

Episode Title: SC Dillon and Lisa O’Connell: “Young, Gifted, and Gay” Revisited

[Start]

Julia Barclay: Hello and welcome to the Hear Our Stories podcast by the City of Waterloo Museum for the people of KW. Sarah, Harkamal, and Julia, myself, are your hosts as we explore the 2SLGBTQIA+ and queer community of the City of Waterloo and KW and greater Waterloo Region area. Today we have myself, Julia, taking the hosting seats and Harkamal listening in on tech.

JB: Hello listeners, just jumping in here to give you all a content description of this episode – light profanity is used in this episode, as well as discussions of homophobic slurs and homophobia experienced by one of our guests. If this is something you might have difficulty listening to, we encourage you to tune in to the next episode of the Hear Our Stories podcast and explore the links in the description of this episode.

JB: Now we begin every episode with a land acknowledgement to express gratitude and show respect for the land and the Indigenous peoples of the past and present that have resided here. Acknowledging the land is an indigenous practice that is just one small part of dismantling colonial world views. And ongoing process that we, your hosts, must be mindful of as settlers and students and partners of colonial institutions. In a virtual and physical environment, it's important to acknowledge the land that we end all of our supporting organizations each reside on.

JB: So, the settler City of Waterloo, home to the city of Waterloo Museum, and many of our participants is situated on the traditional Land of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and Neutral Peoples, the settler township of Centre Wellington, home of myself, is within the traditional lands of the Attawandaron or Neutral Nation, the Huron-Wendat Nation and the Grand River Metis Council. The land was negotiated as part of 23 in 1784 and Treaty 19 in 1818, signed by the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Both Center Wellington and Waterloo are on land originally set aside for the people of the Six Nations of the Grand River under the Haldimand proclamation of 1784.

JB: The settler City of Guelph, home of our other host, Sarah is part of the Between the Lakes purchase and is the triads of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation of the Anishinaabe peoples. The Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee people have unique long-standing and ongoing relationships with the land and each other, the Attawandaron people are also recognized as a part of these lands.

JB: The settler City of Etobicoke home to Harkamal, and Toronto home to the University of Toronto, are part of the Toronto Purchase Treaty Number 13 in 1805. It is the traditional Land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and Mississaugas of the Credit. Etobicoke, known as Adobeegook, the “Place of the Alders” in the Michi Saagiig language is situated along the Humber River watershed, which historically provided an integral connection between Lake Ontario and the Lake Simcoe Georgian Bay regions of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat peoples.

JB: All of these lands are a part of the Dish with One Spoon Treaty, this treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee, bound them to share in this territory and protect the land in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect. So we would like to extend our gratitude

again to the Indigenous peoples with whom we share all of these lands today, and in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect, we hope that all of our listeners will do the same as they listen to the stories shared on this podcast.

JB: And if either of you would like to also add to the land acknowledgement, you're more than welcome, but you're free to pass as well.

SC Dillon: Well, you did a great job of acknowledging where I reside in Guelph. I did also want to acknowledge the two-spirit and Indigiqueer people who also live on this land and to affirm my commitment to supporting and defending land sovereignty and to keep at the front of my mind, the atrocities that were brought upon Indigenous people in the name of white supremacy and Christian supremacy and patriarchy. So I'm just holding that too, Thank you.

JB: Thank you.

Lisa O'Connell: Well said, and I thank you Julia for also considering the virtual space. It is a privilege that not all both settlers and our Indigenous community as well, don't have access to. So to consider not only the land, but also as we go forward in whatever the new age is that there was a virtual space that needs to be considered for all folks and for equity for all...

JB: Thank you, Lisa. Now, you've all heard the voices of my two guests that I have with me today. We are joined today by Sarah Dillon or SC. SC is a butch queer, gender queer and writer of Irish and English descent. They are based out of Toronto, having completed their MFA in creative writing at the University of British Columbia, and they are presently completing a collection of stories that explore the intersections of queerness, grief, shame, and transfiguration within the genres of magical realism, fairy tale and body horror, and dignity. SC loves books, brass deviance and all things forest and animal.

JB: And I am also joined by Lisa O'Connell.

-5 MINUTES-

JB: Lisa is of Irish Mohawk and French descent. She is the artistic director of Pat the Dog Theater Creation, a catalyst and registered charity dedicated to regional theatre creation, including the platforming of marginalized and neglected voices.

JB: So, thank you both for joining me today. I'm thrilled that we could pull you both together. And to touch on, I guess, why I've brought you both here today for the listeners that don't know the connection between these two. In the 90s, Lisa worked as a journalist and did a few interviews with folks about being 2SLGBTQ in KW and one of these articles titled "Young Gifted and Gay," featured our other guest, SC. So, we're super excited to bring you both together again, this kind of full circle moment, maybe if it's not so bold to suggest that. But yeah, that's why I've brought these folks together today and I'm thankful to our sponsor at the City of Waterloo museum, Karen, for tracking down Lisa, and I reached out to SC over Twitter and managed to track them down that way, so I'm glad that worked out.

JB: So, to get us started and set the stage for our listeners, where were you both at at the time of this interview, kind of what was that first interaction like and... Yeah, where were you both at at the time of this article getting done.

SD: I remember parts... What I remember is my mom used to hold some gatherings at our home with a wide range of women in the community, we lived in a suburban area of Waterloo, near the farms of St. Jacobs. And so I would always kind of sneak in to these... These things... And act probably like a very cool 15-year-old. And this is how I remember, I remember meeting you, Lisa, and I'm not exactly sure how we came to do the interview, but I do remember we sat outside, Grab Jabba, which was a coffee shop uptown, Waterloo. There's an eyewear shop there now, I can't remember what it's called, but yeah, I remember that part quite vividly.

LO: It was, I mean, this is crazy, it's kind of mind blowing... 'cause for me, this was a previous life, I've been working with theatre for almost three decades now so.. I even thought there was a mistake when I got the email because it was like "Lisa O'Connell," and I'm like, "My God," I didn't think anyone remembered or cared or-I think that first of all, these being archived was a little bit of a... A bit of a mind-blowing. And then you remember SC... Which I do, I remember Sarah. But I knew your mom, I was on a board with your mom, and had interacted with your mom through there. My background, is I moved here from Toronto, I came here for one year, and that was 31 years ago, and I think I was in the first year and a half in this community, I was a young mom, and I was kind of curious about my community and learning more about my community.

LO: And then it came to my attention. My children were very young. I had one who was a... Just in the local elementary school here in kindergarten, but I noticed that one of the slurs that was happening in the playground was to say, "You're so gay"... And I remember being taken by that and thinking- you know, I hadn't experienced that, and I was surprised with that, and so there's the things probably from outsiders eye... I was aware of... I also was aware from some colleagues that ACCKWA, which did amazing work in the 90s and continues to do so, were finding that some of their patients weren't able to get served by our local physicians. Now, this is what I was told. And I believe it to be true. And there apparently was the letter passed around to a lot of physicians to see if doctors would be comfortable treating patients that had a AIDS or HIV, which I also thought was like, "Oh, that's interesting too."

LO: So my consciousness was raised and my interest was raised in terms of these conversations, and I met Pam, and Pam had indicated to me through the board we were working on, we were the board of Planned Parenthood and we were putting together a play to put some consciousness in the community mostly among high school students. I think it was called "Live on Stage Uncensored", it was an endowment, made to planned parenthood. And there was a playwright hired, this was long before I identified as working in theater as well, and I remember we were talking about what content would be on it, and one of the pieces that the playwright and the community felt, not the board felt that could not be put into play because it was too controversial to get it into even the public school, was any kind of what we called then "queer content," which I found very surprising. So the play was, I mean it was important, there was mostly conversations about consent, but it was from a very cisgendered straight perspective, it wasn't open to a lot of other communities, so... Yeah, so I just felt this was an important conversation for the community and met SC and asked them if they would be interested in me possibly...

-10 MINUTES-

LO: in the conversation, and it went from there. It's really always been about SC and their story, and their courage in that age to want to be, feel free to be public, to trust me, they didn't know me from anybody. Didn't know who the hell I was, right. And so a lot of that exploration in the

local community newspaper, which I think was the responsibility of our community papers. That's what I remember.

JB: Thank you for sharing, I guess, on that note of coming to SC, who at the time was 16 when this article was written. And in the article, SC, you mentioned that you had come out when you were 13, and how did you come to identify and accept your queer identity at such a young age, 'cause I don't know how common that is to be as confident, I guess, out as you were at the time of this interview either.

SD: Yeah, I think about this a lot, and so when I saw that question, I really thought about it, and I thought about it some more. I can never quite pin down when it all started to make sense to me, but I do remember when it started to click. The ways in which I became attached to friendships felt different, and I noticed that it was different by, I think the response of other kids like, why was I so attached? And why did my attachment feel like it was imbued with some kind of romance? And I think when I began to realize that there was desire behind that, I was also... I was 13, so desire is a strange thing at that point. So, starting to understand that, that it wasn't just love and care for for some of these friendships. It started... yeah, it started to make sense to me. And no, there weren't a lot of kids that were out, I remember of each grade of high school, there was one other person that I would know who was queer, and there was usually like a gay, a gay friend. Very classic 90s high school vibe. And yeah, so there weren't a lot of us at the school that I was at, and I had to find that community on my own, which was tough at the time, but... Yeah, very different time. Very different time than it is now. Yeah.

JB: Truly. Yeah, and was there anything that kind of... In it being sort of just this coalescing of thoughts and things that you had brewing in your mind, was there anything that helped you in your journey? Like any kind of belonging... This is that opening, if you have any object tied to your finding yourself, that was a part of that, coming to these realizations for you early on?

SD: Yeah, certainly my mom was a huge factor in this for me. I think that she always took my sister and I to things like Take Back the Night, the Take Back the Night March was a formative moment for me from quite a young age. We would go every year and eventually, it was just my mom and I that would come and it was in these sorts of spaces where I saw other queer people, and so I knew there... there was never any feeling that we didn't exist. It was very clear and part of a conversation in my home that queer people existed. So, when it came to figuring it out for myself... I mean, I kept it a secret, which was strange because it was very clear that it would be okay, but it was just a general fear. I think Lisa had mentioned it was '94, '95 when I first came out, the AIDS epidemic was really... The numbers were cresting kind of globally, and KW felt like a strange mix. There was a risk, I think back then, and coming out at home, my mom actually asked me, it was a very... kind of charming, Saturday afternoon, she was baking cookies, I was sitting in the kitchen and she's kind of... She said, I want to talk to you about your sexuality, and I remember just sinking in my chair...

JB: Oh no...

SD: I was mortified, but she was careful and cautious, and I felt very loved, and I think that her support for me to be out in the world and be queer... I was very fortunate, and I know that so many don't have and didn't have that experience, especially back then.

SD: But yeah, there were two kind of areas. Music was something, I learned the guitar, I discovered Ani DiFranco and was playing folk songs at open mic nights. And I watched... This is a very funny movie, and some people know it and some people do not, but it was 1996, a movie called Bound...

-15 MINUTES-

SD: Which was written and directed by the Wachowski sisters, now who have come out as trans, but at the time it was their debut movie. And it's like a butch and femme mafia caper, so good. And it really keyed in for me on multiple levels, just like yes, to queerness and really starting to identify with a butch identity. And then there was the gay bar Club Renaissance, which I, to the best of my knowledge no longer exists and hasn't for many years, now, but I was sneaking into that gay bar from the age of 15, and it was a wild time back then. The owner was this very old school Butch and she had a mullet and she was very cool, and she would nod me into the bar and if the cops ever showed up, and they still did back then, and they weren't quite raiding the bars, but they were aggressively walking through, some of the people who knew who we were would hustle us out the back door into the back room or into the bathroom, and we would hide out there and then we would come back out. But yeah, those were my people.

SD: And I was thinking about the item, and I had all these things in my head and I lost a huge amount of my stuff when I left my last relationship, so I didn't really have a lot of things, but somehow I have managed to carry my guitar for the past 25 years, and I've never gotten rid of... I don't even... I have not played in forever. But I do have it here, and I found it,

JB: That's awesome.

SD: and I think in a moment of shame in my 20s, I removed all the stickers and I tried to make it look very nice, but I have not played it, but I found it today.

JB: That's awesome.

SD: Yeah, that was my very first guitar and my only guitar.

JB: Wow, thank you for sharing that. And all those pieces kind of coming together is really cool, and I guess since you have a very different coming out experience, I guess to some who don't have a support of family with that perspective that you speak to, do you have advice for the kids coming out these days, and words of wisdom, I suppose, for that kid that might be listening...

SD: Okay, I love this question so much because I just turned 40 in December, and the running joke is kind of if you hit 40, then you become an elder in the queer community, which is amusing because I still feel like I have no idea what's going on. Yeah, I think that queer and trans kids, especially these younger generations are just... They're incredible. I feel very excited for them, and I also worry for them. In the same way we live here, we live on Turtle Island, and there are places in the world where... It's not like that. There are states and cities and all over that are really scary places to be queer and trans, and I know that kids have an easier time, I think when their parents or family support them, but the queer community is really powerful and generation after generation, we've taken care of the younger generations. I know that I felt very taken care of by the older queer community, and they show us the world that we don't often have a pass into, especially when we're young. Older butches showed me, sometimes problematically,

showed me how flirt and how to be respectful. The older gay men showed me to be resilient and to hold that with joy and their ease of contact and touch and kindness.

SD: So, my advice for young queer and trans kids, I think, at least in some areas or all areas, is that the path isn't always clear. I don't think it ever feels easy for any of us, especially when we're young, even if we're loved and cared for, so when you're coming into your sexuality and your gender and your body, I would say find your people... Find your people first. And we're lucky we have the internet. That helps, that helped me in my mid-teens a lot. Find the people now, and I would strongly encourage young people to find and read about our ancestors our queer ancestors, the experiences they had, the stories they tell inform who we are and how we identify now, and the kind of world that we live in now, and I think it's important to learn where we came from and where these things happened...

-20 MINUTES-

SD: so it isn't our genealogical lineages that matter. I think that our queer lineages are essential for queer community and for really feeling in our core, embodying our queerness and our confidence in that too.

JB: Absolutely. Yeah, that resonates for sure. Just building that community, and I have found it was similar for me, I guess in my high school, how there were the gay kids and then other people were like, "We're allies, we support them," and then over time... Realize that they are also part of that community as well. And it's like you found a lot of the friends that I have had. We've all come to ourselves in various degrees after high school, and that community was already there and gravitating towards each other, which was a very beautiful thing, and just interesting how you may not all be out at the same time, but sometimes these communities kind of form themselves and are incredibly important to building that identity and becoming more grounded in yourself, so... Thank you, SC, for speaking to that.

JB: And then I think this leads well into some of the work that you've done, Lisa, with dedicating your professional life to writing about what some might call controversial topics or giving space to marginalized voices. So you spoke a little bit to this earlier on, but what really pushed you to pursuing these efforts in the work that you do and just providing space for these voices and stories.

LO: It's kind of funny to have it put that way because I don't think of it that way... And I was interested in... For preparation for this, to think in terms of legacy to the space of the museum, which is a space you kinda capture these things, because you asked me about an object as well. And I think probably because I had a grandfather in residential school and I didn't know I was Indigenous till I was 14 and so questions of who we are what we are, as we find that curiosity, I mean memory is an object, I think that is the most tangible object.

LO: And SC speaks so beautifully about their feelings about what we have to remember space. They mentioned Club Ren, which was a really important space, a physical space where folks could go, and that was the first place that I did the first... where I did in conjunction with other colleagues, the first Queer theater festival that ever occur in this region. It ran for glorious two years, and it was literally through the generosity of the owners of Club Ren to let us and to make that happen. And Muses, which was a cafe in the 90s that was in downtown Kitchener, run by a very beautiful couple, and it was really, it was a significant space for folks to gather- everyone to

gather! It was like the best coffee ever and the most generous folks ever, and ultimately, that space with gentrification was lost. And Gen X is – the very back area of Gen-X, the video back in the day where we got videos that had a queer section where folks could access videos 'cause back in the day there was no streaming in the 90s. These were significant places for my children, there's different pieces for me in kind of those conversations.

LO: So, I think of my work less in terms of advocacy for marginalized forces, it comes from a curiosity of really who and what we are, I mean, how can we go forward? How can we not- how can we do anything if we don't know who we are? How can we understand how the electric works? How can we understand who our neighbors are, if we don't have that curiosity and it's endlessly interesting, it's endlessly beautiful, I mean, in a brutally beautiful and the pain and also the glory in that, and the peace of it as well. And it's essential. Story is everything. Story in terms of capture, which is... SC it's so wonderful to hear that you're dedicating your life to writing, I think that that's a... That's just what... I did not know that to moment, and that's super beautiful because those stories and those meanings are so important because it expresses who we are and what we can be and how we can go forward.

LO: And I think when I'm in my lifetime, because I'm older, I have seen a shift back to some of the practices in the political entities that I've thought were gone, and I thought we're not gonna continue, so it's... Maybe if it would be stronger that we have to do that work, that the work needs to be done by folks from community. It's... My space with SC was to give a platform, it was their story, and my job was to try to do the best I could express that and try- and we all fail and we do the best we can, words are so difficult. Delicate little beasties that can fail if you're not careful, but my work now and really being the curator of voices and around platforms and festivals is just to allow space for those voices to be out there and a place where folks can gather if they have something to say and give them supports to tell that well... And it's interesting, it's fun. I don't know anyone that isn't curious, if you're not curious... What's the point? Right? There's so much in this community that I'm still trying to figure out, I'm trying to figure out...

-25 MINUTES-

LO: our country- of Canada. I have a very complicated relationship with the Canada in terms of my background, in my understanding, and I think probably most people do as well, so it's hard work, but it's beautiful work and it's really necessary work...

JB: Yeah, the power that stories have. Allowing them to be told in whatever medium, that if it's theater, if it's writing, just allowing them to be shared and consumed to a degree, like the learning that can be had for them, but also... Back to that self-identification, the power of being able to write your own story too, and have the means to tap into your story is really great, and we hope that with the podcast that we're doing, that we've created a space where folks can feel comfortable sharing their stories, and it's been really great and I think really speaks to, like you're saying, Lisa, like the power that stories have and their importance with marginalized communities specifically, and just creating a space where stories can be shared.

LO: I remember being impressed, somewhat gob-smacked as well in the early 90s with the amount of both shame and anger that was approached to someone when they came out still. We had a [??] in the north end of Waterloo a suburban area. And I grew up in downtown Toronto, so the suburb was kind of new to me, and the whole politics of the suburb was something that I

found... I looked at it kind of like a real outsider constantly, which is a great place to be as a writer, 'cause you're always observing and it's endlessly fascinating.

LO: But we had a lovely young neighbor at the age of 16, and they came out, and I remember it being such a subject of gossip in the community and being shocked at that, and it was a conversation, it had all the elements that a very theatrical local shunning and quiet and gossip moved in a way. And he had an older sister who was just angry all the time because it was a sense of having to protect her brother, and it was all this kind of mechanics of emotional... [??] if you will, that was perpetrated on the fact that this young man was just courageous enough to state, you know who he was. And this was the- about the same time SC, it would have been about '91, '94.

LO: And I remember being, again, as a young mom with my children three kids, right, is this a safe landscape for my children to grow up in. What is this... How common is this? Is this just this community? Does this exist everywhere? And what's my responsibility to assist, because again, as a young parent, it was like, a lot of responsibilities, I think to at least do what we can to provide that, but it was a very different feel, I believe... Well, again, I don't know, but it felt like a different feel than the freedom that I see of many of the younger artists I work with now, where there's the... I wouldn't say it's never safe, but there's a consciousness to be able to be open about identity, about sexuality, fluidity, all of it, it doesn't mean it's easy still, but there is at least... a sense that this is an important conversation. There was there, it seemed to be shame and shunning and quiet and gossip, which was... Yeah, it was, I can't state... how that was a very different time. And they're very fact that this article that I wrote, which is just this little 750-word op-ed. Would be considered controversial where it was so gentle, really. And yet it was... And I got a lot of letters I mean, I did, from folks that were for or against... Mostly against.

SD: You know, It's wild to me that Waterloo is... I still think of Waterloo. I know as far as voting goes, it seems to still be quite conservative, but I always wondered, it's like two universities and a college, there's a constant rotation of young people, but the rotation of students means that these aren't voting students necessarily, they might be voting in their hometown, but because I spent a lot of time, like when I did move back to Waterloo for a period, I lived right uptown Waterloo, it was also the 2000s by that point. It felt very different, but that there is... I think too, the older I get, my pivot of who I'm interacting with tends to be overwhelmingly almost entirely queer and trans folks, so there is a very safe bubble, which can be a bit misleading. You pop on Twitter for five minutes and it's like, "Oh right, this is still not a safe world," which is why I think queer community has built such a strong circle...

-30 MINUTES-

SD: Is we have to protect each other and we have to find a space where we can feel... Free of that kind of shame, although it does exist there too, but... Yeah, I do remember gossip. I mean, I came out to a small group of people when I was 13, but I think it was the next year, I would have been in grade 10. I remember somebody like taking me aside, "Sarah, people are spreading rumors about you that you're bisexual" and really like, "Are you okay?" Kind of energy, and it still surprised me and I was like, Well, they're wrong because I'm gay, and so much drama ensued. I didn't have a super hard time in high school, but out in the world, for sure, there is a kind of vitriol, especially around, I think gay men and visibly queer folks, I think, which is its own thing. That's like a misogyny situation there too, but yeah, I think my visibility for sure made me a target.

LO: I think are still a perception of who we are and what we really are. It is again, it's a very interesting community, when I bring artists in to work, because our organization is national and identified as a catalyst for original work. And I've been doing it for so long, so I know a lot of folks that are kind of as the coming work in the community, and it's a really great place for our artistic voice, because it seems to have this collision, you can literally drive to the end the road on Westmount Road and go back 200 years in time 'cause of Mennonite farms... you can literally [??] into history here and it's a bit of a, I don't want to swear, is a bit of a mind, you know, thing to kinda hit that all the time and have that sense of it, which is really kind of beautiful for artistic voice, but I think there's a strong sense of what we think we know versus what we are. I really don't... we haven't explored that, we haven't talked about things, we haven't... The amount of work that's been created in terms of not only just story, art, books, journals and whatever, it's not as expressive as what it can be, 'cause I think they're still that fear for an amount of reasons... Most of them from a capitalist perspective, in terms of what we can and cannot do, or what is acceptable? What is unacceptable? That's why I think politically we're always a swing. We'll go left, we'll go right. It doesn't mean we're stuck, we're fine, I can go to people. It just means I don't think you really have a sense of... who and what we are. Right?

LO: In my lifetime here, I'm seeing good change. I've seen in the past, particularly ten years, I've seen such a shift to terms of who is working in our community, what do people wanna talk about in our community. In many ways, I wish it was like this when I started my practice, because it would have shifted the kind of work that I do. It would have shifted what I could have been, in terms of an artistic voice or maybe had the courage to do but I didn't have the courage to do it. But there's something that's changing, and I don't think it's just from folks that are coming from outside coming into our community, I think there's just a cognizance that really of a curiosity of who and what we are.

LO: A project like this would not have happened, despite the fact that we didn't do podcasts 20 years ago, but this would not have been put together by an institution like a city museum... In museums it wouldn't have occurred. If they did, it would be hockey players and men, white settler man and the usual, would be the ones that would record these histories. We still don't record enough of these histories. We're still talking about history more than what's happening currently. So I think that work still needs to be done. But again, kind of collection- folks that are doing it, when there's more community to do that, and there's more the sense of urgency to do that. I think it's as urgent as it ever was. I truly believe we're not really sure what we are. I know that what I hear in terms of perception has never reflected who I am, and I guess at this point, all of these institutions, communities, anybody else, and I have to raise children here, I'll be buried in these lands if I'm buried at all. And yet, what is all of that... And so I think it really begs to think about who and what we are... What that means in terms of what we change, and what those conversations will be, and also to encourage us not to accept what we're told is the way things are. Because you set that already, and does that narrative reflect who we are. What are the provocations of that. And that work is important to be done and be done by folks that have had the experience to lift it... and investigate in terms of story, that's fantastic, that's very helpful. In terms of what can be done.

JB: Yeah, and I think you alluded to it a little bit there was what you said, Lisa...

-35 MINUTES-

JB: In how there's a lot of preoccupation with the past as well, but history is living, it is present, and the people that we are sharing stories with, are current and are going through their lives, operating in this area in a living, breathing, ongoing sense. So, while, yes, it's important to look to these histories and know where we've come from and go forward with histories like these that have very real impact, they are very present, they aren't just in the past, and being able to have conversations with these folks and lend to that living history and everything is more work that needs to keep doing... We're not the first people to do it, we won't be, hopefully, the last people to do it, and it's hopefully a big growing thing that is valued a lot more going forward, 'cause it's important and these are important stories to know about and learn from...

JB: We were talking about it a little bit with you, SC, and how you came out young and you had your guitar, which is great thank you for sharing that with us again, and at the time of the article, you were a singer and can you speak, I suppose, a bit more to the social aspect of being openly gay?

SD: Yeah, it's very funny. It's always some amusing to me that I really thought I was on track to being a lesbian folk singer in the 90s, I feel like Ani DiFranco did that to all of us. And that's a problem. But yeah, being openly gay as a teenager in the 90s, and also my gender presentation was pretty visible, we were just talking about that at the time, I was often called a dyke. And so I think that that just became a way, as marginalized communities often do, that was like a reclaimed word. I wore a lot of cargo pants and combat boots, but it was really around this time and I was still quite young, so I'm sure it was probably happening before I was even aware, but there was a resurgence of identity with identifying with butch and femme, which is kind of rooted in the working-class bar scene often in New York, mostly white community, although the black community had... There was a surprising amount, I think, of shared spaces in the 50s for queer communities, and then it kind of fell out of favour during the rise of the second wave feminism where kind of a more... Not, definitely not feminine and definitely not hyper-masculine in any way, and so there was a lot of shaming around the butch and femme identity, so it kind of went away for a little bit, and I think it started popping back up in the 80s and really came back in the 90s.

SD: And I remember learning what... Not the history, but learning what that was and looked like, first what it looked like, and just feeling in my guts that that was me and that was real, and I think if I went away from that and came back to that a few times, and I've settled quite happily with that identity. As a masculine queer person from a very young age, that visibility can make you a target for harassment and violence, but within queer community, my masculinity was definitely privileged. And I felt that inherently, that there was value in my masculinity to varying degrees and results... I don't wanna speak for the gay community, but definitely there's a common phrase that is talked about often, "no fats, no femmes," which kind of carries through into actually the queer community on a whole, and that femininity was not considered legitimate in women's sexuality. If you were queer and femme, that you couldn't possibly be a real queer or that you really just wanted a man. And these sorts of things occur within the queer community and obviously have rippled out, so I think that is a big misconception within queer relationships, or at least it used to be - that my masculinity and my butch appearance and identity is more privileged because of patriarchy, and that femme women who I am, and feminine people really, who I'm overwhelmingly attracted to are less than...

-40 MINUTES-

SD: And also invisible and experience a different kind of misogyny than I do. I think a more dangerous in a different way, kind of misogyny. I think that that has played out in my life consistently, in the trajectory of learning how to keep myself safe by aligning myself with cisgendered masculinity, and certainly when I was in high school, aligning myself with these boys who would otherwise be sexually harassing me, or if I were feminine presenting, or physically or verbally attacking me if I wasn't... It was kind of this like a passive acceptance of their misogyny that kept me safe, and I don't think I realized at the time that that's what it was, but a real pleaser came out that if I just kind of let this exist near me, it aligns me with you and you're less likely to cause me harm. That's keeping me safe. Whereas, I think the other people who I've spoken to actually someone who I ended up dating years later, we went to high school together, wasn't out at the time. She experienced a significant amount of sexual harassment and, which I just had never experienced that.

SD: So... Yeah, and I think that after high school, I carried that with me into my 20s, and when I stopped kind of associating with that part of the world, I didn't really hang out with straight men, it lingered, and there was a kind of misogyny that wasn't hateful or resentful of women, but kind of, I think it translated into a little bit of a soft boy, overly protective kind of way, and I had to do a lot of work to undo that, but... That's a tough one, it's a tough one. We want to embrace masculinity and femininity, and they're both really gorgeous, powerful, beautiful things. We also wanna embrace the in-betweens like me, and that's how I feel in my body, but my presentation is very masculine, and at the same time, there are whole generations upon generations that have been built around a certain kind of story around what that means, and how that's valued in the world, so it's a very strange thing to adopt it and embody it and also turn it on its heels, but... you know, queer people are very good at doing that.

JB: And do you think that this internal understanding of how masculinity and misogyny played into yourself, do you think that there was an external expectation from you as well, that played into your dating life in a sense of... Yeah, I guess misconceptions or expectations that were put upon you?

SD: Yeah, and I think some of that is real. Some of those expectations, maybe not the expectations, but some of the reason why I feel so strongly about my identity as a butch queer is because a lot of how that identity has been defined as by ancestors and has been redefined... Feels true and feels correct for me and my body and how I express my desire and how I express myself in general within the community, so... Yes, I also think it is a strange thing to... Then, I didn't understand or know the history, so there was a lot of lessons I was taught about how to be chivalrous, and there are varying degrees of how people express and engage with butch and femme. You know, I was lighting a million cigarettes in the early 2000s, just all over the place. Lighting every cigarette of every feminine person I can find, holding every door open, tripping over myself to do that, which was fun and charming, and I think there's something quite playful in that as well, but when it comes to the problematic parts of masculinity in a patriarchal white supremacist world. I shouldn't say White Supremacist, I mean under White Supremacy, it feels like it can be misunderstood, and it has had...

-45 MINUTES-

SD: There have been, I think, moments where there's been expectations that I don't really have feelings or I don't care much about my feelings, that I don't run very deep... Yeah, or have needs. And also an expectation that the people I have chosen to date are passive or just dilly dally-ing.

Which is not true. You know, I think there is a lot of confusion. Lisa, you were talking about this too, about how we're perceived and who we actually are, and I think that how we identify is incredibly important, and how we feel who we are and what feels correct for us is very important. The strangest part of all of that is how entitled people feel to tell you that you're wrong, like why? Why we're so invested in our feelings about how other people feel correct in themselves and that... I think is gonna be a lifelong thing. And I think that's the case for everybody. That's the case in the smallest things, "I wanna be a lawyer." You're not... "You can't be a lawyer, you have to be a teacher like your father", in any sort of way, the way that people want to place their fear... The way their fear expresses itself is a wild world.

SD: But yeah, it still... Maybe it affects things. My partner, certainly, I think, probably experiences a lot of that as someone who identifies as femme. And I also still have expectations of how I'm going to be treated, I'm always scared to show up to apartment viewings. I still have the feeling that I'm gonna be judged. 'Cause I have... 'cause I look this way, and because I have tattoos on my hands and it's not really... I have not had those kinds of experiences recently, but yeah, it just gets in there, and I think this is what can get... What can make people behave this way out of fear where it's like, you don't know, you can't do that, you're not... You shouldn't be doing this. This is dangerous and I'm uncomfortable, so I have to make you feel that discomfort, so you stop it. Yeah.

JB: Thank you for sharing.

JB: Hello, Hear Our Stories listeners, thank you so much for tuning in to part one of our episode with SC and Lisa! Since this is a two-parter, we will be back next week with Part 2 so you aren't waiting too long to hear more of their stories! While you're waiting though, please check out the description of this episode for local organizations and groups related to this episode's content where you can lend your support and give a follow! You can also go to the City of Waterloo Museum's website at waterloo.ca/museum to explore the virtual exhibit of this podcast series that features some extra bonus content! You can also follow the museum on Instagram and Facebook @waterloomuseum for updates on each episode's release. Thanks for listening and we'll "Hear" you all next week!

[48:47]

[End]