

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

SINDELL

Interviewer: Sebastián Castro Niculescu

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Transcribed by Briana Miranda

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Sebastián Castro Niculescu: Hello, my name is Sebastián Castro Niculescu and I will be having a conversation with Sindell for the New York Trans Oral History Project in collaboration with the New York Public Library's Community Oral History Project. This is an Oral History Project centered on the experiences of trans-identifying people. It is July 24, 2018 and this is being recorded at the New York Public Library Offices in Midtown Manhattan. Hi Sindell

Sindell: Hello

Niculescu: How are you doing today?

Sindell: Very well and yourself?

Niculescu: Pretty good, so I guess to start you could just talk about where you're from where you were born

Sindell: I was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvanian and yeah

Niculescu: And so, maybe what was your earliest memory?

Sindell: Of my transition?

Niculescu: Oh no! Just of your life

Sindell: Oh I have a vast memory of my life, my earliest memory goes back to fir—kindergarten. Kindergarten is my earliest, earliest memory of my life. I could remember sitting on the floor, I could remember wanting to be in corners, it's something that I constantly do now as an adult I like to always have my back to corners and sit back and watch people and observe situations before I go into them, something that I've had in me since I was a child.

Niculescu: Okay and so, growing up what was your household situation like?

Sindell: Very negative, I started to exhibit the mismatch of my brain and body in the first grade. So I was expelled from my very first school, Durham Elementary School in first grade. It was very, it was very, its hard to ex—I don't— I can't really think of the word for it but I know that I was forced to grow up faster than most children my age because of how differently I was treated from my brothers and sisters, how differently I was treated in my neighborhood, and I grew up in south Philadelphia. If people, people would visit Philly or visit any city don't really know like the real nitty gritty of neighborhoods and the urban you know, until they live in an urban neighborhood and although south Philly is not like what you call quote unquote "ghetto," it was still a residential neighborhood, a working class neighborhood so people let you know how they feel, felt, everyone knows everyone. So it was, I had to really grow up fast and I went to Durham, I went to Nebinger, I went to McDaniel, then I went to Saint Barnabas. I was in 4, 3 public schools before I was in private school, and that was from first to second grade. So I didn't, didn't even really finish second grade because the third school I was expelled from, there was no other neighborhood

schools for me to go to. I went to all three, but it was really hard you know, it was really hard. I was dressed as a boy but my mother did not, the world did not identify me as a boy you know, I was very (mimicking sounds) you know, it was hard I had to grow up quickly.

Niculescu: And when you say grow up quickly like what were the ways that you had to adapt or like change your character?

Sindell: Identifying danger, identifying where was a safe place for me to be myself, knowing which blocks to walk down, and I knew that I was treated differently from my brothers and sisters—I'm the oldest of six. I knew I was treated differently from my brothers and sisters because I was in the second grade walking home from school when my brothers and sisters got picked up. So knew that, I was very aware that my mother did not love me the same way she loved her other children. That's the household that I grew up in, that was my reality.

Niculescu: What were your parents doing to like support the family at the time?

Sindell: You are not going to believe this, well my father was not in the picture, I didn't meet my father for the first time until I was 15 years old and by then I had already started transitioning so he met me like this and he actually thought that I was his second child, when he first met me he didn't know I was his first child. Say it one more time—

Niculescu: So then what your mother was doing to support the family financially

Sindell: I was in the Philadelphia boys choir, my mother did a lot of jobs even though she was a college graduate. I think she, looking back on her behavioral patterns now I think she suffers from mental illness and has gone undiagnosed and looking, well financial she did have several jobs but I exhibited my talents just as early as I exhibited the girl inside of me that I didn't identify with on the outs—with the body that was placed on the outside. I also exhibited my talents very early from choir and church. My mother started getting offers for weddings for funerals for parties and I would go and I would sing at these parties and I was placed—she took me to an audition for the Philadelphia boys choir and I was in the Philadelphia—is world, that choir is world renowned and I traveled to Switzerland, France and Australia with that choir and I did all this before I was even 12 years old. I didn't find out until later till I was older that she was being paid because I was the youngest member of the choir. She was being paid for me to be in that choir and that's how my career really started, I was a child performer and I also worked for Disney. I also worked—sang with the academy of music, I did the nutcracker four years in a row, yeah.

Niculescu: How—How'd you do—

Sindell: And that was another example too, like who send their child to—a 10 year old child to Europe for a month with a professional choir with a bunch of grown men and teenage boys, right. Coincidentally even though I was not touched, I was not raped anything like that. Coincidentally that was my first, that was my first exposure, to men and their sexual ways. They didn't touch me but when we go overseas, when we went overseas we use to stay in what is was called a

homestead, where a family took two or three boys from the choir or the members of the choir and you know, housed them. For the length of stay, that's how we stayed for a month overseas and these were three separate trips that we took. I remember the first—I woke up—because in Europe, I didn't know this also but the other boys there because they were in the choir longer before I did. I didn't know that in Europe there is pornography on regular tv, it's like channel 5-6, channel 10 porno—PBS channel—[laughter] HBO, it's just regular on tv like they don't cable services, stuff like that. I woke up like I went to sleep and then I woke up, to two of the boys that I was homesteading with, they were jerking off to a porno and we were all staying in this little room. I was like oh my god, oh my god it was horrible! Because I had to like force myself to like pretend I was still sleeping and I didn't know what was going on and then oh my god it felt like they took forever! It felt like they took forever and I would just have to lay there and then when they finally and I remember one of them going to the bathroom to clean up or whatever and I didn't watch to see what happen because I still didn't know that the penis ejaculated.[laughter] I just knew that I saw that, I was just ah! [laughter] So when they did I took my blanket and they go into bed and I had to wait until they like—until it was like quiet, they stopped moving in bed so knew they were sleeping. I took my blanket and went and slept in the living room on the couch because I just felt so uncomfortable. That was like my first memory like, that was my first trip to Switzerland—the first day! Crash course in adulthood, and puberty and body. I think I was also aware because I had, when I went to private school I had my first psychologist, her name was Ms. Robin in Philadelphia and she was on Locust street. I remember like it was—because this lady, I felt so protected, I felt so relaxed and she even had a bucket for me on the side of her desk because I use to go every week and she called it my special bucket and it had a doll in there, and it had books, and it had a piece of paper and crayons for me to color and stuff like that. She would ask me questions while I was you know playing and I just remember Ms. Robin just being there for me—I love that lady so much. I also remember a serious conversation that she had with me as well about my body and what I would look like and I knew it was not happening. So when I went to private school I think I was in the fourth grade it didn't happen in third grade because I finally got the psychologist in fourth. She told me that what would happen to my body and I was like huh? No way! Coincidentally that was not my first experience with the mental. When I got expelled from my first elementary school, this was in first grade from Durham Elementary School. When the principal told my mother why—there was this little boy named Hakeem [laughter] and we use to play house and if anybody knows how to—if anybody knows how to play house, I was the mommy and he was the daddy [laughter] and I use to sit on his lap and I use to kiss him [laughter] and I that was the reason why I was expelled from Durham Elementary School, my first elementary school. Yeah—My mother came down and I remember the way she picked me up by the back of my shirt, by my collar and I remember her nails scratching all over the back—I just remember that burning feeling all over the back of my neck and she took me to CHOP—its, thats an acronym for Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and they have a psychiatric and left me there alone—left me there, and I remember crying and crying, that's another example of why I had to grow up quickly. I remember the first nurse was like, "What are you doing here, where's your parents?" And I was just crying like (mimicking cry) and, it kinda, I can't really remember the details of everything but I just remember the hallway, I remember how cold the hallway was, I remember the first night that I spent there while they were trying to find my parent and I remember the bed, the mat, the hospital bed, it was like a flat cold like plastic mat. There was

like children stuff in the corner there and they left the door and I was like, leave it, don't turn the light off leave the light on! And the nurse she left the door cracked and I remember the bright light from the hospital hallway shining in that long crack. I remember staring at it until I fall asleep.

Niculescu: So how long were you in?

Sindell: I was in there a couple days.

Niculescu: Okay.

Sindell: I was in there a couple days I think because they had medical records for myself and my siblings they knew who my mother was. I don't know, I don't remember—I can't, you know I'm not gonna even pretend to guess. I don't remember what happened, I don't remember how they got in contact, I don't even know if she got in trouble for leaving me there. I just remember she put on a chair there and the ride from elementary school there, it was like daggers. You could cut that tension in that car with a knife. You just know you're in trouble, yeah, intense, intense from an early, early age.

Niculescu: What was—that happens in first grade when you were first expelled right?

Sindell: I got expelled from Nebinger for fighting because children noticed. That's why I was nervous about doing the book thing because my experience with children hasn't always been, you know I know how cruel children can be and this is in first grade okay and they use to pick on me like, "Why you act like a girl all the time? Why you talk like that? Why are you doing..?" And me being like strong, "You're not talking to me like that, Imma punch you!" I was fighting, not once, several times. So I got expelled from Nebinger and I actually liked, I remember Nebinger, you can go back and look it up online right now and I remember, this is in first grade but I remember the structure of the building inside. It was marble floors, and then there was like gold piping in the design of the walls that went up to the ceilings in the hallways. I remember that like, crystal clear, I remember that. Isn't that crazy?

Niculescu: Yeah!

Sindell: That's weird, at a young age. The third school I was expelled from, McDaniel, McDaniel is one of the worst elementary schools in Philadelphia. It's like the quote on quote "riff raff" where the problem children go. They use to give me hell. This one boy use to pick on me more than anyone else. This was second grade year, because I didn't even finish second grade because I had no other school to go to. I think I did a half a year at McDaniel and this one boy use to pick on me so much that I took a textbook and at McDaniel they have cubby closets. You come in through the front door of the classroom and then there is a cubby closet, like a long little vestibule, its so weird, it's very back in the day old, old, old, and then the classroom is here. Like this is the classroom, and this is the door and there is a cubby closet here and it has hooks in there and little shelves where you put your lunchbox and stuff like that Is the classrooms so what I do when he used to sit right up here what I did was I use to sit in the back always like that in the corner in the

back on the side that's always me. So I took my textbook and walked through the cubby closet straight around to the side and I smacked him upside his head with that textbook. [big dramatic sigh] The relief and freedom I felt, the kids were screaming "Oh my god!" the teacher dragged me by my arm. I just remember feeling like free, release not a care, could care less what the consequences were and I think her name, she was the guidance counselor at McDaniel, I think her name was Ms. Vobuck, Ms. Vobuck something like that if I remember correctly. She was the one I believe she was the one that referred my mother to Saint Barnabas Elementary. That was my fourth elementary school.

Niculescu: The private school?

Sindell: The private school my great-grandmother paid for me to go there. My grandmother and my great-grandmother were the biggest supporters of me and they both used to argue with my mother about allowing me to do whatever I wanted to do. I started to arch my eyebrows, as a young child I use to arch my eyebrows I would braid my sister's hair or braid my brother's hair, I would jump double dutch in the neighborhood. Everything and it wasn't it wasn't like I was trying to be like a girl this is just the things that made me happy and oh my god when I got, when nana bought me my first pair of rollerblades. I use to rollerblade all the time and I use to do figure 8's in the street I used to imagine myself like I was figure skating. [laughter] Our idols back then was watch figure skating all the time to back then was Oksana Baiul and Nancy Kwan and—oh my god I use to watch figure skating all the time too back then. I know I went off like a little—

Niculescu: Totally fine, I'm interested in your grandma and great-grandma where you think maybe they are able to get the support for you from and about your relationship with them was so supportive?

Sindell: It was very sneaky the way they did things it was without my mother's knowledge and it was also very protective. My mom was my great-grandmother she taught me how to sew, she taught me— I make a lot of my dresses now for my performances and stuff like that. I alter, like I buy things from, I thrift a lot and I buy them larger and I alter them to my body shape. She taught me how to—this is how my mom, my mom caught me, my mom—these are women, women in my family that would dress like when they walk down the street, you'd be like who is that? And there was this one dress it had puffy sleeves and it was long and high empire waist and it was so flowy and had multiple layers and it was lace, chiffon dress

Niculescu: What color?

Sindell: It was yellow, and it had very soft, very very light faint soft white flowers on it. And she caught me, she came upstairs and caught me in her room putting her dress on and I was dancing. Oh my god one of my favorite movies used to be Cinderella, the original Cinderella old school, old school cartoon Cinderella and one of my favorite songs I use to sing all the time, especially when I— they use to make me do chores or when they even when I was wearing my mom's dress was— (singing "This is Love") I used to sing that all the time when I was little [laughter]. My mom saw me in the mirror wearing that dress, "Now this is love," and she was standing there and I

remember my heart went right up in my throat. When I turned and I saw her standing at like, in the hallway to her—and then she came in and walked in like nothing even happen [laughter] and I was just standing there like. And she went in her dresser, got whatever she was getting and walked back out the room!

Niculescu: Wow!

Sindell: And I said ah! And I took it all—I took out quickly took it off and put it back in the closet. I remember peeking down the top of the stairs and she use to have this chair right down the bottom of the stairs in our we had a living room, dining room and kitchen. And in the living room at the bottom of the stairs she use to sit in the rocking chair that was right by the door. And I use to peek down there and I saw her still sitting down there and I came down one step and I came down another step and she wasn't saying anything!

Niculescu: Wow!

Sindell: And I came down another step and I was just sitting there, I remember sitting there, I don't have no idea for how long I was sitting there and she was watching tv rocking in her chair [laughter] and I was like oh my god, I just remember because she wasn't saying anything! And I was just like ah! I figure that she was gonna tell my mom, she never said anything.

Niculescu: Wow!

Sindell: Never said anything! I was like—and I remember, maybe it was days later, that you know cause my mom use to go on odd shop—she worked for Aramark, Aramark is temp—a temp agency. So she would go on these temp jobs, so some days she'd be home, some days she'd be working. She's saying—one day she was like look out the window and make sure the car has left the block and I was like [laughter] and I would go run upstairs and get the dress and I was washing the dishes in the dress a couple times because my mom let me do it. And she came in, she rolled the sleeves up because it was too big, I was a kid, it was too big, she rolled the sleeves up and let me finish washing the dishes. And Nana, Nana started doff as a registered nurse and then she was in, I think she was in residency or something to become a pediatrician something like that. But Nana was in the medical field and Nana was the one who snuck me my first hormones.

Niculescu: Wow!

Sindell: Yeah!

Niculescu: Wow!

Sindell: Yup! Oh my god she even told me how to inject myself! I remember, yeah she taught me on an orange. She said, "Back in the day in nursing school this is how we do." And she brought the syringes down and I remember she sat me in the kitchen, oh my god, oh my god my hands was shaking like because I was so nervous. And then she made me do it like, I have—I have—I

have no idea how many times she made me do it. But over and over again she would make me inject this orange until I pulled out pulp. Yes. Yes. Yes. Because if you could inject the orange and pull out pulp without the pulp leaking out of the side that means you inject—you injected one of the—you know inside the orange they have little

Niculescu: They have their own like veins.

Sindell: Yeah, and that's how I learned and that's how I learned about the epidermis, the subdermis, subdermal because in the orange when you inject it, the needle will go through it you'll feel the first pop, she was telling me that's the epidermis, and then when you go through you'll feel the second like spongy material that's the subdermal, same as the skin, yeah. Then she brought out the vile and I was like oh! Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god! [laughter] And we were gonna do it, she turned and looked at me and said, "You're gonna do it." And I was like, "No Nana I can't do it! No I can't do it!" "Stop that!" She was very [claps] but supportive at the same time. "Stop that!" And I would cry, "I can't do it," "Relax, you're overthinking the situation..." and running down everything, that's how Nana was, very analytical, run everything down [mimicking sound]. She made me lean against--she had a, I guess it was a, a table, I can't remember what it's called, it's like a baking table that moves and it has wheels on the bottom it used to be really popular like, and she had one and she had her microwave on top. She made me lean against it with my front of my thigh and I would rotate my upper body and then she told me how to directly go through, make sure it was 90 degrees to the skin, Oh, of course it bled, of course, this was my first time, of course it bled. And I said oh! [laughter] Dramatic! She said, "Stand up! Stand up, do it again!" I said, "I can't do it again." The sweat was coming down and I was so nervous and she made me do it two more times after that. Mind you still in—the estrogen is still in the syringe [crying] "Stop it, stop it right now!" She gave me gauze, because she was in medical, she didn't have paper towels or napkins she had gauze. She had the real deal, I remember she made me press into there with my thumb, hold, hold, hold, hold, take it off, see the bleeding has stopped. "Stop it!" The tears were coming down and the sweat was coming down. "Stop it right now." Finally I got it after I think like the fourth or fifth time I injected myself. Yeah and that was my first hormone shot. [laughter]

Niculescu: What age was that at?

Sindell: I was 14

Niculescu: Wow!

Sindell: Mhmm

Niculescu: So how did that come about? Did you ask her for that? Did she like talk to you about it?

Sindell: She knew, she knew. I did something that I was not--I'm not very proud of but I was child I didn't know any different, I didn't any other way. I think it was the third time I came back from Australia...

Niculescu: With the choir?

Sindell: Yeah, I think I was 12 then, and my voice started to crack. Dr. Hamilton, that was the director of the choir. Dr. Hamilton was telling me that puberty is coming, and I was the first soprano, the whole time—the four or five years I was there I was first soprano. High, high pitch [laughter] He was telling me, your voice is cracking, puberty is coming. I said [gasps] so I took dental floss and I tied it around my genitalia. I tied it tighter and I remember it was like that for a day and I remember the pain was so severe, and I kept—I was going to school like that and everything. The pain was so severe, this was at Greenfield, this was after I graduated from—that I collapsed, I collapsed in the school yard, rec-room, recess yard. It was like silence, when I got sent home and they found out what was wrong, going on and I got sent home from school and I had to stay out of school for, I think it was a couple days. I couldn't go to school, the silence, the silent treatment that I got in the house...Honey, it was gonna come off, puberty was not coming in my body and I didn't want to go back to choir rehearsal, I didn't wanna go back, I did not want to be a second soprano, I did not want to be an alto, I wanted to be first soprano. [singing & laughter] Yeah, Nana knew it was an emergency, it was urgent, and that's how that conversation came about she asked me. Because I use to go to—my mother stopped buying me clothes, because I use to cut the neck out of them and wear it off my shoulder. I had long hair at the time, I use to take my corn rolls out and I use to tie my hair in a bun at the top of my head. [laughter] My mother, she use to scream, “Stop taking your damn hair out, walking around like an effin' faggot!” It was an emergency, this is 12 years old, okay. It was an emergency, Nana took me, asked me to come up there and show me, to show me how to do it and be my first hormone shot. I remember when the estrogen goes in your body, your very first hormone shot, I mean I'm not talking about the shit they give you now, this estradiol and all that, I'm talking about estrogen! What they use to give you, girl, when it first went up in your body, you could feel the muscles in your spine—around your spine in your back go [mimicking sound] and they would start jumping and I would look I said, “Nana look!” On my back it would be going like this, fluttering and flipping, as the man was coming up out of there! [laughter] Yeah. So that went on for a while until, I was 14 honey. The breast came in quick! [laughter] I came out the shower and I use to wear the towel up over my—my mother was sitting in the kitchen and she said, “take that towel—take that damn towel down from around your...!” I started just crying, you know. “Stop come here!” She ripped the towel down, would tell me that—embarrass me in front of my brothers and sisters, boom! And boobs! [laughter] I just remember the shrill in her voice, I can't really remember her face I just remember that shrill in her voice, “What the—what is that! What is that!” From the face all the way down to the knees was like ice through my veins, my body dropped in like 100 degrees [laughter] and I ran in the room, silence again. She knew, how else, she knew! I remember her yelling it was the—I think the biggest fight her and my grandmother ever had, I think it was the biggest fight they had ever had. She felt betrayed I guess that my-- that Nana went behind her back, so Nana stopped giving them to me and any girl who's transitioned from a teenager into adulthood knows that you must continue that estrogen until the puberty periods are over, like

you have growth spurts at 16, you have growth spurts at 18, you got growth spurts at 21. Baby, this was like 14, 15, 16 I was taking the hormones and then when I stopped cold turkey because my mother found out it was like, the man came back and he was coming full force. I remember, it was over like 2 months, mustache, goatee started to come in and straight depression. Straight depression, I didn't want to dance, I didn't want to sing, at that time I was at the Philadelphia High School for Performing Arts and I was a vocal major dance minor, I didn't want to sing, I didn't want to dance, I didn't want to be touched, I didn't want to see nobody, I didn't want to go to school, I us to go to school and check in then leave. My good friend, my god, I don't know where this girl is at, her name was Kelly. Coincidentally that was the name of my mentor that I found as well. Her name was Kelly and she had a car, she use to take us to WildWood, we would cut school and we would go to WildWood in Atlantic City. She knew I was like not there, I was not the same person I went into high school. Yes girl, I know its a lot right. I'm just reflecting all the stuff that I did, all the fighting, all the strength that I had, that I had no idea I had. I was a child against the world it felt like and I was gonna be me, regardless. Regardless! [tongue pop]Yes. No idea how I made it through, no idea.

Niculescu: What was that—so like this was all like kind of happening at home, the hormones and being taken off of it. What was going to school like, in that period, how were people responding to your body changing?

Sindell: That is another story, my early, all my early experiences shaped me into who I am today and why I have such negative feelings and negative experiences towards certain demographics. Because I went to a performance arts high school, of course it was majority LGBT up in there, of course the L and the G was not supportive of my T and I got backlash for acting like a girl, talking like a girl, and the gay men felt like why can't I just be a gay man why do I have to do this and I started wearing lashes and why I had to do that and question me and question me. You're not gonna question me because I have been strong minded since I can remember like, and I was very, "Who the fuck you talking to? You're not gonna do this to me, you're not gonna question me" Now that was my earliest experience with other gay men. I found The Attic Youth Center, safe space for LGBT. At that time when I went there it was majority T, at that time when I went there it was majority T because, I think even to this day we still need the most support of all, we're still the lowest minority. We're the one that are questioned the most, we're the one that are overlooked the most, we're the ones that are asked to do shit for free or cheap or—we are, we need the most help. So I think that was not because they appealed to the trans girls more than any other, but I think it was because it was—it was an emergency, it was an alarm, it was just needed at that time. I met some of the other girls that I know to this day, one of my best friends in the whole wide world, we've been friend for 14—I'm lying because, aged right now. [laughter] We've been friends for over 15 years, almost 20 years, we have been friends and we started what we say, started transitioning together. But we met at The Attic Youth Center, coincidentally my mentor lived around—right around the corner and a block away from The Attic Youth Center the old one on 13th street. Cause some people might hear this and say oh The Attic, I think The Attic is in a different location now. Old Attic not on 13th street, on 15th. The old Attic Youth Center on 15th and Locust, Lambar? My mentor lived around there, so we saw her and she had [mimicking sounds] she had triple F's breasts, hips, ass, fabulous bags, shoes, dresses, and she was

[mimicking sounds] and nobody told her. When she saw me, she was like, “Oh my god, you’re like a little girl, you’re like a little doll!” That’s how she became my mentor. Yes honey. I know I’m like talking—I ramble a lot so...

Niculescu: No that’s perfect for this.

Sindell: [laughter] It just goes from one story to the next [mimicking sounds] I know it’s kind of hard to follow.

Niculescu: But I think there is a certain trajectory that we’re following that makes sense and I love the specifics, like what street it’s on, the yellow dress...

Sindell: The old Attic Youth Center!

Niculescu: So when you were going to The Attic Youth Center what time period was this?

Sindell: It’s when because—my mother attacked me, we use to have arguments on a weekly basis. This time, because she wasn’t buying me clothes or anything, I got a job. I was working for Nana you know Nana would give me odd jobs around her house, she would give me money to do it and I got a job you know, I went and got my permit, my work permit. I was 14-15 years old and I worked at Wilsons Leather, I worked at Wawa food store as a cashier and I use to take my checks, I use to buy my clothes, I use to get my hair done. There was this boy named Albert in Philadelphia, this was like probably the most talented hairdresser you ever saw in your life! In your life! He would create magic, and he was known for doing layered bobs in Philadelphia and he would do it with a pair of shears, a pair of sheers is like a blade that was in a comb, not scissors, with a comb and a sheer. [mimicking sounds] Your hair would come out with all these curls, and he would curl it up. I came home one day, I went to work and got my hair done by Albert and came home one day and my sister, because my mother had this, constantly had this negative behavior towards me, they were learning that behavior from her. My sister, we were in a loft at that time, my sister looked over the loft because my bedroom was downstairs with my mother and my brother and sisters were upstairs. She was like, “You really think you’re a girl.” And I never, that was the first time Ashley ever even, because she and I growing up were like Frick and Frack, you know. I was just shocked and I said, looked and turned around and said “Don’t turn into a bitch.” My mother stormed out of her bedroom, “You don’t call women bitches, you’re a fucking man, you don’t call women bitches!” She began to beat on me and ripped my hair out, she ripped—at that time we use to do what was called a glue in. You would get you hair braided, underneath your natural hair you would put a stocking cap and then you would glue, with weave glue you would glue the weave over top and because it was just done it was fresh, like I just have done it hours ago, it was—the adhesive was tacked on and she ripped all the hair out of the right side of my head. Till this day like of I lift my hair up over here the hair is like, it hasn’t grown back. She ripped all the hair out and threw me into the kitchen glass table. There was glass everywhere—it was a glass of some kind of drink on the table and I didn’t want to look, lift my hand up because I just knew it was blood dripping down everywhere and it was just a drink and I didn’t have not a scratch on me, I just couldn’t [gasps] someone had called the police, to this

day I have no idea who called the police, but the police were there and she was fighting me and fighting and the police came in and said, "Ma'am you cannot beat on your daughter like this." Up in rage she went, "That is not my daughter, that's my son! Ahhh!" I had enough, I said I'm fucking out of here, I wrote in one of my lipsticks because of course I had lipstick, I was buying all my own garments and everything, and with one of my lipsticks I wrote, "Evil fat bitch" across the wall of my bedroom, and took my bag and left while the police were still there. I remember the policemen telling me that legally they're not allowed to let me walk out like that, is there any place that they can drop me? I said no, they tried to take me to Covenant House Philadelphia, no ma'am I'm not going to no Covenant House Philadelphia. [laughter] So I pretended like I was going up in there and when they left I dipped. I called my girlfriend Dominique that I went to high school with and I stayed with Dominique. I lived with Dominique for a long time, I loved living there and I slept on the living room floor and I didn't care because her mother, Dominique's mother was very supportive, Dominique was my best friend at the time and you know, but The Attic really allowed us to be us. They provided resources, they provided resources for housing, resources for hormones, and Ingrid, Ingrid was just a counselor at the time I think she's actually the director of The Attic Youth Center in Philly now. She referred to Mazzoni Center. Mazzoni Center is like one of the, the place for LGBT to go in Philly right now, they have this big beautiful facility—but at that time Mazzoni Center was a little office on Chestnut Street in this building. They had like four patients and one doctor, his name was Dr. Robert Winn. My brain [snaps fingers]—the information—you could look all this up. I was like one of four patients there because ether were just getting started and because he didn't know much about, he was just learning about it. He gave us, I remember it was a packet of like, not a roll of decks, it was like in a circle like this with estrogen pills in it. And that was my first prescribed estrogen regimen, by Dr. Robert Winn in Philadelphia. And they also gave me a resource to go to Dr. Sedacca in South Philadelphia. Dr. Sedacca was a laser specialist, because I had, you know at that time I was trying to revert with my—I was so angry with her—I was trying to revert what I felt like she did to me. I felt like, because of her all of this happened you know the mustache, the goatee. So I was fighting to get my look back because I just felt so [gasps] oh my god when you're at the peak and you're 14 years old and that estrogen is rushing through you, you are literally being forced into a second puberty of womanhood. Oh my god and it rushes through you and the way you look in the mirror, the way you look period and the way people respond to you. [imitating voices] I just felt so lovely! I felt like I lost that, I had spent a lot of years trying to get back to that. That was the hardest lessons of transition that you have to [mimicking sounds] stay on it. That's why my—that's why one of my ultimate goals was bottom surgery. Had to get that done [laughs] had to! I remember the pain I was scared to do the dental floss thing again because the pain, when they cut the dental floss out, essentially your nerves in your genitalia is coming back to life because you cut the circulation off of it for days! I had did that for days, until the pain was so much that it shot up to my belly and I had passed out as a child. I was scared to do that again so I knew that it was coming, I just didn't know how I was gonna get it but it was gonna get done. Yeah, crazy.

Niculescu: So you're actual prescribed estrogen happened around what time?

Sindell: 16

Niculescu: 16, okay and so you were still living with Dominique?

Sindell: I was living with Dominique, I was still going to school because I graduated from high school and how I graduated? I have no idea, I have no idea, my grade point average was B, C average, how? I have no idea, probably my strong memory, I have a photographic memory, I remember shapes and colors very well, I remember details, I remember stories, I remember faces like I can not see you gain in ten years and ten years later I'll see you and I'd say, "Hey! Girl, you remember me?" And you probably won't remember me because your memory is not like mine but—"No I don't remember you." Plus the fact I change my hair color like every three months, so you probably wouldn't remember me. But I would remember you ten years from now, my brain is like [mimicking sounds] Sorry, I went off on a tangent again.

Niculescu: We are at... Oh! Dominique, started estrogen, bottom surgery as a goal.

Sindell: Yeah, I knew it was coming. I knew. Unfortunately at that time there weren't grants and there weren't things that are available now for trans individuals in America. So, I was, I was an escort, I was an escort. So many doors had been slammed in my face, regardless of everything I fought to be me, I still had doors slammed in my face. When I graduated from high school, I was determined to show people that I was going to be me, going to be successful, regardless. And I went to Dance Theater of Harlem I was a member of their ensemble [laughs] off of one audition, off of whim! I said baby I'm going to get up there, I'm going to turn it out and I'm going to show them! I did get into ensemble but unfortunately again that was my second life experience dealing with negativity from gay men. Because, they complained to the director Lavigne Nadou was the director at that time and they didn't want to partner me, they didn't want to you know, so I was their first trans experience there at Dance Theater of Harlem. And when you dance for the ensemble, usually what happens is, you dance for them for a year and their best, their top dancers get recruited into the company. Baby, you know that I could twirl and spin around them two times over but unfortunately I was let go. Not just from, not accepted into the company I was let go from the ensemble. And they offered me, "oh you're technique is impeccable [mocking sound], smoke up my ass, lip service. "Could you stay on and teach our children?" I said are you crazy? So, I had another negative experience, at that time Alvin Ailey was recruiting, they were, each—all of the, all of the dance—it's, every institution has a cycle and Alvin Ailey's was the same is American Ballet Theater, it's the same—they all had open audition process that's usually held for people of ensembles and so I went to Alvin Ailey's. Because I said, okay fuck ya'll, you know Dance Theater Harlem. Y'all not gonna take me, I'm going to go to Alvin Ailey. I don't remember this woman name but I will never forget her face at Alvin Ailey after I slammed! I mean slammed this audition! Slammed it. I mean nobodies leg was higher, nobody had sharper pirouettes, nobody's leaps were higher and—my joints are over extended so—that's my dog [laughs]—my joints are over extended so when I use to do a grand jete, you know how you see somebody do a grand jete and it be in a split in the air, mine use to over extend. Honey, I was the first person they called in and you know I stormed in there I said oh! You know, imma be first. This woman read me my rights, read me my rights, do you hear me? Unfortunately you did not get the part, you are an excellent dancer but we don't know what your are, if you are a man or a woman. This is how she spoke to me! With a gay man sitting next to her, the tears, people have been so

unapologetically, cut you to the core mean to me. Cut you to the core, I mean say stuff to me, you don't even know me, I mean cut me, try to cut me down to the point where if I was not the person that I am I probably would have killed myself. You know what I'm trying to say—I mean, even to this day with my singing career and it's the reason why I chose an amenity with this interview today because people give you a lot of lip service, a lot of lip service. I was on American Idol Season 3, I went to audition for American—made it all the way through. I did, I did use my sisters identification information, with her permission! Because I knew that, I just got turned down from two prestigious dance companies in New York, I knew that they weren't gonna let me come into American Idol just-- I knew they weren't gonna let me come in there! So I had to use—

Niculescu: What year was this? If you don't mind me asking.

Sindell: I was, I don't know what year it was, I think I was 20 years old, because this is after high school, this is after I did a year with DTH (Dance Theatre of Harlem), training with their company, training with their ensemble and didn't get into two companies, I was about 20 years old. I'm not technical, I didn't want to go back into cashiering somewhere, what other choice did I have? Go back to my other talent, singing. Just so happen, the American Idol auditions was up in here this is season 3 though. I made it all the way through, all the preliminary auditions, smashed them. Boom, boom, boom [snaps fingers]. I mean I'm not just somebody that just wants to do it, I've had like world renowned training since I was like 9-10 years old. So I'm up in through there, of course they found out and I had to sign something. I had to sign something that said, I don't know what it said but I remember it was in front of several producers they had called me back and I thought it was a private audition and they told me that, "We know, we know that's not your name, we don't care what your real name is, we can't put you through, you falsified information." Okay. I mean I'm giving it all I got, so what else am I going to do? I'm a 20 year old trans girl, lovely, because I have fought to get my looks back! Fought to get my estrogen back, I mean I was this thin, ballet thin. With natural C cup boobs and you know, what was I gonna do? What I knew how to do, what the best way I knew how to do, couldn't fall back—I'm an adult now, I couldn't fall back on my girlfriend Dominique in Philly, I couldn't go back home. Started escorting, yup. Might as well make sure that I am happy and that's-ultimately that's my goal right now even though I am, right now I am successfully able to sustain or support myself on singing alone, the downfall is a lot of the people at the, at the places that I perform at don't know that I am of trans experience, you know. And it doesn't bother me that they don't know, it's just something that I know that I have to do because people give you lip service. They tell you that it's okay and then, who wants to hire an ex-prostitute to be up in their situation? To be up in their company, to be up in their event. Some of the stuff that I have done since I have been here in New York these last 6-7 years that I've lived here, Those people if they knew that one, I'm trans and two that I use to prostitute, they wouldn't have me in there, you couldn't—huh! You think I'd be up in there? I just recently performed for this like couple of months ago, for a celebrity's birthday gala and a celebrity brought me on stage like, do you think these people would have me up in their event if they knew? Unfortunately a lot of people give you a lot of lip service here, they're not supportive of us, our community, our goals, our dreams. So I walk around and I dream big and my ultimate goal right now is to be happy. I would love to one day have everything accomplished out of life, the American dream. Have my house, have my car, have my dogs, have my husband,

you know? And I was married before, yeah I was married but I've been divorced now for two and a half years. And no his family did not—[laughs] his family has no idea to this day, he knew. I'd love to have all that, you know, have that American dream and then give back. I would love to be a teacher, cause once you can't do, you teach! That's all I know from a child, I know entertainment, I know singing, I know dancing, I know sewing a costume together, I know presenting, stage presentation, I know these things I could pass this onto children. Especially young black children, give them the opportunities that someone gave to me. Some of the exposure that I've had in the industry is some of the people that I've met that have given me advice and told me things that—its like, I would love to pass that onto another generation. Ultimately those are my goals in life right now. I don't know... if this will help somebody else. Hopefully they'll hear this story and be like, "Oh shit." She's been through a lot and that's like a piece of it, you know with escorting there's a whole other set of shit that you go through. I've almost been shot three times at gunpoint! Not for robbing because they think I got a bunch of money, they want to kill you because your trans. Its crazy! Its crazy, its crazy what we have to go through as human beings just to even live some type of normality. It really, really is.

Niculescu: Is it okay if we backtrack a bit maybe?

Sindell: Sure, yeah definitely.

Niculescu: Okay so we went to you auditioning for dance companies, so I wanted to ask about first your mentor, Kelly I think that was her name? And how that started and also wanted to ask about the move from Philly to New York and what prompted that?

Sindell: [Laughs] Kelly is known by a lot of the girls, a lot of the girls. Kelly was somebody who pumped silicone and created the bodies in Philadelphia. The dangerous curves in Philadelphia she did it very well and it's a part of the reason why I have not gone overboard because she was very—I've been very blessed to have these people in my life she was very militant [mimicking sound] just like Nana. Nana passed away so when I didn't have Nana I had Kelly. She was very—"Don't do this, don't do that, don't follow these girls, stay like this, listen to what I'm telling you!" How it came about was strictly off of appearance, I believe from what I was told by her, what I'm told by other people that knew her, I believe that Kelly did come from a similar situation as myself. She didn't get along with her family or her mother and she started at a very young age so I think she saw a lot of herself in me and she didn't want me to make the same mistakes that she made. And that's the kind of energy I tried to put into the girls that I have mentored, I don't currently mentor a lot of them now but I have mentored several, I'm talking fifteen girls that I have helped turn into babes! [laughs] Because a lot of the resources that are readily available today, they don't find as much appreciation in an older girl like myself showing them the way. Maybe it's just a sign of the times because younger generations are very disrespectful, they don't have that same respect for your—quote on quote, "respect for your elders." As others do, but my move from Philly to New York was not a straight move up here, it was, I tried to be up here professionally, then when you escort you travel. When I started—I started escorting in New York but I found myself in Miami for a year. I lived in Davie County, Miami for a year. Then I lived in Sandy Springs Atlanta, Georgia for three years, then I lived in Los Angeles, California for two years,

and then I moved here after that and it was after bottom surgery. There was a sense of urgency like I've known, I know girls all over the United States and some in Europe of trans experience and I know several that are post op and still escort and in my mind there was this sense of urgency that I can't keep living like that. Like even though—even, especially now you know they are trying to fight, they are—there is a group of girls, cisgendered women and men trying to fight for prostitution as a profession and it is a profession! It is very [laughs] it's very lucrative. That, ultimately it wasn't for me, I find myself having to really like build myself up double over because there is already being trans, you already have to build yourself up mentally to be in this world and build up this wall of armor just in case somebody notices that you're trans and has something negative to say to you. You already got this wall built up and I had to build a second wall on top of it you know just to deal with the men that come in that don't see you as a woman, that don't see you as a human, they see as something that they're paying for and that they want to do whatever they want to do and you got to be a real stone cold B-I-T-C, you know and I'm not that normally. That's not how I am, this was something that I had to really drill into myself. "You're not gonna do this, honey come over here and sit down..." You got to turn into this person and there was a sense of urgency that I needed to normalize my life again. I got everything that I've wanted, I've got my breasts, I've got my looks, I've got my you know, I've finally, I'm at a point where its not mandatory that I take hormones every, every, everyday, every week...don't turn back into a man... That cycle had stopped now, I'm post op, I don't need it. What do I really need to keep escorting for? Of course I would love to—I would have loved to save enough money to buy a house and a car but the way taxes and the government and the federal law are now like, not just now, but period! You take a lump of money and buy a house the feds is on your ass like bitch tomorrow. You take a lump some of money and buy a car straight off the dealership the feds is on your ass like, you know. And this is money that we don't pay taxes on, prostituting, so I couldn't, I knew, I'm smart enough to know that you know [laughs] so I said you know, let me just see. The last city that I was in, in Los Angeles I started to look for work because I knew that I had skills that I could fall back on. I started doing makeup at the Warner Brothers studio out there. I also did makeup for Christian Dior, so they asked to transfer me here to New York and when I knew my opportunity to come back here I said lets go. I flew back to New York, little did I know, see it was different in Los Angeles—the women, the public, I'm trying to think of the right word, the demographic of women in California just cared about themselves visually more than they do in the state of New York. You don't have to force women to come into a makeup store and buy makeup. Here in New York, when I got here I'm thinking I'm going to be a makeup artist, do some faces, sell a couple of products, in and out. I'm going to love this job, I'm in New York! Honey no, our regional manager she was like, you have a quota to make here [mimicking sound] and I wasn't the only one they transferred, they transferred some girl from Texas and they transferred another guy from Los Angeles as well. So when we came here and we were in our orientation for New York City there was a whole thing that we had to do like, "you have to sell this amount of that and you can't..." So me being me I'm going to find my way around it anyway. There was a guy there at the location that I worked at, that he could sell you a shirt with a hole in it [laughs] he could. He could see you a shirt with a hole it. So me and him use to have this thing that we would work out, I'd say you get the clients, you get the sale and I do the makeup because he wasn't that good at makeup and I was like [snap] I beat your face down [laughs] in like 2.3 seconds. And it worked out for a while until Robin, our regional manager, had found out

about it because we use to split and I think she had found out because it was month after month we were equally [laughs] him and I were equally making, you know 20% above the quota. We were equally doing it and it was working, why we couldn't continue doing it—I have no idea. “No that's not right, you got to...” I'm out of here, I'm not going to put up with this, I'm not going to sit up here and force people to buy something that they don't need. In my conscious I just didn't—because I knew how hard it is to make money, keep money you know and that how I got here to New York. When, and they were paying me \$23 an hour at Christian Dior so I had jumped out of money [sighs]. And of course again what are you going to do, you're trans, you should have waited until you got another job—Nana told me stuff like you know, I was-- I had a woman, several people in my life that, that had instilled morals and common sense [laughs] but I did not, I worked, I maneuvered off of emotion and I jumped out of a situation without having a pot to piss in, as Nana would say. I've had to dive in head first into again what I knew best which was entertainment. I sang at some of the [laughs] and I sang some of the dumbest shit and I even posted advertisements on craigslist and, and I had to really like work to stay here, I even took DJ gigs here in New York just to maintain and I'm not a DJ but I know music since I was a child so it was easy for me to tell what people wanted to hear. So I was very you know, and I built up until I was able to completely sustain myself on just singing. That's how I got here to New York.

Niculescu: Okay so, you auditioned for all the companies and when that didn't work, yo started escorting? And that's when you started to move around the U.S.

Sindell: Yeah, it was a lot, I've done a lot, I've seen a lot. Not saying I did more than other people I'm sure that there are other women of my experience that-- and also I know there is, there is, I have some level of privilege I have passing privilege. I'm very thankful for that, I don't take that for granted and I don't, I try very hard, I try not to throw that in a lot of other girls faces. Sometimes it's a little harder than others because you know the girls can be [rawr] towards each other you know, but I try to be the first one to extend the hand and say, hey, hi how are you, how are you doing, my name is... and sometimes they take it back like oh excuse me, she's not you know nose in the air. That's how I met Kierra.

Niculescu: How did you start maybe engaging in the trans community in New York?

Sindell: When I got divorced I felt like I was in this world of where do I belong? Because, you know still in the back of your head because his family didn't know—there's still something in the back of your head like that makes you feel like your lying to people. Only because of what, only because of what society makes us believe we are, you know society makes us believe that we are not women. That we're still men that have just transitioned you know. Until society changes I don't think that even myself would be completely comfortable all the way in the back of my mind you know what I'm saying.

Niculescu: So you got divorced?

Sindell: I started looking for little... little sisterhood, little friendship you know. So [laughs] I did not, again I did not have a good experience when I first started going to--I just wanted to visit,

the center on 13th street, to see if they even had a group for girls like me. They made me fill out this long entry form and me, and put—get on a waiting list an interview to see if I was right for the group, me! Huh! So, I did not have a good experience at the center because after I had jumped through hoops to get into this, I think they call it female trans identified, I can't remember what they called the group but after I jumped through all those hoops to get in this group. I went to the group and saw, cis male identified men, I mean not even, there is a certain way you look at people, life is built on visuals, we have eyes for a reason. You can look at people and tell who they, tell what they are. These individuals that was in this group, these were men, men. I don't care what plans they had, how much money they were saving up to eventually go down the line and possibly think about maybe sort of kind of maybe I might get this done in the future! You made me jump through hoops to get in this group, I lost it. They had to call the police and everything. And I sat there, when I first got into the group and I saw them in there I sat back for a little bit and I said you know maybe, maybe they are in here to like ask if someone wants to do an interview maybe they work for the center... This is my first experience with the center okay! I lost it, and when they sat there and said, "You know, you know I've been toying with the thought that maybe one day in the future that..." WHAT? I have fought, life or death for this life and you come up in here with your male privilege after they made me jump through hoops to get up here! And you say you might think about, get the fuck out right now or I'm leaving, I lost it. And of course the cis female moderator, "This is a safe space for everyone..." Bitch, don't play with me, don't play with me, this is not what I came here for. One just had this look like, we know each other, we know each other, after you experience life to a certain extent you know where people come from. I knew this particular person had a perversion for us, especially dealing with the escort industry. As I'm getting upset, "I understand how you feel, my trans girlfriend...I'm only here to gather information for her" I said, WHAT? I knew that one because the way he was looking with eyes, and the sparkle in the eye [laughs] I knew you had no—it wasn't, I was more, I was offended. That you made me jump through these hoops to get in here. Especially when I come here looking for sisterhood, looking for a little information, looking for a little reference, looking for a little resource, looking for that's hard to find for us anyway that you know, no offense I don't have to look for because I have passing privilege. I'm coming down, like I'm trying to be in, be with my girls and you're making me jump through hoop to get there. That center, they're a mess, when trans identified girls walk through the door, everybody in the lobby already you know, tension, daggers. But when I had that negative experience with them I started to find, if it wasn't for that negative experience, I wouldn't have started to look for—and that's how I met Kierra. Because I started looking for other places to find my sisterhood [sighs] I know its a lot right. Yes girl, they called the cops and everything. I went off, 0 to 60. WEEKS! I think it was like a month and a couple of weeks I had to wait on this waiting list!

Niculescu: I didn't even know there was this screening process.

Sindell: Girl, lost it. [groans] [laughs] That's the incorrect way to act [laughs] you should not go off 0 to 60. You should express your feelings [laughs] articulately. I should have done that but when it comes to me, my life and what I've been through to get here it's like, that's like the one straw that can easily be plucked [laughs] to get me there. Tooth and nail I fought and that's another reason why I wanted to do this because I believe far too often now, you have people

from the trans experience speaking about their trans experience from a...they speak, they speak from a less of a struggle. And I feel like more women that have fought to be everything that they are today should do more interviews like this so that they know exactly what it takes or what it took to be who we are today. So people won't think it's so easy. I think the visibility that is coming into our community now is not all good, because it makes the public look at us like, it was just a whim that I thought about yesterday. You know like Caitlyn Jenner and all that you know. I didn't think--she's trans she can be trans, everyone has a right, but people need to know that it's not a second decision. This is from birth you know, this is, this is an actual chemical imbalance this is an actual...an actual—I'm very [laughter] maybe we should have did a video because I'm very, with the hands and everything! This is something that is internal, this is medical, this is something that is not going to go away, this is something that you don't wake up tomorrow and decide to do. [laughter] And I reiterate again, that is not the way you conduct yourself as a young lady [laughter]

Niculescu: There goes the bit of mother [laughter] I was wondering then maybe you would talk about more about how like mentorship fit into that and the girls that you mentored and where you found the kind of like strength and the power to do that?

Sindell: It didn't even come as a--I didn't even have a second thought about it. Each one of the girls that I have met, that I have helped, I saw a need for it and was like [snap] boom. Let me show you, let me take you, let me show you what you want to be. I—it wasn't even a second thought for me, it was immediate and two of the girls that I've mentored they were.. it's not like I have something against because I don't want—you know people can take interviews and interpret them any way you want. They can hear one part of—we as human beings we have different levels to the way we think, to the way we are, to the way we act. I don't want people to interpret that I don't like or I am against people who thought about it later in their life. Because two of the girls that I did mentor, they were are, they were living their life as cisgendered gay men and decided to transition. I don't have anything against it, it's just that I don't want anything taken away from my journey. It wasn't even second thought when the two individuals asked me to help them and when I saw the other girls who I knew, I knew—I can't really explain it, like. My first, what we call in our world daughter, she-- I saw her and I saw a piece of myself. You can see it in her eyes, and the way she talked and the mannerism in her hands, it was a girl and she needed help. At first, when you take on a daughter you start them on your own supply just like I was started. I was started underground, and you give them that first heavy dose of estrogen [mimicking sound] [laughs] it sets them on a path for life that there's no turning back to--from. It wasn't even a second thought when I met them or when I was asked, it was—I felt that same sense of urgency for myself.

Niculescu: And when did mentorship become, in like the timeline we've set up, when did it become like a part of your life?

Sindell: I think when it comes, and that's a good question because a lot of times I think there are trans women that mentor other trans women that are not ready to mentor trans women. I think it comes when—I can easily say when you're ready but people know when you're ready, they see

it. The public sees it, you've been living like this for so long that you can't even remember the last time someone misgendered you or even had an inclining that you are trans. You're ready to pass on that knowledge, because it has become bread and butter, it's like day and night not even a second thought. That's when you're ready, I would say that you are ready to mentor. I didn't know when it came because for years I was so focused on being me or focused on making sure that my life--even after you first, even after you first get your bottom surgery you still have, you still have a whole other set of things in your mind that you're worried about. How a man that you're intimate with, how will he judge your private area now that you had it done. You think about all these you're not sure [gasps] you know. It's after experience comes in, its after life comes in and not months, years. It takes years for you to get the knowledge and experience to even have anything to pass on to someone else and people a lot of times our community now they think it's trendy to be somebody's mother. And now that this television show again they're pushing [sighs] this television show is using our lives out into the forefront, this new tv show *Pose*. They had this individual playing someone's mother, okay you can put an individual in a mother position but you can't just put anybody in that position. You understand what I'm saying?

Niculescu: It's not like a role to be played.

Sindell: It's not a role to be played! Like, that girl thats laying that part she's not ready to even think about playing somebody's mother, you know what I'm saying? And now you're putting this for millions of people to see, now these young girls are thinking, "oh all I got to do is make it work for me and then I can pass it onto someone." No girl, no! You can't just put somebody, they should have put somebody in that role that was ready, seasoned, they needed a seasoned girl for that role so that the public and the community would see that, that is a mother and that she's ready to be a mother. No offense against that actress, she does an amazing job, she's a great actress but she should not have been casted that role. And that's a fact, it's a fact because in real life it doesn't work that way, and when this—these newer generations take on these quote on quote "mother positions" you have nothing to pass onto to them and you just, y'all are really just sisters, girlfriends running around making mistakes together, come on! Come on, the whole point is that you have the knowledge and you've made these mistakes already so that the next person does not make those mistakes. That's the whole point of being someone's mother, of being someone's mentor, to prevent catastrophe, to prevent bad silicone injection, to prevent bad hormone experiences, to prevent passing out from overdosing on hormones, to prevent blood clots in the brain, to prevent blood clots in the heart. This is shit that they have no idea about, you don't know nothing about none of that. To prevent hematoma in your vagina after you get an SRS (Sexual Reassignments Surgery) surgery, to prevent encapsulation (capsular contracture) in your breasts, to prevent—what does she know about that? Nothing! Nothing, to prevent the next generation from going through that, y'all just out here and have no respect for the girls that did it because you think the girls that did it before you had their head to high and the only reason they had their head so fucking high is because they had to beat their way to where they are that day. That's why you have it so easy, because the girls that did it before you had to literally punch and uppercut, fight in the streets, almost get shot in the face, get shot in the ass, get shot in the back, fight tricks, fight people in the street just to get a haircut, just to go get their hair done. Like come on! These are people that have been through it night and day just so that you're able to

comfortably do it now and you have no respect for that because all you can see is the fact that we carry ourselves with our heads so high and you have no idea why we carrying ourselves with our heads so high, you don't care to ask. You just want to pass judgement, you got a little hormone shot, you got some free implants and now bitch you have arrived. No baby, no baby and two years down the line you have no idea why your breasts are so hard, why they look like tether balls on your chest and it could have been prevented if you didn't have so much ego. Right? So that's the generation that's going on right now and that was--that's part of the sense of urgency I felt when I met certain girls because I saw them and so often now young trans girls are being forced into--not being forced but they're learning these...feminine male mannerisms that is not becoming of a woman. There is a certain way women carry themselves, period and the younger girls are not learning that way. Because they're transitioning and they're going straight into balls and they're going straight into majority cis gay male spaces and they're getting that, "Ahhh girl yasss..." How can you take that to a secretarial position? How can you take that to be a cashier at CVS? Or Walmart or whatever you want to do. How can you open up a flower shop, when somebody comes in you have no idea how to conduct yourself like a lady. There's etiquette to being a social person in life, it has nothing to do with--who you are with your friends is not who you are in life. There is a professional way to do things and then they, they never learn it. They just [screams] how can you open up your own flower shop doing all that. Who is going to take you seriously, who is going to think you're professional enough to cater, not to cater but to design their wedding, to design their reception, who is going to do it? [laughs] You're not going to make any business, you're business is going to flop because you don't know how to carry yourself, all you know is being [screams] It's ridiculous, it's ridiculous and I think, I think Ryan Murphy and-- did a good job with casting a trans women to help write some of the—but either he should have casted another trans woman to be hands on in how it goes or she should have been more vocal about how the shit go because she know! (Jeanne Imak) know how this shit go! And some of the shit that I saw go down—you know what that's it. [mumbles]

Niculescu: We're like at a very particular moment in kind of like how trans people are seeing vs how the community is involved.

Sindell: Yes, yes, yes, yes. They're doing a great job and carefully showing visibility and being sensitive but they're not getting the full story because even some of the-- there was too many again there was too many cis gay men dictating what it was and what's it like. You had, the actual—I think it was 4 or 5 women, women of trans experience actually from that era, that lived in that era, you've had them sitting in background.

Niculescu: but you (Ryan Murphy) didn't ask them to consult.

Sindell: You (Ryan Murphy) did not ask them to consult for trans parts or trans information or trans spaces. You took what you heard from, you heard, from—come on, come on, come on, come on! Come on, come on, you know? It was terrible, but give credit when credit is due its bringing visibility and I guess because—and that's another thing too, why the fuck do we always have to be okay with what they give us, it's the same thing with black lives matter, its like you force people to be okay with chips and crumbs like, "Okay look you're getting a couple spaces,

you're gettin this so be okay with that, okay? Be thankful that you're getting this" And it's like when a person like me complains about it it's like, "Bitch what are you complaining about, at least it's visible..." Come on! Come on, it's not right that's why, its not complete thats why, thats why! You're not trans thats why! Yes girl, I think I have said enough because whew!

Niculescu: Is there anything that we missed or anything that you want to end with?

Sindell: I think there are more important things to discuss like healthcare, like the stigma of being post-op but we need a more depth situation, situation [laughs].

Niculescu: Not just for visibility but like information.

Sindell: How about space just for trans, how about that? Just for trans because even spaces that are created just for trans don't stay just for trans. They--because they are funded by grants or they are funded by the government they are required to bring in, put more seats in, put more butts in the seats. If they took the numbers they had from (Counternorth) GMHC, Saint—not Saint Marks, Mount Sinai and they took all those numbers even, what's the other one down Canal Street?

Niculescu: Aperture.

Sindell: Aperture, if they took all those numbers and put them in one space, they would have more than enough numbers for one space to be fully funded and fully informed of all the levels from beginning to non-conforming, to male transition to female transition, they would have the numbers. Come on, why isn't someone doing it? Like com on. Not me! Because I'm not medically, I'm not medically verse like that, I know a little bit because of what Nana taught me but you know. Come on somebody do it, somebody, put us all together, write a medical journal, how about that? Write a medical journal with all the information and all the things that happened, there is a whole heap of shit people have no idea, only we know and then we know from word to mouth from telling each other what each of the girl—you know. A lot of these girls don't even you get breasts implants too early before your mammary is formed, the implant slides! Come on [laughs] and these people have medical degrees! These people have degrees that are placed in these places of power but they don't have common sense.

Niculescu: They are like on the ground experience.

Sindell: Come on! [laughs] Wouldn't you like a space where you wouldn't have to go and explain every single time everything. When they come in and see you and say, "Oh, hey Sebastian, we know exactly what you're feeling today let's go right here, don't worry we'll have someone call you tonight and tomorrow to make sure that..." Don't that sound (oval)? That sounds amazing doesn't it because they know, you don't got somebody sitting at the front desk doing secretary work misgendering you until they see your paperwork. Like why are you working at this facility if you cant even identify visually what somebody is going through. Come on it's not fair [laughs]. You know I wish my Nana was still alive she would do it. She was like business--she was a virgo,

business, militant business woman, get things done, “This needs to be done like this, go here...” Knows who to call and knows people, I mean knows people! Knows people, she would have done it. [big sigh] So today’s lesson, boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen is that we are just as complicated as anyone else but we are under serviced. We are not listened to as much, people just want to be listened to that’s when the--so often they hear people trans experience ramble! It’s because there is so much stacked on top of stack because we are not listened to. As human beings you want what, companionship, you want to eat, you want to sleep, you want to [clap] [laughter] and you want to be listened to! That’s when the crazy comes in because as human beings we are not getting the fundamental necessities as humans, we are not listened to. I feel like we’re in a exhibition with all these windows over there.

Niculescu: Yeah, we are in a large corner office with huge windows.

Sindell: I feel like everyone can see us, hey how are you? [laughter] Yes, so if you are of the trans experience, you are not alone. I’ve recently, do you know Cecilia Gentili? She recently a couple years ago took me, because she’s been trying to get me to be more hands on with the community. I just don’t think I’m ready because I’m not in my career where I want to be yet I’m getting older, I’m not getting younger I got to establish my career then I can hands on with the kids. [laughs] But she took me to a medical conference, I thought it was going to be just a trans conference with other trans people but it was for medical professionals and their numbers were astonishing. In the past 3 years, 300 some post-ops in New York City, I said what! Come on, come on, their statistics, their statistics were astonishing! I said [gasps] what! And then even in--within that conference you have representatives from all these different organizations, why didn’t they just have just the trans liaison from each representative come and make one, one place? It made sense to me and I was just there as a guest. One of the things that they were talking about is their lack of knowledge, their lack of knowledge on post-op care which is any old thing. The body heals differently after you get a orchiectomy or your post op the body heals completely differently from a cis male or a cis female. Your thyroids don’t function as normally once you strip the body from its natural function of producing estrogen or testosterone. This is something that they don’t have a textbook on but y’all are performing surgeries like [snaps fingers] [sighs] and then people see a trans person react, quote on quote, “react or wild out or flip out or bug out.” And they think, “Oh yeah that’s just what they do, they’re crazy.” No, we’re not getting the same fundamental [laughs] parts of life that you are. We want to be loved, I don’t want to have to keep going—you know [sighs] yeah. I hope this helps somebody, I really do.

Niculescu: Thank you so much for sharing your story.

Sindell: There is life out there for us. We can have it, we can have it [laughs]

Niculescu: Thank you, thank you so much.

Sindell: Thank you.