

Shmanners 216: Transgender Historical Figures

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Travis: Hi internet. It's me, husband host, Travis McElroy. So, before we get into the episode, I wanted to do a bit of a content warning here. This is, I think, a great episode full of important information about some really cool historical figures. But there's mention of things like suicide and police brutality and general judgement and violence and marginalization faced by transgender people. So, I just wanted to let everyone know that ahead of time. Now, on with the episode.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet. I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: You know, I keep on truckin.

Travis: Yeah. I didn't know you were a truck driver.

Teresa: Oh wait. I'm not.

Travis: You're not?

Teresa: So, I can't use keep on truckin?

Travis: You stopped truckin?

Teresa: No, I never started truckin?

Travis: You never began truckin.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: I continue the level of trucking I have always done.

Travis: You have maintained a standard level of trucking for you.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I'm worried you've plateaued.

Teresa: I do keep on truckin, in the same manner that I have always not been truckin.

Travis: Have you ever considered increasing your level of trucking?

Teresa: No.

Travis: Reaching for a new, like, higher standard?

Teresa: No, I'm cool.

Travis: You're perfectly happy?

Teresa: Not truckin.

Travis: [sighs] I'm disappointed in you. I'm worried that you have become complacent in your level of trucking.

Teresa: Meh.

Travis: None of this has anything to do with what we're talking about.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, it is Pride month. We have neared the end of it now, only a few days left, and there's also been a lot recently protesting police brutality and it got me thinking, you know?

Teresa: Got those wheels turning.

Travis: Got those wheels turning, thinking about the intersection of Pride month and anti-police brutality, and so of course I thought of Marsha P. Johnson. And then I thought let's do a bio episode not just about Marsha P. Johnson, but about trans historical figures.

Teresa: I'm into it.

Travis: And I am going to be presenting this one, and I am really excited to talk to you about it. But before we do, the thing that I think will be kind of a recurring theme in here is that, a lot of these figures you probably have not heard of in standard historical, you know, history classes in school. All of these people deserve to be discussed.

Teresa: More than we are going to today, obviously.

Travis: Yeah. Their stories are, like, so amazing and incredible and, I mean, we could talk about them for hours and still not do justice. So, if you wanna do more research on it, we highly encourage you to do so. There's resources all over the internet to do that. You could check out Samy Nour Younes's TED Talk called "A Short History of Trans People's Long Fight for Equality", the Louise Lawrence Transgender Archive, you can find blogs, YouTube channels, all kinds of things run by trans people, focusing on queer history. Check them out.

And if you are a trans person and listening to this episode, I— you know, I was about to say, "It goes without saying," but it really doesn't. And I think that that is something that is easy if you, you know, are a quote-unquote "nice person" who thinks things like this go without saying. But we support you. You are you, and we, you know, we are on your side and will do what you need. We support you. You are you, and we love you. So, let's talk about some incredible historical figures. First, I wanna talk about Albert Cashier was born Jennie Rodgers in a small fishing village in Dublin on Christmas Day 1843.

Teresa: Nice.

Travis: Now, this is completely off-topic, but while— so, Baby Dot was born January 7th and I was so worried that her birthday was going to be, like, on Christmas Day. And that seems like a bummer to me, but something about it being like in Victorian times and born on Christmas Day seems like a fun thing.

Teresa: I mean, it feels like a Dickensian novel, right?

Travis: That's what it is.

Teresa: Yeah, that's what it is.

Travis: So, Albert immigrated to the US as a child, eventually settling in Illinois, and he was assigned female at birth, but it is said that he began dressing as a man shortly after arriving in the US. And by the time 1862 rolled around, he enlisted in the Union Army—

Teresa: Woo! Go Union!

Travis: Yes. He was short, about 5'3".

Teresa: Hey, that's about me, too.

Travis: Yes, and it's said that his fellow soldiers kinda teased him about the way he kept his uniform buttoned high above his Adam's apple and slept away from, you know, everyone else. But no one teased him for his skill in battle. He was one heck of a soldier. He fought with the 95th Illinois infantry. He was a hero in several major Civil War battles and his bravery was written about on several occasions. Once he was captured by the Confederacy and escaped by overpowering a guard.

Teresa: Hey.

Travis: Another time— and just remember that 5'3" number, that's the thing, that he overpowered a guard at 5'3". There was another story where he grabbed a Union flag which had fallen and it had fallen due to Confederate gunfire, and he raced to the top of a hill and planted it as a gesture that the Union would see victory. By the end of his career with the 95th regiment, Cashier would have fought in Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee, marching almost 10,000 miles for the Union over the course of three years.

Teresa: That's a bad manna jamma right there.

Travis: Indeed it is. Indeed, tis. He's credited with the famous Civil War quote, "Come out of there, you damned rebels, and show your face."

Teresa: And because it's a quote, we can say that.

Travis: Yes. Now, it wasn't uncommon for working class women to dress as men to get jobs in the 1800s.

Teresa: Because ladies were not allowed to work at stuff.

Travis: Indeed.

Teresa: And that's not fair.

Travis: And there are several accounts of women who fought in the Civil War disguised as men on both sides. But for Cashier, it wasn't just a paycheck and it wasn't about just fighting. When the war ended, he continued to live his life as a man. He returned to his hometown and took work as a farmhand, a lamplighter and a handyman. He voted in elections, had a bank account, and was able to claim his military pension. All of those things, by the way, the voting in elections, a bank account, before you say, like, "Uh, yeah," remember, 1800s.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Still, that was a big deal.

Teresa: And women weren't allowed to do it.

Travis: Indeed. That's what I'm saying. This is— it was a big deal that he did these things.

Teresa: This is like— this is just a person living their life.

Travis: Indeed. And yeah, and like, after this heroic military career, just wanted to live a simple life in a one-room cabin. You know, I've talked about before, I'm a fan— I've probably talked about it on this show, but talked about Cincinnatus. You know, this idea of doing your duty and not doing it for acclaim or reward but just because you think it's the right thing to do. And Albert, man, Albert was like, an exemplar of that.

So, things were going fine until 1911 when Cashier was hit by a car and broke his leg, and when he was sent to the hospital, his assigned birth sex was discovered. But the doctor agreed to keep his secret and helped him transfer to a home specifically for male ex-military members in Quincy, Illinois. And, you know—

Teresa: Well, that's the whole thing about HIPAA, too? Right? Like, doctors are supposed to keep your health history—

Travis: I'm willing to bet in 1911, maybe HIPAA wasn't a thing?

Teresa: Probably not.

Travis: No.

Teresa: But, like, it should be part of the “do no harm”, I think.

Travis: Indeed, yes. Absolutely. And so, from all reports, Cashier was happy and was even visited by soldiers he had fought with in the Civil War. But two years later, he developed dementia, which during that time meant that you were sent to an asylum.

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: Yeah. And there, his assigned birth sex was discovered, and those doctors were not so understanding. They, I would say, very cruelly, forced him to wear a dress and present as a woman for the rest of his days.

Teresa: Some of those, I mean, you hear about these “asylums”, which are supposed to mean, like, haven. Like, safe, and it’s not. It’s not safe.

Travis: No, that is not it at all.

Teresa: Not safe for bodies, not safe for minds.

Travis: Now, there is a bit of a, you know, bright side... silver streak? What am I thinking of? What’s it...

Teresa: Silver lining?

Travis: Silver lining. His comrades never gave up on him. One of his fellow veterans made numerous attempts to transfer him back to the soldier’s homes, and in his death his comrades took charge and gave him a full military funeral, where he was buried in his Union uniform, and they made sure that his headstone had the name “Albert Cashier”.

Next, let’s talk about We’wha.

Teresa: Alright.

Teresa: So, We’wha is a great opportunity to talk about how trans identity is not only as old as time, but was also stifled by colonialism.

Teresa: Aw man. So much stifled by colonialism. We talked about this a lot in our Hawaii episode. And it’s [sighs] it’s hard to kind of, like, recognize in yourself that you are a product of the thing that you hate.

Travis: Yep.

Teresa: But here we are. So, we're reckoning with it.

Travis: Well, I mean, like I said, we're dealing with a lot of systemic stuff right now that is hard to admit is a problem if you, you know, are part of, or in our case as cisgender, white, you know, middle-class people, we—

Teresa: In the US.

Travis: We benefit.

Teresa: Which is a product of colonialism.

Travis: Yeah. Like, we are the ones who tend to indirectly, or directly, benefit from things like colonialism and systemic racism and all of these things. So, it can be very difficult to say, like, "Yes, it is a problem," when you're sitting there going, "It's never affected me." But.

Teresa: But it does.

Travis: It does. So, whether it was Central Africa, South America, the Pacific Islands, or beyond, many civilizations that were wiped out by colonialism recognized multiple genders, some dating back as long as 2000 years ago. Indigenous American tribes each had their own terms, but as Samy Nour Younes points out in his talk, many had an umbrella term for "Two-spirits".

Teresa: I've heard of this.

Travis: Yes. It means someone who possessed both masculine and feminine energies. So, these people were often looked at as shamans and healers in their communities, and it wasn't until the spread of colonialism that they were forcibly taught to think otherwise about gender norms.

Teresa: I think that not only, you know, colonialism as far as governments go, but also religion.

Travis: Religion, yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Very much though.

Teresa: That's... man.

Travis: So, We'wha was a well-respected Zuni tribesperson known for their singing, dancing, weaving, poetry and just being cool amongst their tribe. So, We'wha was lhamana, or two-spirited and— I'm just gonna say, apologies if I mispronounced that, as is evidence that there's not nearly enough education and history on this. In trying to find the correct pronunciation for lhamana, I couldn't. On the internet.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, I don't know what that says. So, lhamana was a third gender recognized by their people that meant that they were assigned male at birth but gifted with blended male and female characteristics. So, at puberty We'wha underwent Zuni manhood ceremonies as well as learning female tasks and dressing as a woman. This confused American missionaries who settled in 1877, especially anthropologist Matilda Coxe Stevenson, who befriended We'wha in 1879 and eventually took them to Whitehouse in 1886 to meet all of Washington high society, including President Grover Cleveland.

Teresa: This has kind of a two-handed argument, right? Where like, this person We'wha was considered important enough to meet the President and high society, but also is a, kind of like, the old idea of showing off something, quote, "exotic".

Travis: Exactly that. And there's another figure in here that we'll talk about too, but this idea of, like, that— I would say that for a long time, and you see this a lot in history, that this kind of behavior was mistaken for accepting, but really they were being treated as an oddity.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You know, it's that, like, "Check this out, how cool is that? Look at this interesting person I've brought to dinner," and not as like—

Teresa: Yeah, more of an object than equals. Yeah.

Travis: Right, exactly, I would say that they were objectified and not really treated as, like, yeah, they're just living their lives, leave them alone. It was something to be, like, quote-unquote "celebrated" at best. Or at worst, you know, kind of gawked at. Stevenson described We'wha as "the strongest character and the most intelligent of the Zuni tribe" and claimed not to know that her friend was, you know, that went through the male puberty rites until their death. Washington society accepted We'wha as a Zuni princess, but when called to

action, We'wha left Washington to lead the revolt against the American allies who now threatened the Zuni way of life.

Teresa: Oh yeah. Get it.

Travis: So, let's talk about Louise Lawrence. So, despite wanting to live as a woman all her life, Louise Lawrence was born Lou Lawrence and was even married in 1930 and had a daughter. And when her wife died five years later, Louise began corresponding with other trans people in her area. After a nervous breakdown, she finally transitioned full-time to living as a woman without hormones, without surgery. And she moved to San Francisco, where by the mid-1940s and 1950s, medical researchers were starting to study trans medicine. And they were only able to do this because of patients like Louise.

Teresa: What a pioneer. That's awesome.

Travis: Right. Oh, I'm not even done yet. It keeps going.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: So, she corresponded extensively with people who had been arrested for public "cross-dressing", and there's a lot of—

Teresa: Yeah, that's air quotes. Quotes, quotes.

Travis: Yeah, a lot of outdated terms in here. And remember, this is, you know 1930s and 40s. So, had been arrested for public cross-dressing and in 1948, she began to work with sexual researcher Alfred Kinsey, who you may recognize the name from the Kinsey Scale, which is, for those of you who don't know, the idea that when you're talking about sexuality, that it is not just, you know, yes or no as to whether one is heterosexual or homosexual. That it's a scale, right? The—yeah.

Teresa: So many things are on a scale. There's so much grey area when it comes to this scale and the gender scale and the autism spectrum and, like, it just goes to show that everything is on a scale when it comes to people.

Travis: Well, so there are people who just cannot deal with ambiguity.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And they want yes or no answers, they want it to be one or two, right? They cannot deal with "there's not really a name for it, there's not really an answer to this". And so, in order to try to achieve their own comfort they will sacrifice other people's rights and other people's safety and all of that, so that they feel more comfortable. So, back to Louise. So, Louise was able to introduce Alfred to a massive network of trans people and encourage those that she met to give Alfred their life stories. In the 1960s, when Virginia Prince launched the magazine *Transvestia*, Louise's address book was their original subscription list.

Teresa: More pioneer stuff.

Travis: Ah!

Teresa: Oh... getting excited over here.

Travis: When Virginia Prince launched *Transvestia*, she was quoted saying that the magazine was for, quote, "the needs of those heterosexual persons who have become aware of their other side and seek to express it", end quote. The magazine became a safe space for individuals to tell their story without judgement. Each issue has a section where the cover person would tell their story, where new-comers could be embraced by the community, and even a place where wives could write in about their relationships with their husbands who cross-dressed.

Teresa: Okay, okay.

Travis: So, *Transvestia* immediately received pushback that got Prince arrested for the crime of, quote, "sending obscene material through the post", end quote.

Teresa: Which is why nothing gold can stay. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. And that law, by the way, the "sending obscene material through the post", if you wanna go down a rabbit hole of censorship, check that out. Cause that also is the thing that limited sex education in America.

Teresa: Oh...

Travis: Like, there was a, like, you couldn't send textbooks about anatomy through the mail in some cases, because it included, like, diagrams of sex organs and stuff. It's absolutely bonkers how much that this, like, postal law affected censorship in the United States.

Teresa: And everyone's different definition of obscene.

Travis: Absolutely. Absolutely. Prince pled guilty and was given a sentence of five years probation, but Transvestia had already made an impact in the community because Louise Lawrence was able to get the publication where it was most needed. Louise continued to send information to the Kinsey archives even after Alfred Kinsey's death in 1956, and before she died at 63 she is quoted as saying, quote, "I consider Louise to be my true identity, even though the birth records say differently. On this I will stand, for to me, as to most people who know me, I am Louise. I maintain that people are personalities first and statistical facts are merely additional information." End quote.

Teresa: I really like that. I really like that. "People are personalities first."

Travis: Oh, it made my skin tingle.

Teresa: Because people are people. People are people first.

Travis: Yes. Well, and it's just what we were talking about. You know, this idea of, like, statistical facts being information that make people more comfortable. They want to be able to understand and they want to be able to quantify things, but really, people are personalities. And saying, like, "Oh I can profile you based on this, and how you look, and how you dressed, and how you act, and how you—" you can't do that, right? People are made up of countless decisions and countless personality traits.

Teresa: How's that... "more than the sum of their parts"?

Travis: Absolutely. Absolutely. So, to think that, like, by answering these ten questions I could know everything about you is—

Teresa: I'm racking up idioms for the next one as well. [laughs]

Travis: Me too! [laughs] I can't stop! The other day I said something about "blowing smoke" and I was like, yes!

Teresa: Yes. Write that one down. [laughs]

Travis: Let's talk about Christine Jorgensen. So, Christine Jorgensen was born George Jorgensen Jr in 1926 and she would go on to be one of the first Americans to receive successful gender reassignment surgery.

Teresa: Sometimes when I see, like, a 19, I think, “oh, that really wasn’t that long ago,” but it’s 100 years ago.

Travis: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Teresa: Almost 100 years ago at this point.

Travis: Absolutely. Christine was a GI, General Infantry in the United States army during WWII, but had identified as a woman since a very young age. As a teenager she began to feel as though she was trapped in the wrong body. Many assumed that she was a gay man, but she held fast that she wasn’t homosexual, she was a woman who happened to be in a man’s body. After being honorably discharged from military service, Christine came across information about a Danish doctor named— now, his name says Christian Hamburger, but I’m gonna guess because he was Danish it was something like [attempts European accent] Chris-tion Ambur-ger. Something like that, right?

Teresa: Something like that.

Travis: Sure. Who was experimenting with gender therapy by testing hormones on animals. And this doctor, Christian Hamburger, would change her life forever. So, Jorgensen’s family, her parents, were both Danish. So she used her family connections to justify her trip without telling anyone the real reason she was going. She would later recall that Dr Hamburger was one of the first people she met who didn’t feel that there was anything particularly strange about the way she had felt her whole life.

The two began Christine’s transition through a long course of female hormones and encouraging her to dress as a woman in public. Hamburger closely monitored her changes and also had Christine routinely assessed by Dr Georg Sturup, who accepted how deeply Christine desired to be a woman. Sturup was the one who successfully petitioned the Danish government to change the law to allow castration for the purpose of their operation.

Teresa: This is how you do it as a doctor, I think.

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: I think that, like, you know, believe people when they say that they want it. And it’s not just about, like— I’ve heard of a lot of transitions taking part also with extensive therapy. Talk therapy, psychotherapy, all this kind of stuff.

Travis: A lot of counselling.

Teresa: A lot of counselling. And I want to give the benefit of the doubt that—that's another one, "benefit of the doubt"—that it is for the person transitioning and not to convince the doctor that this is right, or this is what they want.

Travis: Well, there's a third reason there, and a lot of it has to do with legal liability, you know, of just like, when you're going through— I assume. Once again, like I said, I've heard that it is an issue of, like, states requiring that the person goes through this kind of counselling and that... it's all BS. Now, that's not— I don't think counselling is BS, let me clear. I think therapy is wonderful. I love therapy.

Teresa: Me too.

Travis: I'm just saying that this idea of requiring convincing an organization, that's the BS part.

Teresa: Right. It's like requiring, like, your 60 hours of driving on your drive test. Like, it's one of those rules that seems, like, completely arbitrary. Who decided 60?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Weird. Anyway—

Travis: And not only that, it's also a great point, to think that the idea of you could talk to someone and say. Like, "Okay, you're ready to do this," just like it was a driving test is absolutely ridiculous.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay. After more than a year of hormone therapy, Jorgensen went under the knife for the first of a series of operations to transition her to her true identity. The first attempt at a modern sex change operation most likely took place in Berlin in the 1930s, but the surgery failed, and the patient, known as Lili Elbe, died as a result. Hoping to avoid this, the Danish team used the Berlin medical notes and proceeded with massive caution. And when all was said and done, there seems that there was no complications or side effects from the treatment, and Christine wrote to her parents back home, "Nature made a mistake which I have corrected. I am now your daughter."

Teresa: Wow. What— that— so, surgery. Yikes, scary at any time, especially when there had been a failure beforehand.

Travis: Yeah, especially when we're talking about the 1930s, so it's not like there were like, you know, machinery and science has become aware of this stuff.

Teresa: And imaging and all of that kind of stuff. To be, like, the first one... whew, that's a lot. That's a lot.

Travis: This is another reason that I get so frustrated and livid now when there are people who think of this transitioning as, like, some kind of ploy to do something— and it's like, do you know how hard—

Teresa: Or like, a flippant decision at all.

Travis: Yes, and people like, "Oh, they're just doing—" it's the reason why all the bathroom bill, oh, I almost cursed again, was so frustrating was like, do you think that people are doing this for that? Ridiculous. To their credit, her family seemed to be very supportive of her decision, and she later said that her mother had always known that her son had been different. So, upon her return to the US, Jorgensen was greeted with curiosity, fascination and respect by the public and the media. I think this is another example of like... you know, that celebrating is not always the same as acceptance.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Because she faced very little hostility, though I'm sure, you know, there was plenty of ignorance. And this is once again, as we read about in the histories, right, this is not necessarily to say that there wasn't hostility and there wasn't, you know, glances, that she wasn't treated differently, that there wasn't judgement. But that's not what the histories write about.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: What they wanna write about is, like, for example, Hollywood embraced her and theatre and film contracts rolled in, and she was invited to A-list parties, and she was crowned "Woman of the Year" by the Scandinavian Society in New York. Which, I mean, great. All of that's great.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: But you know... I don't know. Sometimes I worry that, like I said, celebration gets in the way of normalization.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: She's quoted as saying, quote, "Everyone is both sexes in varying degrees. I am more of a woman than a man." End quote. Unfortunately, her personal life was not as successful. Her first serious relationship broke down soon after their engagement, and her next almost ended in marriage, but she was refused a marriage license when she pulled out a birth certificate with her dead name on it.

Teresa: Man. Just the buratic— bureaucratic, there it is, red tape that a lot of ignorance can provide. Ugh.

Travis: And this is what I'm saying, right? This idea of, like, she was celebrated but then it was like, "I would like to get married like other people are allowed to."

Teresa: Like, "Oh no, not that one."

Travis: And it was like, "Oh no, I mean, you're not the same as us," right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Like, that, it does not extend beyond— I mean, you see this now with a lot of companies here in Pride month. You can find countless examples of companies this month, like, putting rainbows on things, and then the rest of the year not doing anything to benefit the LGBTQ+ community. And I think that that is an example of what we're talking about.

A documentary filmmaker who got to know her very well was quoted as saying, quote, "There had been ups and downs, and I think she had a little problem with alcohol, but in the end she was very straightforward and told me that the best company she had was herself." End quote. Jorgensen died of cancer at the age of 62 in 1989, but not before she was able to travel back to Denmark for a reunion with the doctors who helped her through her transformation. Speaking to the media about her transition, she said, "We didn't start the sexual revolution, but I think we gave it a good kick in the pants." End quote.

Teresa: Cool.

Travis: So, let's talk about the figures that inspired this episode. Marsha P. Johnson and Silvia Rivera. So, Marsha P. Johnson and Silvia Rivera are both legendary trans women who are famous for their involvement in the Stonewall uprising. They did so much more than that though, so let's talk about them. I'm doing a lot of hand movements.

Teresa: You really are. You're very into this, and it is exciting to watch.

Travis: Yes. These are only for the benefit of Teresa, but I get excited when I talk about cool historical figures, because—

Teresa: Also your hair? Enormous.

Travis: Yes, I do just keep grabbing my hair and like, brushing up.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Because that's what I do when I talk. Okay. None of this is important.

Teresa: [laughs] But I do like it. I do like it though.

Travis: Okay. Marsha P. Johnson was born in 1945 in New Jersey, and she started wearing dresses when she was five years old but reportedly stopped because of teasing. Boo.

Teresa: Aww, that's sad. We want everybody to be themselves.

Travis: Mm hmm. When she graduated from high school, she ran from her town in New Jersey to New York City with just a bag of clothes and fifteen dollars in her pocket. She survived on the street by doing sex work and was known for her incredible persona, often wearing flowers, fruit and Christmas lights in her hair.

Teresa: I am— I take a lot of my fashion inspiration from the pinup community and the hairstyles is what I love so much. All of the flowers and the pins and, I mean, I've seen people put, like—

Travis: Their hair is a canvas.

Teresa: Yeah! I've seen people put, like, little Christmas trees and what else have I seen? I've definitely seen fruit. I've seen huge ribbons and beautiful hats and fascinators. I'm into this.

Travis: Yes. Despite the unbelievable amount of violence she faced, she was known for being open, optimistic, and a devout Christian. She was seen often praying for her friends at local churches, and because of her generosity and her kindness people who knew her gave her the nickname Saint Marsha. Also, whenever she was asked what the P stood for in her middle name, she always said, "Pay it no mind."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, one of the people that Marsha famously looked out for was a Latinx woman named Silvia Rivera. Silvia fled to New York City when she was just eleven years old, to escape her grandmother who would beat her when she dressed up in makeup and feminine clothing. Silvia's father left when she was a baby and her mother died by suicide when she was just three years old. Silvia had no one when she met Marsha. The two were both sex workers, but Marsha looked out for Silvia, and Silvia would go on to say that Marsha was like a mother to her. Marsha gave Silvia a sense of stability and loved her in a way that Silvia had never known before.

Teresa: Community is so important.

Travis: So important.

Teresa: It really is. There's just no substitution for making your own family when you need it.

Travis: And I think that this is also a great example, this is something that I think you will see over and over and over again in LGBTQ+ stories, is this idea of found family. Of just, like, you know, like we talked about last week, blood is thicker than water, you know? Is that this idea that the family that you make—

Teresa: In the traditional sense.

Travis: In the traditional sense.

Teresa: "Blood of the covenant is thicker than water of the womb".

Travis: Right. That this idea of, like, the people who love you and accept you, right, find your family.

Teresa: Yeah. They are your family.

Travis: So, now both of these women are famous for their involvement in the Stonewall uprising on Saturday, June 28th, 1969. So, on that night the gay bar and dance club The Stonewall Inn was raided by police, and in an unheard of move at the time, the gay community fought back. So, during this time gay bars were outlawed in New York City and these raids, while common, were gross violations of people's privacy when the LGBTQ+ community was trying to just hang out and be themselves. During these raids, people were told to line up against the wall, IDs were checked, and if a different gender was on your ID than the way you were presenting, you were taken to the bathroom and quote-unquote "checked".

Teresa: Ugh, gross.

Travis: Yeah. So, this raid was particularly aggressive, so much so that when police allowed people who were not under arrest to leave, they stayed and formed a crowd. And at first they were yelling and mocking the cops, but when cops arrested a lesbian woman named Stormé, she yelled, "Why don't you guys do something?" And do something they did. So, Marsha and Silvia were definitely there. The myth is that one of them threw the first rock at the cops that led people to throw bottles, bricks, pennies and whatnot—

Teresa: Sounds like everything they had.

Travis: Yes, whatever they could grab, at the offending officers. This was discounted by both of them later, because Marsha went on record saying that she hadn't arrived at the club until after the pushback began and The Stonewall Inn was set on fire.

Teresa: Wow.

Travis: And she is hilariously quoted as saying, "I threw the second brick. I did not throw the first." [laughs]

Teresa: Oh, okay. Okay.

Travis: The legend isn't important. What is important are the things both of these women did in the aftermath. The Stonewall uprising lasted six days and they were there for all of them. At one point, Marsha P. Johnson actually climbed up a lamppost and dropped a bag with a brick in it on a cop car.

Teresa: Okay, wait a second. She climbed up a lamppost?

Travis: Yes, holding a bag with a brick in it.

Teresa: Holding a bag with a brick in it.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: That is so cool. [laughs] That is— can you climb up a lamppost holding a brick?

Travis: No. [laughs]

Teresa: No.

Travis: No, I couldn't climb up a lamppost, period.

Teresa: Me neither.

Travis: So, when the uprising finally settled, Marsha and Silvia helped create the Gay Liberation Front, an organization that fought for gay rights and gave way to more gay support groups around the globe. And they didn't stop there. In 1970, Silvia and Marsha founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, or STAR, and they soon had enough funds to purchase a house, which they called the Star House, to house homeless LGBTQ+ youth. The two funded the house through sex work so that the kids who lived there wouldn't have to do it themselves. STAR went on to fight for other civil rights causes, including anti-police brutality and resources for marginalized people.

When the trans rights cause began to dwindle in the 1970s, the two women did not rest. The gay community at the time believed that asking for trans rights was too difficult to attain, so they switched their focus to gay rights because they thought that those had a better chance. At one rally, Silvia tried to make a speech but was booed by the crowd. She managed to grab the mic and yelled, "If it wasn't for the drag queens there would be no gay liberation. We were the front-liners." And shortly after that speech, she attempted suicide. But Marsha saved her life.

Teresa: Here's the thing, right: It's amazing that these women helped out their community so much. But they shouldn't have to. We should all be there for them, you know? And I hope that that dream someday comes true for everybody.

Travis: Yeah. Both women continued to fight hard against the exclusion of trans people from the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act in New York, and

continued to be loud and persistent voices for People of Color and low-income LGBTQ+ people in need. Silvia Rivera died of liver cancer in 2002. But Marsha P. Johnson's 1992 death is still listed as "mysterious circumstances". She was found in the Hudson River and her death was ruled a suicide, but in 2016 Victoria Cruz of the Anti-violence Project worked to get the case re-opened. Her journey for justice is documented in the 2017 documentary *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*.

Teresa: Which is still on Netflix, by the way.

Travis: Indeed. To this day, both of their memories continue to be honored by the Silvia Rivera Law Project and the Marsha P. Johnson Institute and several other foundations and organizations that serve disenfranchised LGBTQ+ people. New York City is even in talks to erect a statue of the both of them.

Teresa: Very cool.

Travis: And I mentioned the Marsha P. Johnson Institute. So, for this month we across the McElroy shows have been donating ad revenue. We didn't have any ads this week, but Shmanners is still gonna be donating money to the Marsha P. Johnson Institute and the Silvia Rivera Law Project. And we would encourage you to do the same. And if you're looking for resources, you know—

Teresa: Other places to donate. GLAAD.org.

Travis: Which is G-L-A-A-D dot org, just in case you didn't know that.

Teresa: TheTrevorProject.org or The National Center for Transgender Equality.

Travis: Yep. So, check those out. And once again, just a reminder: We love you and support you, and you are you. And you are normal.

Teresa: If there are other topics that you would like us to discuss, you can email us, shmannerstcast@gmail.com and we are always taking those suggestions, so please send those in. When we do an episode that we take questions for, you can submit your questions to our Twitter @ShmannersCast.

Travis: I'm also going to say, this is not something that we normally call for, but because so many of these figures, you know, we talk about that history is written by the victors and these people are not nearly talked about enough. So, it's quite possible that we made some factual errors in here. Whether, you know, it was

factual errors about the individual or about, you know, transgender facts, anything like that.

So, if that is the case, please, we would encourage you to tweet at us, ShmannersCast, to let us know. And then if there are any factual errors, we will retweet them so that we make sure that people who listen to and follow Shmanners know the facts. Because that is important. So, if there's anything that we need to correct or anything along those lines, please let us know @ShmannersCast.

Go check out all the other amazing shows on MaximumFun.org and you can check out all the other McElroy projects at McElroy.Family. Also, if you go to McElroyMerch.com we have a "phantasmal and resplendent" pin, which is a reference to The Adventure Zone, as well as a "good out here" t-shirt, which is another Adventure Zone reference. For both of those, the proceeds go to the Trevor Project. So go check those out, McElroyMerch.com. Let's see, who else do we thank?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, thank you to Bruja Betty Pin Up Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, called Shmanners Fanners. And you can join that if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans. Also, thank you to our research assistant Alex.

Travis: Yes. Without Alex, we would not be able to do this episode or most episodes.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: So, thank you Alex.

Teresa: Thank you.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us. Join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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