

Interviewer: John Kearns

Interviewee: Amy Coleman

Interview Date: 2000-07-16

Description: Interview with ex-Hot Peaches performer, Amy Coleman, and her experiences in Hot Peaches as well as her encounters with Marsha P. Johnson.

Audio File Name: Center_Kearns_1

Audio File Length: 47:00

Date Transcription Completed: 2023-03-10

Disclaimer: This transcription omits vocal fillers (e.g., “um” and “like”) for clarity and flow. Sensitive and/or personal information has been redacted.

[00:00:05]	Interviewer	I have a list of names before we even talk about things. You know there is a whole Hot Peaches crowd there,
[00:00:12]	Coleman	Right.
[00:00:13]	Interviewer	but do you wanna just look at the names in case you know any of those people because some of them I don't know I'm gonna be able to easily track down or not.
[00:00:22]	Coleman	Yeah I do, I know some of them better than others. I know, let's see, let's see, let's see... I know Tony Fish. Babs Gray, I haven't seen for a long time but I know her. Mark Anay who was Jimmy's lover I don't know-
[00:00:42]	Interviewer	Do you know if he was in ACT UP?
[00:00:44]	Coleman	Probably.
[00:00:45]	Interviewer	Because I was in ACT UP and when I saw that name, Mark Anay, I thought--
[00:00:48]	Coleman	I'm sure he was actually
[00:00:49]	Interviewer	Okay
[00:00:51]	Coleman	Yeah International Chrysis is dead [unclear]... Betty Born who's from the Blue Whips group and probably lives in London, I would think right now. [incoherent mumbling] Michael Lynch... and Julia Deers I know of I'm not really...
[00:01:17]	Interviewer	So Jimmy would probably be the guy who would be the best to-
[00:01:20]	Coleman	Well he probably has their
[00:01:21]	Interviewer	He'll know where people are...
[00:01:21]	Coleman	numbers and stuff now. Ron Jones. I have very old numbers, I don't think I have them with me, but I mean if you can't find them call me and I will, ya
[00:01:30]	Interviewer	If I can't I'll just get back to you I won't bother you otherwise
[00:01:35]	Coleman	Because I could probably—it's just been a very long time I haven't worked with these guys, in you know, eight years or something. But yeah I, you know, if Jimmy doesn't have it I could probably find some of them.

[00:01:51]	Interviewer	Alright. Perfect. Alright. I don't know... This little photo there... Marsha's stuff...
[00:02:00]	Coleman	I wonder when this was... Yeah
[00:02:02]	Interviewer	Yeah a lot of them do have dates and things and photos but this one doesn't have anything but I'm sure when I speak to Jimmy he will have all the documents
[00:02:16]	Coleman	Yeah he probably will but again as you're looking I don't mind you know I love to immortalize these, you know, Marsha and International Crisis so whenever I can do anything, so really call me with anything I probably have stuff somewhere, you know, all over the place.
[00:02:34]	Interviewer	Yeah and if you ever do come across a person that knew Marsha that you have sort of forgotten about or you know isn't on this Hot Peaches list you can always let me know
[00:02:44]	Coleman	Okay, Braun-Jones is a good one too, he's in there ya.
[00:02:53]	Interviewer	Ok. Your website is great, did you do that yourself?
[00:02:55]	Amy	My husband actually.
[00:02:57]	Interviewer	Wow! He does that for a living? It's a really good website
[00:02:58]	Coleman	You like it? Yes, yes. Oh good, good
[00:02:59]	Interviewer	That was really good! I saw that, the link was Marsha P. Johnson, because you know with the internet you have to continuously go back in and do searches because people will put up websites on so like 3 months from now I'll do another search with Marsha's name and something new will come up and when I saw that it was really good
[00:03:22]	Coleman	Right, something else will come up. Feel free to use anything from that little thing that I wrote
[00:03:29]	Interviewer	I would cite you.
[00:03:32]	Coleman	Yeah that would be good because that story is like the epitome of Marsha.
[00:03:40]	Interviewer	I just wrote down some questions but we can just let it sort of flow. Before we even get into Marsha I'd like to get a little bit about your background, I think I read that you're from Brooklyn Heights?
[00:03:53]	Coleman	Yeah I'm from Brooklyn Heights and then I grew up in Cobble Hill and kind of from a, I guess you'd call them a liberal Jewish family and I don't really don't know how I ever got connected to the Hot Peaches, I really

		don't know how it happened.
[00:04:17]	Interviewer	See that's how, I thought we would leap there somehow. Well you went to college because I saw you were a sweetheart
[00:04:23]	Coleman	Yes I went to SUNY Bridges, I went to
[00:04:25]	Interviewer	For literature?
[00:04:26]	Coleman	literature.
[00:04:27]	Interviewer	Not for performing arts?
[00:04:28]	Coleman	No. No I got a really weird eclectic kind of thing, I think the way that I met, let's see who I met, I must have met Jimmy Kamichu first through a guy named Yuri Schubert who was my sister's boyfriend and he was connected somehow with this whole lower East side thing and he knew Jimmy somehow and then Jimmy hired me to do some shows with the Hot Peaches and
[00:05:02]	Interviewer	And that was 1983 with this whole thing from [unclear] 1980
[00:05:07]	Coleman	Yeah I guess it was. God, ya. It probably was 1983 and so I think the first thing I did with Jimmy was something called Waldorf Salad which was with Audene, do you know who Audene is?
[00:05:23]	Interviewer	God yes! Yeah.
[00:05:26]	Coleman	Yeah! He was kind of brought back for wherever, whatever place he was and so again it was this weird combination of people, then I started a long-term kind of working relationship with Jimmy and we went to Europe a few times and so along the road Marsha—I met Marsha and International Crisis.
[00:05:55]	Interviewer	Okay, I have a video cassette that somebody edited and it's basically Hot Peaches but all it is is introducing Marsha, you know Marsha, it's edited they aren't complete shows, but Marsha mentions about being with the Hot Peaches for the last 14 years so was Marsha affiliated somehow before you arrived?
[00:06:19]	Coleman	I think Jimmy had known her from way, you know, way in the early days, the Stonewall thing. You know I think there's a great-- One of my favorite things Jimmy ever wrote was "Spare Change For a Dying Queen" and its, I don't know if it's in that one, it might be
[00:06:45]	Interviewer	I have a—like a cardboard list of different things that Marsha carried when she went out on the stage, you know 'whose up next' and 'what song' and there's a mention there something like "Spare Change for a

		Dying Queen”
[00:07:00]	Coleman	It might be in the thing that I gave you, which I think he wrote about her so I mean you—she, she was an inspiration to him as kind of an art type. Which she is, you know, I don’t know what but she’s an art type. I actually brought this, because I remember reading it, but did you ever see this?
[00:07:19]	Interviewer	Yes, I have actually
[00:07:22]	Coleman	So I mean I think it’s true she’s like the street queen, you know, but I think he knew her way early on and Alternon, you know she, he would work with her. I didn’t meet her until later on at some point, I don't know exactly when.
[00:07:38]	Interviewer	So when you first worked with Hot Peaches, Marsha wasn’t there? At a particular show or whatever.
[00:07:42]	Coleman	No, no, no.
[00:07:45]	Interviewer	Do you remember the first time you met Marsha?
[00:07:48]	Coleman	I can't really say I remember the first time, I mean as I said in the thing that I wrote to Marsha at times was very inconspicuous. I mean she was always wildly dressed but so was everybody so it wasn’t really a big deal but she sometimes could be very, you know, quiet and then, you know, all of a sudden she’d just go and become, she was pretty crazy. I mean she really was like this-- I never knew whether she was, knew that she was being funny or if she was just insane you know it was very hard to tell but she was very, you know, you just can't put any kind of-- there’s no way to like put her into any kind of particular..
[00:08:41]	Interviewer	Category?
[00:08:42]	Coleman	Yeah I knew- I had known that she- that Andy Warhol had done a--
[00:08:48]	Interviewer	Okay because that was one of my questions was if that was previous to you knowing Marsha
[00:08:51]	Coleman	Yes, yes.
[00:08:52]	Interviewer	Okay because I’m trying to date that and I contacted the Andy Warhol Museum and they’re a mess
[00:08:58]	Coleman	Are they?
[00:08:59]	Interviewer	Ya, they... They’re relatively knew and I think they have a ton of things that they don’t know-

[00:09:04]	Coleman	See I know that Jimmy is gonna know all this stuff,
[00:09:06]	Interviewer	He'll know all this stuff. Great, ok, alright.
[00:09:08]	Coleman	you know, I don't know where he found it, probably on the street somewhere you know but he would pick up, through all different areas and places, you know different characters and they all kind of converged into this The Heat, which when you read that describes a whole... This thing is a, this play is like the—it might say, it might actually say—give dates. It's the history—the chronology of his working with this troupe, you know, so it might have something.
[00:09:45]	Interviewer	Where did you fit into this group?
[00:09:49]	Coleman	I have no idea. Jimmy always liked the way I sang and I was kind of like a... you know, I wasn't gay I wasn't... But I was always like the token you know diva you know that they threw in there and because I had kind of grown up in the, that kind of, you know, lower east side, rural, somehow I had always been affiliated with that world. Like the theater for the New City and La Mama and stuff. So I kind of just fell in and I always kind of identified with people on the fringes of everything. So I think that that's where I came in and you know, I was kind of, I remember International Crisis was always trying to make she-- I was kind of like a female drag queen you know in a certain way. They were trying to make me more into like a drag queen. So I don't know I just you know and then I went to Europe with them. It was kind of a very fun time and I never really thought of it as strange or weird at all it just was-- you know, because I had grown up in that kind of whole strange eclectic world. My brother is a composer of like new music and you know all this stuff. It was just like a whole, you know, artsy fartsy kind of time.
[00:11:33]	Interviewer	So you were just having a good time being part of it all? There was no master plan?
[00:11:34]	Coleman	No, I don't think I had any master plan. I mean I grew to love a lot of it. Especially I think Chrysis was the one that I really got closest to. We traveled a lot, but yeah no there was no real master plan and I don't think for most of these people there really is a master plan, they were just doing what they do.
[00:11:58]	Interviewer	Right, well you mentioned that the troupe had gone to England a number of times but Marsha had not gone but this time she did so I guess it was sort of like, you planned a tour and people came or did they come?
[00:12:13]	Coleman	I did two like European tours with Jimmy which he has been doing off and on for years and I mean he hadn't done one for a long time and when I came in he had just begun to do them again I think not until the late 80s

		<p>did I start doing it. He had an idea of who he wanted to come and the more outrageous the personality the better but Marsha was too, even for us. She was not going to even pretend or be able to try to conform, in that little piece that I wrote, you know, her idea of conforming was dressing up in this bizarre male drag that completely, was obviously, not working. So even Jimmy had to be very careful about you know because—so she did not go with us. Chrysis went with us for the first tour and then I think she got sick so she couldn't come to the next one. She was fine with having-- you know Chrysis had to dress up. First of all, Chrysis looked like a woman so you could really-- I mean Marsha didn't look like a woman.</p>
[00:13:35]	Interviewer	That wasn't Marsha's intention--
[00:13:36]	Coleman	<p>No no no, and I never really knew if Marsha had a conscious intention or it was just a, I often felt like she was just being what it was that she was, you know? It's hard to even remember if I she ever really, if I ever had a real conversation with her, you know what I mean? She was just out there you know. She was out there.</p>
[00:14:10]	Interviewer	That was one of the questions I was gonna ask, did you ever talk to Marsha for example about her childhood and the--
[00:14:21]	Coleman	<p>No I never really did. I talked to her, she would say something about where she was living which I never really got a clear idea wherever she ended up, Staten Island, where was it?</p>
[00:14:35]	Interviewer	<p>Hoboken, Randy Wicker owns a lighting store on Hudson Street by Christopher. Marsha's seemed, now I don't have all the details, she seemed to somewhere around 1980 or 1982, somewhere in the area, moved in with Randy. Now I don't know wether that was all the time or that was kind of the operating days.</p>
[00:14:58]	Coleman	<p>Yeah it's very hard to know what was really happening with her. You know I had heard they have all been prostitutes at one point or another but she was very involved in, I don't even know which one it was but something to do with working with homeless drag queens or something. I don't know exactly what it was. But she had some kind of thing that she was doing that she was very involved in like helping the unfortunate. Do you know anything about that?</p>
[00:15:36]	Interviewer	<p>Well, previous to your knowing Marsha, and that's the title of S.T.A.R, Street Transsexual Action Revolutionaries. In the early 70's, around 1971 or so, Marsha and her friend Sylvia Rivera. I hope you know Sylvia</p>
[00:15:56]	Coleman	No.

[00:15:57]	Interviewer	Okay, they created a group called S.T.A.R and they created something called S.T.A.R house where they got a building that they fixed up for street people, mostly prostitutes, to live in so it was a communal kind of arrangement, and it lasted for a while but it eventually fell apart because of finances. Do you think that's what she was--
[00:16:27]	Coleman	Yes I think so
[00:16:28]	Interviewer	Okay because I'm very interested if you have any memories of what she might have said about that experience.
[00:16:34]	Coleman	I think it was very meaningful to her, you know? I think that it was very important to her in some way. As I remember Marsha though it was really hard to ever get one long focus. Because I really think she was probably psychotic honestly. Really I think she was insane, but
[00:17:02]	Interviewer	Interesting because maybe you can give some information here. I've spoken to Marsha's family, I haven't done a formal interview but I've talked, they're very helpful.
[00:17:12]	Coleman	Really? That's great.
[00:17:13]	Interviewer	Yeah they're very interested in having a whole history of Marsha done. They tell me that when Marsha was a kid, now Marsha was always in touch with her family so it was never a situation where Marsha disappeared later on. But as a kid, Marsha never had mental problems.
[00:17:34]	Coleman	Really?
[00:17:35]	Interviewer	And I've seen in both some interviews and also in video tapes and also from friends and people saying that she had her breakdown. I don't know when that started, I know she was being treated in Jersey in a mental health clinic but did you ever have any experience with what exactly that was?
[00:17:59]	Coleman	Yeah as I said there was a time especially when we went to London that one time and all the sudden she just lost it. I mean she was fine and then she started screaming and running through the streets tearing off her clothes. You know, and it was just like no one really knew where it was coming from or what was happening but I mean generally I always thought Marsha was out of it. I mean she was out there. She was not very able to—when I knew her, so again that's like probably starting around 86 or 87 somewhere. She was not very--you couldn't really have a real conversation. She was very all over the place and at times you'd be able to talk to her and then it would just go into something else. She was just out there, she was not really-- you couldn't grab hold you know, but I think the only time I really saw her lose it was that and it was kind of

		scary, she really—people had to run after her and grab a hold of her. Although she appeared very kind of kooky and funny a lot of the time, I really think that by the time I knew her she lost her, you know, lost her mind. There were times she was fine, she'd show up and it was okay and then it would just like all disintegrate. That was the most--
[00:19:38]	Interviewer	But she was okay? She was able to focus enough to show up for the--
[00:19:42]	Coleman	Yeah I mean she could never
[00:19:43]	Interviewer	the things that you were doing?
[00:19:45]	Coleman	Yes. She never could really learn her lines.
[00:19:51]	Interviewer	Right, I've seen that on the tapes. Which she sort of turned to her own advantage
[00:19:55]	Coleman	Yes. See that's what I'm saying that there was something very-- That's why she reminded me of Gracie Allen in the sense that you never knew is she doing this, or like does she know she's doing this, or is it just like whatever. And I never could figure that out
[00:20:13]	Interviewer	Well even as far back as the early 70s when Marsha and Sylvia started S.T.A.R and S.T.A.R House, Marsha said to Sylvia "I want you to be the president, I'll be the vice president because I guess Sylvia said "Marsha this is your idea." and Marsha said "I have trouble focusing, you be the president I'll be the vice president because I will not be able to focus."
[00:20:40]	Coleman	That's probably when she was focusing better because I don't even imagine her being able to say that much.
[00:20:45]	Interviewer	Right, and I think over time--
[00:20:48]	Coleman	Something really did happen because by the time I knew her she was kind of a caricature. Do you know? There wasn't really somebody there that you could really talk to. But there was a sweetness to her and you know always and-- but I guess even from what you're saying earlier on there was somebody really at home but by the time I knew her really...
[00:21:21]	Interviewer	Yeah, I'm sure once I've spoken to everyone I'll be able to figure out where along the lines
[00:21:27]	Coleman	When did that happen
[00:21:27]	Interviewer	where the mental capacity changed, the family who... a person that didn't have that problem as a child. I also don't know yet what kind of diagnosis Marsha had.

[00:21:43]	Coleman	Yeah that would be very interesting because I'm sure, I mean I think she could have been schizophrenic, cause like that breakdown that she had on the street was just-- First of all
[00:21:54]	Interviewer	Was it related to anything?
[00:21:57]	Coleman	No, but by that time she had already had AIDs and I think she had a drug problem, I don't know what her drug history is but I assume there were drug problems.
[00:22:09]	Interviewer	Yeah that I haven't really established yet, whether or not she was using drugs or not, I don't know.
[00:22:17]	Coleman	I mean because she was on the street a lot, I think even during that you know, that you could not always find her. She was like-
[00:22:24]	Interviewer	By choice—in the later years when you knew her Marsha, from what I know from Randy and from other people who were very close to Marsha. By choice in the later years she was on the street and she was prostituting. Earlier like in the 60s it was a different story. She was prostituting proudly because, a character like Marsha in the 1960s didn't have a whole lot of other options probably but in the late 80s when Marsha was living with Randy and had a stable home atmosphere and work set by choice she was living on the streets and doing all of that.
[00:23:10]	Coleman	But that's an interesting sale, "by her choice" because if you're psychotic what is your choice? I mean, because does anyone really want to be on the street and prostituting? I don't know. That's what's interesting about all of that to me. Although it looked kind of fun and kooky and everybody going their own ways there's a gigantic price that she paid in the biggest way at the end of her life. Does anyone know what happened with that?
[00:23:42]	Interviewer	I'm trying to get the police files now, I've read everything that Randy, the roommate, has. I've talked to people and from what I've looked at so far I couldn't- I could see an argument for suicide I could see the argument for murder and I can't really at this time say this one looks more plausible this one doesn't.
[00:24:08]	Coleman	Yeah it's hard to say because by that time, by the time we went to London she was pretty out of it. She was holding on by a thread. But I have to say when I met her, whatever lucidity that had really been there was not really there anymore.
[00:24:26]	Interviewer	So even in your period of time you saw the deterioration?
[00:24:31]	Coleman	Yes, I saw a deeper deterioration by the time we went to London, she was sick.

[00:24:41]	Interviewer	Marsha had while living on the streets, had been shot and all sorts of things over the years and I know there's one mention, I think, this was from the early 70s and she mentions about her husband was murdered on the street so, there was all sorts of stuff going on over the years, and I'm sure it took its toll.
[00:25:03]	Coleman	And her family, did they know about all of this? I have a feeling she kept a lot from her family.
[00:25:11]	Interviewer	Yes, her family, they live in Elizabeth, New Jersey, two of them live in another place in New Jersey but basically the Newark area, couple of sisters and two brothers. Marsha's name was Malcom Michaels Jr. as you may know. They referred to their brother as "Mikey". He was openly gay with his parents and with his brothers and sisters. There was a rule, no women's clothes at home but at the same time it wasn't that they were saying "we want to reform you" or any kinds of those things. The sister, one of his sisters, tells a story about when he'd come to visit he would come in drag and tells a story about one of her kids saying "hey, that's my uncle Mikey," and one of the friends says "no, that's a woman," and he's like "no, that's my uncle Mikey." So probably a lot of the goings on but the family was in perfect agreement when they went to do the obituary in the New York Times, I don't know if you ever saw that.
[00:26:24]	Coleman	No, I never did
[00:26:26]	Interviewer	But in the New York Times, when they went to do the obituary for the New York Times they listed no drag performer or Stonewall, 'street prostitute'. The family was in complete agreement with having that in the New York Times but the New York Times wouldn't do that so they finally settled with "lady of the night".
[00:26:50]	Coleman	They should have put [unclear], she was alright with it wasn't she
[00:26:53]	Interviewer	And the family was fine so the family knew. Very caring, loving family and very willing to talk to me
[00:27:02]	Coleman	That's wild.
[00:27:03]	Interviewer	But I don't know if they were ever at any of the shows.
[00:27:08]	Coleman	I never saw them, I never saw them.
[00:27:11]	Interviewer	I think as far as that was concerned they were very separate, they...
[00:27:15]	Coleman	I mean to me when I knew her it didn't seem like she really had the attachment with... I didn't even know the name of the person in [unclear] and that seemed about it I didn't see any family thing happening going on.

[00:27:33]	Interviewer	Sylvia Rivera was Marsha's friend from the street from the 1960s. They were at Stonewall together and they started the S.T.A.R and S.T.A.R house then I came to Sylvia's personal situation they were together for most of the late 70's mid 80s' so I guess that's probably why you don't know Sylvia
[00:28:02]	Coleman	No I really can't say that I met any of them, any of the people Marsha brought.
[00:28:09]	Interviewer	Did she ever talk about Stonewall?
[00:28:12]	Coleman	No, Jimmy, you know as I said, Jimmy really in that way really I think saw Marsha as this kind of single—of the beginnings of all of it and then you know “Sparing Change for a Dying Queen” I think was written about Marsha. She wasn't talking too much about anything really.
[00:28:35]	Interviewer	Yeah she was just there?
[00:28:36]	Coleman	She was there kind of a little “Wooo,” really, really, not..
[00:28:44]	Interviewer	How did you see the audience's reaction to her performing?
[00:28:49]	Coleman	Most of them-- she was so endearing. The people really tended to really love her. Some people could not believe what they were seeing because she would just stop in the middle of things you know and kind of... But she could crack an audience up just completely. So I think people liked her, I mean they were kind of -- even with the whole—and there were a bunch of crazy looking people up on that stage, she was definitely the top of the line event.
[00:29:27]	Interviewer	I asked that question because when I first went to Sylvia and Mirandy and said I want to do her story, document it, Sylvia said to me “well we just want to make sure you're not going to make fun of Marsha," and you know that never occurred to me. First of all, if I felt that way why would I waste my time. But, watching the tapes I saw the crowd seemed to be having a good time kind of cheering her on [phone rings].
[00:29:54]	Coleman	Yeah, hold on a second, but I think people do that. Hello? [answers phone]
[00:30:08]	Interviewer	The crowd didn't seem like they were making fun of her
[00:30:10]	Coleman	No but they did though I would say that was inaccurate. As I said by the time I knew her this wasn't somebody that you could really-- I don't know in a way you couldn't take her seriously because I don't think she was taking herself. She just wasn't there, you know?
[00:30:31]	Interviewer	Did things seem to bother her? Like if people were making fun of her or

		was she just doing her thing
[00:30:35]	Coleman	No it didn't seem to bother her but I think-- I never really thought too much about, I know that people were making fun and that was part of it and I think she used that to her advantage to some extent but as I said she wasn't at a place where she was really, it didn't seem to me like she really cared making a point about anything anymore. You know what I mean? She just liked to dress up in drag and have fun in a way and at that point-- I did see her as a sad character by the time that I knew her and that might not have always been the case but there was something very sad because you could feel this was somebody that was not present a lot of the time. And again as I said I never knew whether she was conscious of it or if it was-- but I think it's a very, I can understand why they said they didn't want people to make fun of her. Because probably they knew also by that time when I met her there was, she was a caricature of herself. Whatever it was she was trying to accomplish earlier on I think she had even lost sight of it. Where as Chrysis, who is bigger than life as anybody, you know, you never felt that she, it was a kind of some hold on a sense of herself. Where when I met Marsha I didn't feel that, I didn't think she had a grasp of her own center anymore. To me that's what it seemed like. And Jimmy was very nervous to take her because she would go off
[00:32:37]	Interviewer	You just didn't know what to expect?
[00:32:39]	Coleman	Ya, and it's interesting to hear that these people that know her earlier that she really could say something like you know "I can't focus" because by the time I knew her she was not saying things like that.
[00:32:52]	Interviewer	She was floating.
[00:32:53]	Coleman	Floating, ya, floating around. We all loved her and I never felt that—I felt a sadness and yet I felt like with so many of the drag queens that I met, this wonderful warmth and vulnerability that was underneath it all.
[00:33:11]	Interviewer	Well the interesting thing is that everybody that I've talked to and I've seen a lot of video tapes and things. Everybody when you mention Marsha, everybody smiles and says "Oh, Marsha!" sort of like a universal feeling with people's first thought about Marsha is you know sort of like a warm--
[00:33:30]	Coleman	Yeah she was like a ball of—very sensitive, and very kind of wounded somewhere to you know, but she was very funny in her own way too. I mean very very funny.
[00:33:49]	Interviewer	Like jokes funny or just a funny sense of humor?
[00:33:51]	Coleman	Kind of a Gracie Allen type of thing and then things would just come out

		and they were just hilarious. And it wasn't always-- I mean we weren't doing it to make fun of her we thought it was just kind of an absurdist kind of thing. Like even when we went to take her home she really was scared to go on the plane and all that, but when we got to customs and there was a certain kind of, she was really trying to explain to these customs people that these were her aunt's clothes, just making up some insane story and the absurdity of it was hilarious.
[00:34:42]	Interviewer	And it was totally unbelievable to the customs officers?
[00:34:44]	Coleman	Oh they were like, I mean you've seen pictures of Marsha, you've seen Marsha right? So you know her walking with these shoes and just-- Oh my God! And she knew better than we did that's why Marsha really was very very smart but I think she was, by that time, disconnected from that but like she knew that there was going to be problems and I really didn't think there would be I was like "come on, what are they-- they're not going to bother you," and they did.
[00:35:18]	Interviewer	They were probably thinking she had drugs or guns or all kinds of things they're looking for so why would they--
[00:35:24]	Coleman	They spent like-- They were making fun of her, they were. Yes. Yes. So I think in a way like so many people she got caught up in her own mythology like something that she had used as a way to get over became, she became a victim of it all.
[00:35:49]	Interviewer	Her drugs and her mental illness?
[00:35:50]	Coleman	I would be interested in knowing what it was really, what her illness really was.
[00:35:55]	Interviewer	I, putting together someone's life like this, especially when you lived on the street, very difficult but slowly but surely I'm finding all these pieces and it's interesting how everybody is so disconnected because she was involved with Hot Peaches obviously for a long time and you as a group obviously aren't together now but there are a number of you out there and Randy and Sylvia and other people really knew nothing about Hot Peaches.
[00:36:26]	Coleman	Really? They knew nothing?
[00:36:28]	Interviewer	They knew that she was in it but there was no real sort of like "oh yeah you need to talk to so and so"
[00:36:35]	Coleman	Right. Right. It was exactly like [unclear].
[00:36:36]	Interviewer	or "they did this and that" it was sort of like acknowledged but a very separated and you're on that side of the divide and you knew a whole part

		of her but during all of this I have, I have seen that she was being treated in a mental health clinic in Hoboken and she had been institutionalized or hospitalized, I guess that probably is a better word for it—numerous times over the years her sister told me that she would get calls from Marsha saying “I’m at such and such hospital come visit me” and that went on off and on for many years but I don’t have from anybody like a real clear what Marsha was diagnosed with.
[00:37:27]	Coleman	Right. Right.
[00:37:28]	Interviewer	But I think you’re right, to me it sounds like schizophrenia.
[00:37:36]	Coleman	Ya. Ya.
[00:37:37]	Interviewer	That’s what it sounds like and of course hopefully I can find whether Marsha was out on medication or not.
[00:37:42]	Coleman	I think that when I met her though it was definitely at the later stages of whatever.
[00:37:46]	Interviewer	Well you mentioned AIDs. I have read that Marsha was HIV+, I don’t know whether she was open about that, do you happen to remember?
[00:37:56]	Coleman	I think she told me one time, yeah, I think she did, at the end. I think, when did she die?
[00:38:03]	Interviewer	Uh it was in July of 1992.
[00:38:05]	Coleman	So it really wasn’t that-- when did we do this thing? I can’t remember the date but
[00:38:13]	Interviewer	Some of the ones I’ve seen are like 88’
[00:38:15]	Coleman	Yeah, but I think that London was a little later so maybe
[00:38:18]	Interviewer	Was it later? Okay
[00:38:19]	Coleman	Yeah maybe like 90’, so it was pretty close to the end for her. I think she told me once that she was HIV or that she had AIDs I don’t remember how she put it but yeah she was kind of open about it I think at the end. And I think that’s what drove her to the—by the time we went to London she was gone. I mean her mind, whatever thing that she had held onto was gone.
[00:38:52]	Interviewer	Was that the last time you worked with her, the London trip?
[00:38:54]	Coleman	Yes. That was the last time I saw her, when we--
[00:38:56]	Interviewer	It was?

[00:38:57]	Coleman	Ya.
[00:38:58]	Interviewer	Okay that was one of my last questions was “when was the last time you saw her”, so it was the Kennedy airport at the customs?
[00:39:03]	Coleman	Yeah, yeah, she was so nervous, it was such a wild time. Yeah I think that was the last time I ever saw her.
[00:39:10]	Interviewer	And how did you find out she had died?
[00:39:15]	Coleman	I think Jimmy told me, yeah, I think Jimmy told me. And then someone else who knew that I had some affiliations with the Hot Peaches read it or something, you know.
[00:39:33]	Interviewer	There was a memorial service, were you at the memorial service?
[00:39:35]	Coleman	No. I don't know when that happened. I guess around a week after--
[00:39:39]	Interviewer	Right within a week or two of her death.
[00:39:40]	Coleman	I might have been out of the country at some point, I don't know,
[00:39:47]	Interviewer	Because I have a video tape of that, the speeches, it was in the church at the corner of 7th Ave. and 13th St.
[00:39:55]	Coleman	Ya.
[00:39:56]	Interviewer	Actually it was quite a beautiful service and the family talked
[00:40:00]	Coleman	Wow
[00:39:56]	Interviewer	and friends and all sorts of people and I don't remember if anybody from Hot Peaches was there,
[00:40:08]	Coleman	Were there?
[00:40:09]	Interviewer	they probably were.
[00:40:11]	Coleman	Were there, sure. I mean I really, you know, think that Marsha, even though I saw her at the later days of her whatever I think she was a remarkable person, I guess for just being who she was, you know. Just for being it. And there was a kind of charisma to her, you know that--
[00:40:33]	Interviewer	I think that's a good word to use because she had an effect on people.
[00:40:37]	Coleman	Ya, without you know, why. Why this crazy, you know-- But there was something that was really that did-- I mean I you know, she affected me. Of all the people that I remember from the Hot Peaches it's her and Chrysis that had the largest kind of you know, that stay with me.

[00:40:55]	Interviewer	Did anybody write anything about Chrysis, articles or
[00:40:59]	Coleman	There's a movie, you know there's a documentary called "Split" yeah and I think you can get it at you know one of, I can never remember the--I know that they show it and have copies of it at some of the more artsy video places. And I think the director's name is Alan Turk. I'm actually in that and actually Chry--Marsha might even be in it because it has a lot of stuff of the Hot Peaches, interviews with the Hot Peaches so. And somebody really should write something about Chrysis too I mean. But there is that documentary.
[00:41:40]	Interviewer	Were Marsha and Chrysis friends or did they have any history?
[00:41:43]	Coleman	I'm sure they had history I don't know what it was they kind of entered-- They were both in this one right? Ya.
[00:41:50]	Interviewer	Ya. There's one
[00:41:52]	Coleman	Ya. So I bet they were street pals because you know Chrysis had spent a lot of years on the streets too. So...
[00:42:05]	Interviewer	Sylvia will know if they did.
[00:42:09]	Coleman	Ya. I'm sure that they did, know each other.
[00:42:15]	Interviewer	Because my whole idea as far as writing this story is that Sylvia Rivera's story has been told in the book "Stonewall" by Martin Duberman and I don't know if you saw the movie "Stonewall"
[00:42:28]	Coleman	Yeah I did see the movie Stonewall, yes.
[00:42:32]	Interviewer	There's a Puerto Rican drag queen
[00:42:32]	Coleman	That's right! Ya.
[00:42:35]	Interviewer	That's based on Sylvia
[00:42:36]	Coleman	Right. Wow.
[00:42:37]	Interviewer	and Sylvia and Marsha were friends from the early, well I think the mid 60's, they met on 42nd street turning tricks but my interest is, is to show how this person Marsha and with her friend Sylvia you know mental illness, prostitution, all these things was able to be a major part in gay liberation and try to create a sort of transgender awareness, social services, even though it all fell apart
[00:43:09]	Coleman	Right.
[00:43:10]	Interviewer	later on you have the whole story of Marsha which she's sort of living on

		the streets and even in the 80's was involved with the Christopher Street Liberation and then it became heritage of pride, gay men's health crisis, raising money. And Sylvia went off in her own world which was full of troubles but how eventually Sylvia now is living in somewhat of a successor to S.T.A.R which is called "Transgender House" and it's kind of like their dream of the early 70's got realized almost 20 years later
[00:43:47]	Coleman	Right.
[00:43:48]	Interviewer	but Sylvia is now living in Transgender House, in Brooklyn, and it's run by transgender people and it's sort of like, it's almost like their own social services. They live there and they have counseling and that's the side of this story I wanna show
[00:44:06]	Coleman	That's great.
[00:44:07]	Interviewer	and so that's the side of the story I want to show
[00:44:09]	Coleman	Right the more positive
[00:44:10]	Interviewer	All of what Marsha did and she was this wild character but there is a very interesting set of accomplishments and with Marsha's death
[00:44:20]	Coleman	Absolutely. And I think that you know I always thought when I was thinking about Chrysis and Marsha throughout the years you know this whole now, you know the mass media is taking it-- allowing a trans, you know, transvestites and stuff to be part of the culture. You know Leslie Snipes is- do you know what I mean?
[00:44:44]	Interviewer	Well RuPaul
[00:44:46]	Coleman	RuPaul.
[00:44:48]	Interviewer	RuPaul is now acting now you know without drag and going on tour and whatever.
[00:44:52]	Coleman	Right, and I do believe that all of those people that really sacrificed a lot of their lives to you know making that more palpable for everybody. They kind of didn't, I always felt like pissed off especially for Chrysis because she was just really getting all her own stuff together emotionally and it was like shit you know she could have lived 10 more years it was like she could have whatever you know because it really, you know with RuPaul and I forget there's other's that I've seen
[00:45:22]	Interviewer	Oh, there's so many now and it's like
[00:45:25]	Coleman	and it's like nothing now, it's like nothing! You know what I mean?

[00:45:29]	Coleman	Yes.
[00:45:30]	Coleman	And they really were at the forefront of that and made it you know possible for all these other people. So I agree with you I mean, and now there probably is more of an ability for somebody who starts to lose it mentally you know they would be able to get help in better ways and you know.
[00:45:50]	Interviewer	Ya, last year in an interview in The New York Times, Sylvia, it's interesting, Sylvia mentions one other transgender person as well just got back from a psychiatric hospital and Sylvia says that's common with transgender people, we--I think she says "we tend to go insane occasionally" so you know it's sort of like a pattern there which I think people like Sylvia and Marsha in the early 70's when they were trying to put this together they were in their own limited way trying to do something about that.
[00:46:24]	Coleman	And I must say all throughout the time that I, I had heard about Marsha's involvement in a lot of this kind of stuff and I never really had seen her do it but I knew that you know that she had been involved in it and you know it always seemed kind of like a strange dichotomy because there was this wild you know for her to really be able to
[00:46:43]	Interviewer	Like to keep up with really serious causes and things like that
[00:46:46]	Coleman	Ya I did know, I mean I could see that part of her. I could see that there was, somewhere a very serious being under there.
[00:46:58]	Interviewer	One last question is in one of the videos--