sanaya's era. Sanaya Ebony has the same look and also that's what I'm trying to get with Pucci's and them era. It was such a different type of beauty and you see that once you—

[Unintelligible crosstalk]

PR: No no no no, Bernie, because we had that back then too.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: But y'all—

PR: We had—a lot of them had that—we have some that overdid it and some that didn't do it. Some of the—a lot of—a lot of them did it but they did it low-key.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And they took their time and they marinated.

PR: And then they did it in stages. Some of these—some of them, like you said, they like to go get it done and get it done quick, like he said, in the six months, but some of them took their time and did it over time. Like—like Kim Hawe. Kim Hawe didn't do that over there. Kim Hawe was very statuesque, she had the high cheekbones, the teardrop breasts, the slim waistline, and the curvaceous thing. But Kim, which I knew for a long time, was very straight up and down. But it took Kim years to get to that point to where she was very curvaceous because she didn't rush it, and that's why she was considered a beauty. But see some of these girls today, they trying to do it too fast, but see in the long run, most of that stuff is not going to stay where it's at, just like on a very natural woman.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: You gotta keep your girls up.

PR: You gotta keep it.

[Laughter]

PR: That's the truth.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And another thing now, you know what it is, from what I've seen in the scene and everything, like, the girls back then, they wanted fashion—they wanted to fraternize themselves. Now it's like, we have the help from insurance and all this, so now we don't got to kill ourselves working in call and risking our lives. Now we got the insurance, you know, and we could take our time and—and now a big thing with the girls is the vaginoplasty.

PR: Wait a minute, wait a minute, what you mean, insurance?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: They are—you—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Insurance.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yes, Pucci, they got electricity and they insure it.

PR: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Insurance pays for a lot of cosmetics?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yes. Yes. It's changed.

PR: Oh, my god, honey, my girlfriends are probably rolling in their graves. When I tell you how much time they walked up and down the stroll to get a little cheekbone. They have insurance pay for it now?

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Well, the thing is, you—you gotta live in the city. Because I live here, but I put somebody's address, a girl, an old schoolgirl that I know, and I get my insurance there and I get all my medical—

PR: Oh, yeah, the Medicaid over there was always better than here.

[Unintelligible crosstalk, laughter]

PR: Yeah, I had a girl, I had friends over here trying to get me to go over there and get a welfare check. I said, uh-uh, cause I was working over here. But they said, you can still get a welfare check over there. They came home with two checks a month over there, something like that. Here they get it once a month, they get Medicaid and stuff.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And also, too, I want to give—I wanna—give Pucci flowers while she's here, you know. Most people don't know this. Pucci brought me into the ballroom scene and after that right, on the cusp of that, the ballroom scene just—just shot up.

PR: Blew up.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And also, we don't talk about Pucci's third phase of Pucci's life. Pucci's raised about 50 children. She has been—babysat a hundred, hundred.

PR: I babysit children.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And these young men and women today are doing very well because when they—she was having to corner—and my mother said, "she's a big woman" about Pucci, and Pucci used to have the kids and she would have like ten kids they would all be at the corner of McCarter Highway. You know how busy it is. But she had them trained that they would stand here. And I know for a fact, they wouldn't move and you would see Pucci, this big old woman with these 15 kids every morning.

[Unintelligible crosstalk]

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And we're talking about—and we're talking about a whole generation of children that grew up—are transgender, don't call people's names, don't have no gay hang-ups, you understand what I'm saying, because she raised them. We was down—we—we was down in court and this young, strapping young man, if I must say so myself, he went up to Pucci and started hugging her and said thank you. Remember that?

PR: They all do that.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And—and it was so beautiful.

PR: They know better.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: His love for her.

PR: Because I don't play that.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Had nothing to do with who she was but—but it had to do with everything was who she was and that's a—that's a testament to Pucci. And I even worked with women she raised their children, and I say, when she say baby-sit, I say raised, because you know nine times outta ten, most children spend more time in school and you gotta—

[BEGIN SEGMENT 3/4]

Audience Member [Offscreen]: A single parent, and they spent a lot of time with Pucci and that's the testimony to the kind of woman she was, she is, in how she raised those children to be.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Mother Pucci.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Mother Pucci. Mom.

WS: That's fantastic. Can I see if there are any more questions folks want to get in before we run out of time? I just wanna make sure for folks haven't had a chance yet to—to raise their hand.

Mary Rizzo.

Mary Rizzo (MR): I have a question and I don't know, I feel like this might be a dumb question, but when you were talking about the folks who were put in the jail up in Caldwell.

PR: Caldwell.

MR: So for the trans girls who were arrested—

PR: They were there too.

MR: Were they—so were they put in with men or with women at that time? That's what I wanted to know.

PR: I've always—now they were put in with the men, but they were supposed to have been separated.

MR: Yeah.

PR: But for some odd reason, they got together with all the guys. I don't know how they did it, but they used to talk about slipping through bars and stuff like that, and slipping down from one cell to another cause they used to talk about it a lot. And I guess that's how they got together and started spreading things around.

MR: But they were supposed to be separated? They actually—

PR: They were supposed to be separate. Cause they were saying they had to be put in protective custody.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: They would be—see—

PR: They were going to be put in protective custody.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: They would be—but there was—there was something about them femme queen Jersey girls, they always end up with these hard, thuggish guys. They would go to jail, they come home with these men—

PR: Because, you know what—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And another—

PR: You know what it is? A lot of the Jersey girls used to get up, washed-faced, they get up in the morning and, you know, we just throw water in our face and go out there and we're still looked at like women, where a lot of the other girls, some of these girls had to put on makeup before they go out, and a lot of the ones that looked like women, they're the ones that end up in Caldwell. Most of them. And Kelly Cole was a good friend of mine. That girl lived in Caldwell. Nataly lived in Caldwell. These are all very—these were all guys or femme queens that were smaller than every woman in this room. They were about maybe, what, four something, very voluptuous, small, very beautiful looking.

WS: We have—we have a question up front from James.

James (J): I guess my question is for—would you tell us what—what was the basic sort of truth of life or what—what is the basic truth that you have that you shared with kids to help them live their live?

PR: What kids?

J: The kids that you have raised back then, you started—raised?

PR: I don't say nothing—

[BEGIN SEGMENT 4/4]

Pucci Revlon (PR): I don't—I don't know, but—because I don't present myself that way to them. Most kids who see me, if I could say—even when I'm on the bus with some people and they got a little rowdy kid, I could tell that child to sit down, that child will sit down and be quiet.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Yes you do.

PR: I have a couple people who want me to babysit now but I can't I would—I'm very strict on children, I'm from that era where kids should be heard—should not be—should be seen and not heard. You know, we came home from school, my parents had two rooms. I'm the boss and I pay the bills, and they always showed us that—where the door was, and we didn't have that problem.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: And you were fortunate, too, Pucci. You have to admit, you were much fortunate than most of the trans women of—of that era because you had±your father was very much in your corner, you had a family.

PR: That's right, honey, because I left that—I used to leave that—I used to leave that house every night in a negligee. I mean, the first time I went out in a dress, he was mad cause my shoes will not matching my purse.

[Laughter]

PR: Oh, man, he had a—he was sitting at the table eating food. "I know you aren't wearing those shoes out of here. Where you going?" "I'm going to a club." I had a brown purse and black shoes. Ooh, my father ticked. Going out in a brown skirt suit with blue and orange bow tie and a little

tan hat. My girlfriend in the living room, they laughing, I said, "he talking about your shoes. He ain't saying nothing about that skirt."

Whit Strub (WS): So we only have a few more minutes. There's probably time for one more question. Sherry, you want to—

Audience Member [Offscreen]: I have a question. What would you tell a kid these days who's going through bullying in school because of his sexuality?

PR: That's a difficult subject, cause me myself, I don't want to put nobody's kid in trouble, but baby, I think of that little boy in New York. Yeah, after—after all that bullying, and then there was two of them, I think I'd have fought them back too. Because you know, they're gonna—bullying been going on for a long time and ain't got nothing to do with being gay and they gonna do it anyway and if you let these people get away with it, no matter who you are, they gonna continue to do it and then you have to stop them. Because I had two brothers that was like that. They wouldn't do things in front of my father or my mother or my—even—and my grandmother. They'd do it behind their back. The being me I'm being the aggressor cause I'm going right after you do something—something crazy to me, and I always got into trouble, but being bullied is something you gonna have to come—have to either stand up for yourself or take it, and in this society today, you need to stand up for yourself. Everyone should stand up to a—to a person if they're being bullied, because being bullied ain't gonna get you nowhere but beat up, money taken, gonna end up in the grave because you let somebody keep bullying you, they gonna kill you It's like being an abusive housewife. I would tell them to fight back like hell.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: Fight for your life.

PR: Yeah. Yep. I would.

WS: I mean, that's—that's fantastic. That's—I think it's a powerful note to formally end on. Let me just say this quick before everybody gets up. We—I think I need to call this meeting to a formal close but we have food over here, we've got water, so nobody has to rush out the door. I just want to make sure I'm respecting the time of people who do have rush out the door but, you

know, these photos are—are just so fantastic. I just want to say if anybody else has photos that you'd be willing to let us digitize and put into an online archive, I think it's so important to preserve and record this history so that these photos don't just get lost in personal—

[Unintelligible crosstalk]

PR: And the person next him is Gina and those were two of the smaller ones of them, and Buck would have spent a lot of time in Caldwell. They loved that center—correctional center. But they used to get busted downtown a lot on the stroll. They loved it.

WS: Yeah, see, this is exactly what I mean. I mean, having these photos and being able to comment on them is important, so I'm just saying for folks in the room who maybe have an old stack of photos that you'd be willing to share, we would gladly digitize them and return them to you and preserve them respectfully with whatever comment, commentary you want to offer and record, and if anybody's in the room who has not done an interview with us and wants to be recorded for our archive, just saying, you know, we would love to record more stories of folks who are willing to share them.

PR: Sherry.

WS: See, I figured you might—

PR: Sherry.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: There's so many perspectives who—to the gay experience of Newark. There was the fag hags we had. There was the women that fought and died for gay men, you understand what I'm saying? And they got jumped, that woman would be out in there fighting like the rest, like she was a guy, protect her brother or sister. That's a big aspect of it. Then we have our relationship with lesbians in Newark. Newark's lesbian and gay, the gays and lesbians have not always really worked out well, but at one time they had their own thing, we had our own thing, then we got our thing together, then they went back to having their own club, so it's always been a strange relationship for us here in Newark, much different from New York City, who's more accepting, much different than from Chicago, so it's so—it's so bad. Newark always had a strange amount of ingredients when it came to personalities about the people and

the city of Newark because we didn't have —we had it rough but we were also so—I want to say something so independent here in Jersey, here in Newark.

PR: That's—that's the correct word.

Audience Member [Offscreen]: They were so independent here in Newark.

[Unintelligible crosstalk]

Audience Member [Offscreen]: If you beat a queen up in Newark, the queen still had to go to the store. My mother sent her to the store, so she's gonna have to fight you again at the store. You understand what I'm saying? So we didn't have the luxury of taking a different route, you know, you look in Brooklyn, you got jumped in Brooklyn, you could move to the Bronx. I had to fight. I wasn't that type of lady.

[Laughter]

Audience Member [Offscreen]: But—but I think sometimes we miss—they don't get the credit that they deserve here, the early people who did the footwork here in Newark. I mean it was not a place to play with. Tiny, Tiny's been out forever. AG from the moment I met her. Always. Pucci. So again, I think when we tell these stories, and I love when Pucci tells it because she doesn't make herself the hero in the story, she makes herself a witness for the things that happened. And I think that's a little bit more honest when you look at it that way, because it ain't about me. So, because when I did this, it was more like, "oh, this happened to me, this happened to me" but I wanted it to me people such as Tiny, Sherry, Pucci, the people that had the real story, you know what I'm saying? Because Sherry's 70 and when—I just can't believe I was two when I met Sherry. So—and I'm sure Sherry has a lot to say.

[Laughter, unintelligible audience crosstalk]

WS: So okay, why don't we—

[Applause, unintelligible audience crosstalk]

WS: Please, help yourself to—to treats back here.