

Mill Valley Public Library
Lucretia Little History Room
Oral History Program

Artemis Frederick

An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Benja Thompson in 2023

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In this oral history interview, Mill Valley native Artemis Frederick shares their perspective growing up in the area, exploring their gender identity, and finding community. They lived in Mill Valley through their childhood and adolescence and returned from college on summer break as an adult, which is when this interview took place. Studying children's literature through a political lens at Bard College in New York, Frederick describes an appreciation for the opportunity of an unconventional teaching environment and a thriving queer scene. They describe their involvement with the Throckmorton Theater, personal artistic practice, and spiritual interest in Judaism. Throughout, the power of names and labels is discussed, as well as Frederick's journey to discover, embrace, and express their own queerness. Frederick's oral history exemplifies a new generation's approach to raising consciousness around difference and finding itself in the wake of quarantine.

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Oral History of Artemis Frederick

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**Oral History of Artemis Frederick
May 31, 2023**

00:00:02 Benja Thompson: Today is May 31st, 2023. My name is Benja Thompson. And this interview is for the Mill Valley Public Library's Oral History program. Today I am speaking with Artemis Frederick at the Mill Valley Library. Thank you for joining me and for contributing your oral history to our community.

00:00:23 Artemis Frederick: You're welcome.

00:00:25 Benja Thompson: I guess I'll begin with the question that you had asked me. What are your pronouns?

00:00:32 Artemis Frederick: Ordinarily, I tell people my pronouns are they/them or ze/they. Very recently I thought I would try having my pronouns just be up to other people and to take a step back from that and stop and let go of some of that control. Also, because I don't feel that any particular list of pronouns will really capture how I feel quite. It will always be getting at something but not quite reaching. It is what I've experienced, but just letting other people call me whatever it is that they call me sort of releases me from that responsibility.

00:01:13 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:01:14 Artemis Frederick: So, call me what you want to.

00:01:19 Benja Thompson: And how does that feel? I guess that release of control.

00:01:24 Artemis Frederick: It's... I'm still working it out since I did that just before I left college. And most people there knew me as using the pronouns, 'they,' so they just kept doing that, which is fine. But being here and being just out in the town, I tend to get misgendered more.

00:01:49 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:01:50 Artemis Frederick: But if it's - if I don't have pronouns that I use for myself, it's not quite misgendering. It's the complicated thing where I don't mind people using 'she' for me in conjunction with other things or if they know me and then use that with just the knowledge of me and knowing that I have parts of me that I identify with in a feminine way. And so using the pronoun 'she' honestly gives me some recognition of that and gives me some sense that those parts of me are also valid and true. And 'she' works in that way. But when it's people who don't know me, it feels a bit more wrong because they don't know exactly who they're referring to when they say 'she.'

00:02:32 Benja Thompson: Yeah, I could understand that. Perhaps feeling presumptuous in a way. Mm hmm. Yeah, that's interesting. It just makes me think of the, you know, the power of labels and the power of names. What, I guess. do you feel like the power of a name is?

00:02:51 Artemis Frederick: That's a very big question also, because I've, um... I use a name that I chose for myself and am currently still looking for another one because I'm

converting to Judaism. And part of that is having a Hebrew name. And I've gone through a very different process with that where I've decided that I want my Jewish friends to pick that name for me.

00:03:13 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

00:03:15 Artemis Frederick: Because I want that name to be given to me from the community that I am joining rather than me choosing it for myself. It's just another way for me to feel like I'm being adopted into part of a bigger group.

00:03:28 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:03:30 Artemis Frederick: And names have power when we give them to ourselves. And there-there-there can be a good power in getting them from other people as that sign of recognition and respect. And for me, a sense that I'm being seen by someone else, not just flying solo.

00:03:48 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. So it's that sort of recognition that can affirm yourself in a way that can only be done through another person. Right. To your point, another community.

00:03:59 Artemis Frederick: Right, exactly.

00:04:03 Benja Thompson: Thank you, yeah, for the quick diversion there. But I guess we should start at the beginning of: What's your relationship to Mill Valley?

00:04:13 Artemis Frederick: I've lived here my entire life, more or less. I moved here when I was a year old. That doesn't really factor in for me. I left when I was 17. Because then I turned 18 at my new school in October. So this is the place that I grew up and I'm trying to figure out my new relationship with it as an adult and as somebody who has now been living in New York for two years and trying to figure out my new life here just when I'm on break from school.

00:04:56 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:04:56 Artemis Frederick: And so if this is a place that I still feel like I can fit into, or if it's just a place that I feel like I've... I've been meant to leave now.

00:05:07 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. From your time here as a... growing up, what are your recollections?

00:05:19 Artemis Frederick: I remember feeling very safe and... and being pretty safe. My, you know, my parents would let me just pretty much range free from the time I was in third grade on. Walk to school, walk back, hangout after school. And I didn't have a phone until I was in middle school. And it was just fine. No one was worried about me because I was here.

00:05:46 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:05:48 Artemis Frederick: So there was definitely a feeling of... I think I always felt a little bit cramped here because this town is so small and I didn't have a really good way to get other places until I was older and brave enough to take the bus, which has only been recently.

Mm hmm. And I still don't know how to drive. And the time when I was in high school on, I think I already just felt like I needed to make my world bigger than this place.

00:06:21 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:06:22 Artemis Frederick: But it's a good place to be when you're a little kid.

00:06:24 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Okay. And then, I suppose what was something that stuck out in terms of culture shock, or what have you, going to New York, as you mentioned?

00:06:36 Artemis Frederick: Well, this definitely relates to queerness, being in this town. And in my school, I was one of approximately ten people I could name off the top of my head who were queer, not even just trans, but queer and when I got to Bard, which is where I go to school now, almost all of the rooms I was in, over half of us were trans and that didn't stop. Just amazing me for, I think, months.

00:07:08 Benja Thompson: Yeah. What did that feel like to be amongst people who shared so many common experiences?

00:07:16 Artemis Frederick: There was this sense of being known and also not knowing because there was a sense of common experience I was having with other people. But we all had lived such different, in such different places, and had such different communities prior to being here and had such different identities that there was this wonderful sense of being with a different kind of different people as opposed to the difference of feeling like I'm the odd one out where I was with a group of people who were like me, but we were all so different that that was a sort of joyful kind of difference.

00:07:51 Benja Thompson: Was that a feeling that you had felt in high school or growing up in Mill Valley?

00:07:57 Artemis Frederick: No.

00:07:58 Benja Thompson: No. I'm sorry. I guess I meant a feeling like there wasn't like a community of people like, you know, that shared similar experiences.

00:08:13 Artemis Frederick: No, I always felt pretty much on my own, which I know everyone feels like that, but I didn't know anyone who was trans until I was in high school. I didn't even know that the idea of being non-binary existed until I was in high school, I suppose.

00:08:33 Benja Thompson: Could you say what that first sort of exposure was to that possibility?

00:08:40 Artemis Frederick: I don't remember exactly when I learned. I think it was sometime in my freshman year, and I don't know if it was something I'd seen online or something I'd heard. But then I had one friend who was out as being non-binary and it took me a while to get used to the idea because it was completely new to me. But as so many of my identities went, my first reaction would be like, 'This doesn't make any sense.' And then I think about it and think like, 'Oh no, this, this does make sense in a way.' And then I realized like, 'Oh, I'm this.' Fascinating.

00:09:21 Benja Thompson: Yeah. That is interesting how at first you can sort of reject something before realizing that it's inside yourself as well. Mm hmm. Yeah, I certainly can relate to that.

00:09:33 Artemis Frederick: Right. Like, it's not always where you hear something and immediately know that it's you. It can feel foreign and unusual, and you have to sit with that for a while before you realize that you relate to it.

00:09:44 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. How long do you feel like you had to sit with, with that concept before you felt like you related to it?

00:09:54 Artemis Frederick: Um, I came out a year after that, so. A year, I guess.

00:10:00 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Could you describe what that process was like, both for yourself and I suppose just moving through the world?

00:10:08 Artemis Frederick: Okay, this is a whole story.

00:10:10 Benja Thompson: If you're willing.

00:10:11 Artemis Frederick: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I wrote my college essay about this, actually. Okay, so I was... It was sometime, I think, September, October. And I had been trying to grow my hair out down to my hips and my hair just didn't do that. It was about as long as it was just a few inches past my collar. And eventually I decided if it's not going to go down, I'll cut it off. And I got a haircut that wasn't as short as this, but definitely an androgynous cut. And I liked it. I liked it a lot. It really worked for me and a few weeks after that happened, I was getting ready to go out to dinner and put on a dress because it was a nice place and I was looking in the mirror and just thinking something about this is wrong, something is, something is weird. And I couldn't put my finger on what about my, my vision of myself in the mirror felt strange and I got into the car and I remember I was-we were driving and I was running through all the possibilities and then just going off into like, nonsense possibilities. And one of them was thinking, 'Maybe you're not a girl' and I remember I sat there, I was just like, 'Oh, God.'

00:11:33 Benja Thompson: That realization.

00:11:34 Artemis Frederick: Yeah. Yeah. Because I thought that and then couldn't immediately dismiss it.

00:11:38 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:11:39 Artemis Frederick: And I think about a week went by of me, like, trying to think, like, I'm just not a girly girl, you know, like, this can't possibly be, be right. Because if this is, if this is true, my life is screwed. That was my thought process.

00:11:53 Benja Thompson: There must be a way to reason your way out.

00:11:56 Artemis Frederick: Of this whole new identity that's going to make things very complicated for me. That was how I was feeling about it. And I eventually realized that wasn't going to happen. But this was... this was me. And I initially was like, okay, this could be true, but

I don't have to change anything. Like, everything could be the same. And then after a while I was like, 'Well, different pronouns would be better.' And then after a while, well, 'I'd kind of like a different name.' That one was harder to, to get over with my parents. But they're really good about it now.

00:12:27 Benja Thompson: I'm glad to hear that.

00:12:28 Artemis Frederick: Mm hmm. Yeah. And they were, they were good about me, me telling them as well. I'm really lucky in that way.

00:12:34 Benja Thompson: Yeah. If you're comfortable sharing different, like, responses from friends, families...

00:12:41 Artemis Frederick: I'm not sure with my friends what I remember. I mean, I remember when I told them I was queer. The response of everyone was like, 'Oh, glad you figured that out.' It's like, if you all knew, why didn't you tell me? I could've, you could have saved me some time. So I think it was, it was a similar reaction of just like 'Finally you got there, did ya? Congratulations.'

00:13:02 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:13:04 Artemis Frederick: I remember telling my mom. She was the first person I told. She was at work, and I called her, and I was crying my eyes out. And I said to her, 'I don't know what my gender is.' She said, 'It's okay. You don't have to know.'

00:13:14 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Oh, that's... Did that feel, how did that feel? I guess, getting that response.

00:13:19 Artemis Frederick: I thought it felt really good. Yeah. Just no questions asked. Just, that's, that It was okay.

00:13:24 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:13:25 Artemis Frederick: And not like 'I'll love you anyway.' Just like, 'No, it's just okay.'

00:13:28 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Acceptance of it as a process. I'm glad that that felt like a good moment you shared.

00:13:41 Artemis Frederick: There's more to the story, though. Here we go. So... I was starting to come out in school, like, very gradually because each conversation took a while to get through, and I, I didn't know how to do it to everybody at once, but what I really wanted was just like, 'Can everyone just know?'

00:14:02 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:14:02 Artemis Frederick: Yeah. I'm tired of telling people. And I was trying to make it.. I didn't want people to feel like I was being really, you know, serious about - not serious like I didn't really believe it, but just intense or, you know, I was just describing it as, I remember the way I said was my gender has gone for a walk and gotten lost. Because it's what it felt like. It

was just gone. Oh, dear. And I had most of my friends in my drama department at Tam High, so I was talking to, I think, two of them and telling them what was going on in a bigger, just in a room with, with more people in it. And a senior, this was, I was, I was a second year. There was a senior there, I'll call him Colin, overhears this and yells across the whole room 'Do you have dysphoria?' And I hadn't thought about that question a whole lot. So I said no. And then he said, 'Then you're not trans.'

00:15:08 Benja Thompson: Weird. A weirdly specific heckle.

00:15:12 Artemis Frederick: Yes. So I did what I don't do anymore, which is to think 'Maybe I can reason this person out of this line of thinking,' which is not how this works. Honestly, if someone's made up their mind to, to be that way, talking to them in that position does not do anything. Like, they're not willing to listen. So I tried and he wouldn't. Wouldn't change his mind.

00:15:42 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:15:43 Artemis Frederick: And... it, it really threw me because he was one of the very few trans people that I knew. In school. Or just period at all.

00:15:54 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:15:55 Artemis Frederick: And I wasn't expecting him to just be open arms about it, but I didn't think he was going to flatly say 'You're wrong.'

00:16:02 Benja Thompson: Yeah, that's... I hope I don't overstep a boundary, but that sounds like a weird gatekeeping thing to do instead of like, you know, encouraging someone to explore whatever their gender may mean to them.

00:16:17 Artemis Frederick: Yeah, no, me too. And I didn't know how to handle that, so... So I'm not... Some time goes by and then somebody also in the drama department came up to me and said, 'Are you still identifying as what I heard? Then, which was, I think, gender queer? And I was like, 'Yeah.' And they said, 'Oh, Colin didn't say that.'

00:16:37 Benja Thompson: Hmm.

00:16:38 Artemis Frederick: So I'm like, 'Okay, what's, what's that mean? And she said, 'Well, he kind of told everyone that you don't identify that way and that you identify as a girl and you're, you're not serious about this here.' Yeah. 'And to, to just keep calling you with she/her pronouns' and it's like, whoa. And I did the thing again where I was like, maybe I can talk to him. What I did this time, which was better, was I did it over text and then I screenshot everything he sent back to me, which was a lot of hate speech and him saying like, 'You're not special. You're like, you either identify like entirely as, as trans or you don't,' like, 'You don't get to have this gray area of not knowing entirely and just essentially like, give it up.'

00:17:26 Benja Thompson: That seems like such binary thinking. for like...

00:17:29 Artemis Frederick: For a trans person. Like we've all had some experience of not being sure. I least that's what I've, that's what I've heard from other people. But one thing leads to another. I report him, he gets expelled.

00:17:45 Benja Thompson: Ouch. Yeah.

00:17:48 Artemis Frederick: And the, the flipside of the story, which is why I kind of want to laugh when I'm telling you is, he'd come out for me.

00:17:56 Benja Thompson: Hmm.

00:17:56 Artemis Frederick: And, of course, no one believed him when he said that this wasn't true. Because people are smarter than that.

00:18:02 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:18:03 Artemis Frederick: And without him meaning to, he'd sort of taken care of the problem for me. And suddenly everyone knew I was trans and knew that I was, like, being attacked. So they stood up for me, and people were, were quite good about it. And a few people weren't. But I knew then, like, who my friends were.

00:18:21 Benja Thompson: Yeah. How did it feel to find support in those around you through that?

00:18:27 Artemis Frederick: I mean, the whole experience sucked.

00:18:29 Benja Thompson: Yeah. It sounds terrible.

00:18:29 Artemis Frederick: Like, I feel more good feelings about it in retrospect, but that was a pretty, pretty bad time of... of high school for me.

00:18:45 Benja Thompson: Yeah. I'm sorry to hear that. Have you found your experiences in college and now in your adult life better? Are people more accepting or...

00:18:56 Artemis Frederick: Well Bard is special because it's a magnet for just weird, queer people who have what feels like experiences that are like mine of feeling like they were like, not knowing that you're the only one, but being one of the only ones where you grew up oftentimes and us all finding each other and making a community together means there's not really any space for, for people who think like that. And if they, if those people do exist, there, they're so entirely outnumbered that they can't get any traction with trying to cause problems.

00:19:37 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:19:38 Artemis Frederick: So that is something that is tough about leaving, though, because I get so used to people introducing themselves and then saying, 'These are my pronouns. What are yours?' And people not making assumptions and people not being rude and knowing that it's very likely that the person you're with is the safe person to be yourself. And it's sometimes hard to forget that that is such an anomaly.

00:20:09 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:20:10 Artemis Frederick: And it doesn't want, it doesn't make me wish that stuff there was less good so that I had less of a culture shock leaving because I, I need that safety and that, that environment so much that I wouldn't want to make it more similar to the rest of the world. But it will be tough to leave permanently eventually. And it is tough to leave temporarily.

00:20:39 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. How long had you known about Bard College? I suppose, as you described it, as a magnet for, like, queerness?

00:20:52 Artemis Frederick: I didn't know it was going to be that until I got there. The reason why I chose to go there, I didn't visit or anything, was that I knew it was one of the top schools in the country for unconventional teaching.

00:21:06 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:21:06 Artemis Frederick: And that was something I really, really wanted out of school.

00:21:10 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:21:10 Artemis Frederick: So that was why I chose to go there. But I knew it was radical in that way and had really good politics, so it wasn't unexpected. But I, I didn't expect the magnitude of the, the environment until I got there.

00:21:27 Benja Thompson: Hmm. And then what are you studying?

00:21:31 Artemis Frederick: Literature. Kids' books.

00:21:33 Benja Thompson: Okay. Oh, very cool.

00:21:34 Artemis Frederick: Yeah. Not writing them or intending to write them. Just studying them.

00:21:38 Benja Thompson: Yeah. As like an art form?

00:21:42 Artemis Frederick: Less of an art form. I'm studying more for political propaganda.

00:21:46 Benja Thompson: Oh, interesting. Yeah. How did you get interested in that?

00:21:50 Artemis Frederick: Yeah, I didn't know it was a thing I could do. I first heard people talking about kids' books in that way through this podcast. I highly recommend it. It's called *Witch, Please*. And it's two women who have literature degrees using Harry Potter to talk about unreliable narrators and talking about body politics and about good representation and bad representation and all this stuff I had never experienced before and never imagined you could, you could take a series of kids' books seriously for in that regard. And it made me realize that I've, I've always read a lot and I've always enjoyed using what I've read as I've gotten older to reflect back on books that I read when I was younger and to, to think about them, you know, as pieces of literature that are worthy of being studied as well as anything else in that way. And when I, when I got to Bard, I didn't have my heart set on that. I went there and just tried some stuff and saw what stuck. And I still didn't think I could major in kids' books. Because I figured I

could major in literature and then use that to study kids' books maybe after school, you know, and because it still wasn't serious enough as something I could do at school.

00:23:21 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:23:21 Artemis Frederick: So I had a meeting with my literature, literature teacher that I had that semester, and I said to her, 'I know I can't do this. What's the, what's the next best thing?' And she said, 'Why do you think you can't do that? Of course you can do that.'

00:23:34 Benja Thompson: Yeah. And so they helped you, like, open that door.

00:23:39 Artemis Frederick: So that's what I'm studying.

00:23:40 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Oh, that's very cool.

00:23:42 Artemis Frederick: Yeah.

00:23:43 Benja Thompson: You know, talk about someone you thought was an ally betraying you, right? With the whole Harry Potter stuff. I suppose I could ask, like, where do you feel like the culture is at large for queerness, looking at, like, you know, looking at even just the last 20 years. 20 years ago, gay marriage wasn't legal. And now it feels like not an assumption necessarily, because it's still very much valued. But do you feel like you've seen change even in your own lifetime?

00:24:28 Artemis Frederick: I am not sure about my own witnessing of change because I've only recently, I think, fully developed my critical thinking skills and been able to properly see the world outside of what people just tell me is true. So I'm not sure about how the, the wider world has changed within my lifetime because I'm still figuring out what did I believe as a kid, what was true and what was not true. But I've definitely seen a lot of change very recently about transness. I think it's a much more a, a topic of conversation, at least maybe not, you know, the world hasn't entirely turned over to support necessarily, but the conversations are being had about gender and about gender roles. And about expression and all of these things. And I believe that that's, that's a really necessary part of change, is to have people be aware of this stuff and to talk about it and just expose as many people to these ideas as possible.

00:25:43 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. What's a change then, that you might hope to see in the future?

00:25:52 Artemis Frederick: I'm... I mean, I'm awfully cynical. I'd like us to be murdered at less of a national rate. Yeah, that'd be lovely. Like the suicide rate to go down?

00:26:02 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:26:03 Artemis Frederick: I don't even necessarily, like, think about the big picture. Like, job opportunities. I'm like, can I just live until the age of naturally dying?

00:26:12 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:26:13 Artemis Frederick: Because it sucks so much that the actual, that a dream as a queer person, and especially as a trans person, is to live and die at the age of 85.

00:26:25 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:26:26 Artemis Frederick: That seems, every time I think of that, just of that concept, it's like, 'Don't be silly. That's not going to happen to you. We don't make it that far.'

00:26:35 Benja Thompson: Yeah. And for a whole generation to have the mindset that their life in particular may be taken from them is so scary.

00:26:47 Artemis Frederick: Like people say that this generation has more queer people in it than previous ones. Obviously like, that... Let me start that thought over. In, in terms of like being born, you know, and being queer from jump, that's, that's not true. But currently the numbers stand. There are more queer people in this generation because the ones in our parents' generation, people died of AIDS or were murdered or killed themselves at a much higher rate than we do now.

00:27:17 Benja Thompson: Or stayed in the closet.

00:27:18 Artemis Frederick: Yeah, right.

00:27:20 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:27:20 Artemis Frederick: So, yeah, there's more, there's more queer, queer people in this generation. There's more of us who are still alive.

00:27:25 Benja Thompson: Mm. Hmm. Heavy.

00:27:32 Artemis Frederick: Yeah.

00:27:32 Benja Thompson: Yeah, it's heavy, but hopeful that the more, the more community that can be formed means the more change that can happen. Which then means the community can grow larger and stronger. So it will sort of feed itself.

00:27:53 Artemis Frederick: Yeah. And I, you know, you think about in the 1940s that was such a dangerous time to be queer. Like just being arrested and killed was just the norm. And now it's not, you know, obviously nothing's perfect, but it's been less than a hundred years and we've made such unbelievable progress in that way of, um, obviously people aren't completely safe, but you can be much, much safer and more in control of, of yourself and your life now than then, than you were then.

00:28:35 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:28:36 Artemis Frederick: And I am very, very grateful for that and for the people who have gotten us there. So stuff doesn't happen without people taking risks and taking initiative.

00:28:45 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Who, I suppose, might you look towards? Like, do you have certain, like, queer icons or historical figures that you like, admire?

00:28:57 Artemis Frederick: Marsha P Johnson.

00:28:58 Benja Thompson: Okay. Could you speak on that?

00:29:02 Artemis Frederick: She was a trans woman in New York in the eighties who is one of the figureheads of the Stonewall riots and was--dedicated her life to making the world a safer place for, for queer youth who had been kicked out of their homes. And she was so fearless. And just obviously, when, when you're living in that time and place and have that identity, there's a certain part of you that you can't refuse the call of... if you are living in that time and place and you are trans, you're going to be in danger. You're going to be at risk. But she did the, the most that she could with it. And I'm so grateful for her.

00:29:58 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. And it's so great that we're able to know her story and be able to, like, grow from that and have that strong role model.

00:30:10 Artemis Frederick: Yeah.

00:30:11 Benja Thompson: What would you say community means to you? Whether community of queer people, community of, like, artists?

00:30:21 Artemis Frederick: Well, that, that word is very nebulous. I guess if you're thinking about it, not community as in just a neighborhood of people who are all just living in the same area, but people who are actually, um, turning to each other for, for support and love and, and help and hope and, and everything. A community to me means a group of people who show up for each other, who are aware of each other's needs and boundaries and like being together, have experiences that make them see each other and love each other and are able to work things out when there's problems with each other and not just see problems as a sign that they're incompatible or that something, that someone needs to be just kicked out.

00:31:19 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:31:21 Artemis Frederick: It's like, it's a thing that can grow and change and adapt and is still strong.

00:31:28 Benja Thompson: Where do you feel like you have found community?

00:31:36 Artemis Frederick: Bard. In the, um, the friends that I have there and also in the Jewish community there that I am going to join in the fall fully. I've been a part of it since for, for about a year now, but to have all of myself there, that's something that's really special about Bard is we have a really special student body. I think that's something I think everyone there agrees on, and I don't know exactly how we all pulled it off and all found each other there, but the people there are, I don't know everyone there. I don't know. It's so hard for me to put into words honestly, everyone there is interesting, That's for sure.

00:32:36 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Yeah. And would you be comfortable sharing sort of your spiritual, spiritual journey that you've alluded to?

00:32:49 Artemis Frederick: I wasn't raised as any particular religion, and I was never particularly drawn to any of them growing up. And in my winter semester of my first year at Bard, I started going to Shabbat every week because I knew a handful of people there and this

didn't really click for me until later this year. About what about Shabbat or the other Jewish practices was really speaking to me. But Judaism has a large focus on how you spend your time and making just regular, everyday time sacred and really making you aware of the, the specialness that you, you can bring to any particular moment and sanctifying what you, what you're able to do and how, and the ideas of rest and the ideas of connection and love and also that Judaism is a religion that can be taken in so many different ways. And you can appreciate so many different parts of it and experience it in a way that that works for you. It's not a religion that has a lot of hard rules about how to do it right. And that idea of flexibility and fluidity, like there's a holiday that's devoted to thinking everything that you think is absolutely true in yourself and subverting it. It's Purim. And that, that space for, for change and for difference, I think, relates a lot to queerness. And we, we have conversations in that space about queerness all the time. And knowing that Judaism has survived because Jewish people have experienced so much hardship but have been able to survive it and have their religion survive it with the fluidity of it, and if it was too rigid, they wouldn't be able to continue to practice.

00:35:22 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:35:23 Artemis Frederick: And seeing the, the changing of the practices and of what everything means as an essential part of it and as something that is good and you can... and doing it in a way that is different isn't a disrespect to it, is such a, honestly, such a radical concept.

00:35:45 Benja Thompson: Yeah, it's so interesting the parallels you seem to be drawing between Judaism and queerness, specifically the holiday of subverting assumptions and expectations you make internally.

00:36:01 Artemis Frederick: On Purim, you, you dress up and you, you with a, a sort of costume that I think is meant to be a diversion from some way that you identify. So the first year I did it, I went like the fullest femme I could possibly be. Like, I put fake tits into my bra on top of the ones I already have. Just like, 'Yeah, we're doing this.' And it was great. And just seeing myself like that and still recognizing a piece of myself that I felt, you know, still mattered and was still valid. But knowing like, this is, I'm doing basically drag.

00:36:35 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:36:36 Artemis Frederick: And that can be good and fun and, and real in a different kind of way. You, you dress up, you put on a play where there's lots of audience participation, and then you get wasted until you can't tell the difference between good and evil. And that's the holiday. And it's wonderful.

00:36:56 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Yeah, it sounds like a really good and a communal, almost like release of these, like, invisible lines that we draw, right?

00:37:06 Artemis Frederick: And just thinking it's okay to have stuff not be so, so tight and fit so, you know, exactly. Even if it's stuff that you, you hold very strongly and true about yourself, it's okay to relax and let yourself breathe and let these identities, just allow them to change. If what they have been wanting to do is change, even if that requires a little bit of rethinking about yourself.

00:37:39 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. What would you say your relationship to performance is then?

00:37:48 Artemis Frederick: I have a, a gender expression that is not super consistent, and it can sometimes be tough me to figure out first thing in the morning what to wear in such a way that I don't get dysphoria.

00:38:03 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:38:05 Artemis Frederick: And it's easier for me to think less in terms of girl/boy, both/neither as like 'Today, I'm going to be a pirate.' It's a bit more fun for me.

00:38:13 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:38:15 Artemis Frederick: And then it, it takes away the gendered aspect of it a little bit, because it's like, what gender does 'pirate' have? I don't know. It's 'pirate.'

00:38:22 Benja Thompson: And it's a purer representation of self, then, too.

00:38:26 Artemis Frederick: Yeah, exactly. Because then I'm not, I'm not so worried about, you know, what are other people going to think in terms of gender stuff when they see me? Because that's always a struggle of me thinking, 'Should I try as hard as I can to look masculine,' even if that's not how I really identify that day? Because I don't want to be misgendered? And which, which thing is more important? Which thing hurts more, the, the misgendering or me not looking a way that feels comfortable but knowing that I, I have less of a chance of that, that day.

00:38:59 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Yeah. That just makes me think of one of... it feels like almost a universal experience for a queer identified person, is that exact calculation of, like, 'What's going to hurt more?' And again, like, that's another difficult reality.

00:39:26 Artemis Frederick: I'm reading this book right now. I just started it, so I don't remember who the author is, but it's called 'Gender Outlaw.' And this was written in the nineties, and it, it's a memoir. It's by Kate, somebody, that has all these concepts in it that are still so radical and something the author writes. I looked up their pronouns, are 'she' and 'they,' she was born AMAB (assigned male at birth) and then transitioned to female and then realized that that gender wasn't right either.

00:39:56 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:39:56 Artemis Frederick: But back in the day, like the conversation was 'man' or 'woman'. And even within trans spaces was, 'Are you a man or are you a woman?' And if you were born as a man and you're feeling weird and wrong about that, you're a woman.

00:40:10 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:40:11 Artemis Frederick: And they realized that after they transitioned that this wasn't also them. And they were trying to get out of one box that felt uncomfortable by getting into a different uncomfortable box.

00:40:23 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:40:24 Artemis Frederick: Which I feel like we still don't talk about that. That aspect of identity, which is back to the pronouns thing. Kind of why I've just let that idea, of trying to find something that fits, go for myself, because it's so much pressure to be under to try to think what is exactly the label that will, will feel exactly right regardless of what other people say.

00:40:50 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:40:51 Artemis Frederick: Because I've tried so many different gender labels, and every single one comes with rules.

00:41:00 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:41:01 Artemis Frederick: They all come with a set of things you are, therefore not allowed to be.

00:41:08 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:41:09 Artemis Frederick: Even the ones that are the most widely encompassing. There's still so much, like, of a box then, which can be great. Obviously, that can be, like, people can take labels and use them in whatever way. And you can have multiple labels that might, that, that might seem like they contradict each other. But for you, they don't. That's all fine. But for me, all I can feel whenever I try to pick one, that one that might work better is my sense of all of the things within me that do not now fit within this new box.

00:41:47 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Yeah. A definition sort of defined by what is not.

00:41:52 Artemis Frederick: Right. Which, I know I won't, like, I mean, I say this now and I change my mind all the time. Like a label that I think I won't ever really want to use for myself is non-binary. Because that's not saying what you are. It's just saying what you aren't.

00:42:06 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:42:07 Artemis Frederick: Just I am not this. Which, again, can open yourself up to – I could be anything else. I just know what I'm not. But if I do eventually pick a label, I want it to be something that actually says something about what is here.

00:42:20 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. And it seems so important to embrace, like, the spectrum of it all. Embrace the fact that not only is it constantly a moving target that may change at any moment, but everyone is working with different targets, right? Where everyone's experience can be different. And just providing space for that feels so necessary.

00:42:52 Artemis Frederick: I do think we could have more space for people who don't want to use labels. I think in the current queer community, there's a big emphasis on like, 'How exactly, how exactly do you identify?' Like, 'What exactly do you, do you feel is, is true about yourself?' And it's not that I don't know at all now. It's just that I think there isn't anything that's going to fit. So why am I bothering?

00:43:23 Benja Thompson: Yeah. And, like, just the act of labeling something is simultaneously one of the most, like, human actions in that's what our brain is like, wired to do. But it's also like an act of violence.

00:43:36 Artemis Frederick: Right. Even if it's for yourself. Like, it's not that I, I don't know what I am. I think I have a fair amount of clarity in allowing things to be fluid and not quite any of the available labels. I just don't think that labeling is going to help, that's all.

00:43:58 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:44:01 Artemis Frederick: I am trans. Full stop.

00:44:04 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:44:05 Artemis Frederick: Or not even full stop. Just. I am trans.

00:44:08 Benja Thompson: How does it feel to be able to say that?

00:44:11 Artemis Frederick: Lovely.

00:44:12 Benja Thompson: I feel like the, the, the relief and, like, almost. Yeah, I can feel that from you.

00:44:19 Artemis Frederick: Yeah, I'm trans and I am queer.

00:44:21 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:44:21 Artemis Frederick: Because I've also recently realized that I don't know how, or, okay, that's an actual one where I don't know how I identify in terms of sexuality.

00:44:29 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:44:29 Artemis Frederick: But I've tried to think, like, is it, you know, the thing where you can be bi and you can still have a preference, but it still allows for both ends. But if I really feel like a lean towards one, then does the other one count at all? But then if I pick a label that's just, you know, for one type of gender, then the feeling that I have for other people, I then have to write off or try to ignore in some way in order for that other label to work. God damn, I'm just queer. That's it.

00:45:03 Benja Thompson: You know, I certainly relate to that. And especially just, you know, out of convenience as like a catchall. That certainly seems to be the, the phrase that I find myself using most often.

00:45:17 Artemis Frederick: Yeah, I like who I like.

00:45:19 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Mm hmm. I have a few questions prepared if we could go into those as well.

00:45:30 Artemis Frederick: One last thought about. Something I learned pretty recently is the terms 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality' weren't invented until pretty recently. And

before then, there weren't types of people, like at least in, I think, American or either British society. You only had acts.

00:45:50 Benja Thompson: Hmm.

00:45:51 Artemis Frederick: So it was like, this would be a homosexual act that you were doing. And it, it didn't mean that this was the kind of person that you only ever liked. This was just the one thing you were doing that day.

00:46:02 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:46:03 Artemis Frederick: And I like that.

00:46:05 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:46:06 Artemis Frederick: It's like, this is the, this is the type of person I'm with right now. This is the type of gender that I feel like I'm experiencing in this moment. And it doesn't have to be contradicted by what I was yesterday. This is just true for right now. And isn't that, isn't that nice?

00:46:19 Benja Thompson: And it allows for like, a spontaneity as well.

00:46:24 Artemis Frederick: Like no strings attached.

00:46:25 Benja Thompson: You don't have to, like, identify as a certain way, but just do what feels right.

00:46:31 Artemis Frederick: Right. And not worry you, like, if this is going to be the way you are forever. Because it might be. It might not be. But if it's true for right now, then that's, that's what matters.

00:46:40 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Yeah. Thank you. I did not know that history of the term. Yeah, that's cool. So I had seen that you were featured in a Tam High news article titled Quarantine Creations.

00:46:55 Artemis Frederick: My friend wrote that.

00:46:56 Benja Thompson: Okay. Could you talk about how that came about?

00:47:00 Artemis Frederick: Yeah. My friend Claudia, she was thinking about the extra time we all had on our hands with the first part of COVID and what people were doing with that time. And I was making a lot more art because I had more time to do it. And I was at home pretty much all the time. And so she asked me about what I was making and about my creative process. So I don't remember all the things I talked to her about that. I remember I told her about my artist trading cards, which were things you can make using playing cards where you just, it's normally collage, but you can do whatever with them. And then if you meet up with other people who also have them, you can trade them with each other and it's great.

00:47:47 Benja Thompson: Yeah, that sounds like a cool way to not only grow your own practice, but to share it with others.

00:47:53 Artemis Frederick: Yeah. And to make something that is small. So you were not investing a ton of time in it. And it's a good way to try things out and not get too attached to the results, which is the type of art that I like. I like to make stuff and then I normally don't keep it. I just, like, let it go in whatever way.

00:48:14 Benja Thompson: So do you feel like you're more process based than result based?

00:48:17 Artemis Frederick: Yeah.

00:48:18 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Mm hmm. How long have you been making art?

00:48:23 Artemis Frederick: My entire life. It's what I've always done.

00:48:26 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:48:29 Artemis Frederick: I remember. I think I was, like, four. My mom got me a wooden easel just so I could put my things on it while I was working. And I don't think I really understood what they were for, so I just painted on it.

00:48:37 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:48:38 Artemis Frederick: And would paint over it and over and over and over and do different things on it. And I loved that. Yeah. And now I make stuff, I think pretty much every day I, I painted these pants.

00:48:49 Benja Thompson: They're very cool.

00:48:49 Artemis Frederick: I bleached the shirt. This is, this is just what I do.

00:48:53 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. It's almost like breathing at a certain point.

00:48:56 Artemis Frederick: Yeah. I can't imagine not.

00:48:58 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:48:59 Artemis Frederick: Even if I didn't have any of my supplies at all, I would figure out something. I'd make something and figure out a new process, and that would just be my process.

00:49:07 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. That's very cool. Yeah. It feels very important to have an artistic process that is personal as well.

00:49:17 Artemis Frederick: Yeah.

00:49:18 Benja Thompson: Something you could just do for yourself.

00:49:20 Artemis Frederick: And I think that also relates to my relationship with gender in a big way. I heard this quote that I love to absolute pieces, and it's that 'becoming myself has been the greatest creative project of my life.'

00:49:37 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:49:38 Artemis Frederick: And I feel that so strongly for myself. Where there's, there's part of gender that you can think of as being innate and is not something that you are actively changing and playing with. But there's also a part of gender that feels like a very incredible part of like, free form expressionist art.

00:50:01 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:50:01 Artemis Frederick: And I love playing with how I present myself and also just thinking what if, what if I just tried out this label? How would it feel?

00:50:12 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:50:13 Artemis Frederick: And how would that let me see myself in a different way?

00:50:17 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:50:18 Artemis Frederick: And just seeing what sticks and noticing what doesn't and letting that be a form of play.

00:50:26 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Yeah. That freedom sounds beautiful. Do you remember who said that quote?

00:50:35 Artemis Frederick: It's from the show *The Magicians*, from a wonderful flamboyant gay character named Elliot.

00:50:42 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Do you have other favorite characters? Because I know oftentimes for queer people growing up, their first role model will be a, like a character with a very extravagant personality, for instance.

00:51:01 Artemis Frederick: I'm not sure I, I think I've forgotten a lot of that stuff from being a kid. I don't think I have a good answer for that.

00:51:14 Benja Thompson: That's fine. I guess Ursula's on the mind –

00:51:17 Artemis Frederick: Yeah.

00:51:17 Benja Thompson: – is the only thing.

00:51:20 Artemis Frederick: Absolutely.

00:51:22 Benja Thompson: And then I'm sure you're sick of thinking about it, talking about it or what have you, but could you recount, would you be willing to recount your experiences through the quarantine phase of the pandemic?

00:51:39 Artemis Frederick: Honestly, I haven't had a lot of time spent talking about this with other people, which scares me in a different kind of way. Like, I know we all don't want to think about that time, but the collective amnesia also makes it feel like a really strange, bad dream. And then thinking back on that, that, and those things we were experiencing that we now just don't talk about, I think I would appreciate having a bit more of a reckoning with people.

00:52:09 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:52:10 Artemis Frederick: Just to process it and, you know, know that we all... It's such a weird thing for us all to have in common now.

00:52:18 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Yeah.

00:52:20 Artemis Frederick: Mm hmm. So that time was, there was an element of it related to trans stuff that was almost kind of nice. A big thing that does give me dysphoria is, or did at the time, was being in school because the two things I would notice just constantly whether I wanted to or not was the um, the parts of my body or my mannerisms or other things that related to the cis girls in my classes. And I was much more uncomfortable then with my sense of gender. So I was trying very, very hard to stay away from all that stuff. But then seeing all of the qualities and types of body, bodily expression that the guys had that I also didn't have, and especially with my voice and hearing myself talk still does give me dysphoria. I think that's currently my last frontier in a way. Like the last big thing that I haven't really deconstructed and started to feel okay about.

00:53:34 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:53:35 Artemis Frederick: And when we started going back to school, that all came back, especially with hearing my voice.

00:53:42 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:53:43 Artemis Frederick: Because I guess I just talked a lot less when I wasn't doing school in person.

00:53:48 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:53:49 Artemis Frederick: Um, so the getting to be alone and getting to have time away from other people had some positive effect on me in that way.

00:54:01 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. And the constant comparison.

00:54:05 Artemis Frederick: Right, right. It's just, it was just me. And I got so much more used to just the way that I was and feeling so much more comfortable with that without other things. To compare it to that when I was thrown back into it, that comfort was just gone.

00:54:19 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Do you feel like you are able to retain that sense of self now in your, like, adulthood?

00:54:34 Artemis Frederick: With, um... yeah. Well it's different now, because I've been spending so much time at Bard where there's people who are like me, where there's so many other non-binary people or whatever type of, you know, identifier you would use. Where when I compare myself to them, feels great. It's like we all have different bodies or possibly the same bodies, but they don't say anything about our gender identity.

00:54:59 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

00:54:59 Artemis Frederick: And whatever you are in terms of like how you look on the outside or how you sound, what matters is knowing that that doesn't matter.

00:55:12 Benja Thompson: Yeah, and that's an interesting inversion where it seems like the differences are now affirmative information.

00:55:19 Artemis Frederick: Right.

00:55:21 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. What's... may I ask, what's a moment of gender euphoria that you've experienced recently?

00:55:40 Artemis Frederick: Recently? I've been slowly getting back into feminine clothing, which has been euphoric, both in the way of having days where it feels good on me, but then also just the knowledge that it doesn't, it can have an impact on my identity that day, but it also doesn't have to. And I can wear feminine stuff without being a girl, and especially at school, people could see me wearing feminine stuff and just know I was wearing feminine stuff that day that I wasn't... both that my identity hadn't suddenly changed, or they also just knew me and didn't see that as such as me being a girl.

00:56:23 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:56:24 Artemis Frederick: And I really, really liked all that. And I don't like wearing feminine stuff here because I know that that's just going to make people go have a snap judgment about me.

00:56:34 Benja Thompson: Hmm.

00:56:35 Artemis Frederick: And the environment there of knowing I could wear whatever. And people knew me and were able to see past that and also see it and know that it was, you know, good and fine. That was a lot of gender euphoria.

00:56:53 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:56:55 Artemis Frederick: Just the space to be myself and wear what I wanted to wear. Not worry about how it was going to make people think.

00:57:01 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Mm hmm. I'm glad that you found places to be able to access that. That's so important.

00:57:13 Artemis Frederick: Yeah, because I don't want to live in a way that I can't wear feminine clothing or makeup or anything, because there's a lot of fun stuff in there and be like, there's parts of that that do affirm my gender identity, and I don't want to have to live in an environment where I have to sacrifice my just sense of comfort and knowing that I'm going to probably have a bad day from other people judging me for that.

00:57:43 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:57:44 Artemis Frederick: Because that's something I wanted to wear that day.

00:57:46 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Yeah. It's that consideration of, like, external factors. And so I've also seen that you would work with the Throckmorton Theater on a summer program, is that right?

00:58:10 Artemis Frederick: Still do. Just came from there.

00:58:11 Benja Thompson: Okay. What were you doing there, just now?

00:58:14 Artemis Frederick: I work with Steve [Coleman].

00:58:16 Benja Thompson: Okay. I don't know Steve.

00:58:19 Artemis Frederick: He makes the props and sets. And, um, have you ever been in the theater?

00:58:24 Benja Thompson: I've not, unfortunately, yet.

00:58:26 Artemis Frederick: There's a lot of incredibly beautiful paintings and sculptures and things in there, and he makes all of them. He is just a wonderful person and a creative genius. And I love getting to work side by side with him on whatever the project of the week is.

00:58:44 Benja Thompson: Yeah. How long have you been involved in that?

00:58:48 Artemis Frederick: This is just the second year. It's pretty new.

00:58:51 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. That's very cool. Yeah.

00:58:56 Artemis Frederick: And then we're still, you know, getting out of the COVID era of, of theater and stuff. So this is all, I might have been there sooner, but that's just, you know, the world, where the world's been.

00:59:07 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Hmm. What's something that you're looking forward to there in terms of like, an upcoming project or...?

00:59:18 Artemis Frederick: Nothing ever seems to get done. Um, we're trying to make a museum of small things in the, um, the downstairs room, which will maybe get done someday. But I don't particularly mind just because the process has been good.

00:59:32 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

00:59:33 Artemis Frederick: But I hope people eventually get to see what we're doing.

00:59:35 Benja Thompson: Yeah, that is always the goal. Yeah. Or maybe not if it's more process than result.

00:59:43 Artemis Frederick: No, we do need the stuff that we're making to get out of the studio eventually. Yeah.

00:59:48 Benja Thompson: That's fair. Hmm.

00:59:49 Artemis Frederick: You should come by.

00:59:50 Benja Thompson: Yeah, I think, I know there's the Tuesday night comedy sign that they have often. What's your introduction, I guess, to that space before you were involved? Like working there?

01:00:09 Artemis Frederick: Well, I used to go and see the performances that they had there. And I used to work in the art store downtown, which closed just a few weeks ago.

01:00:20 Benja Thompson: Oh.

01:00:21 Artemis Frederick: But Steve would come by there for stuff all the time, so I got to know him a bit in that way and know what he was working with and what he would do. And I don't remember exactly how I started going over to help out, but my boss at the art store eventually transitioned over there and she would call me up to come over and make stuff and do calligraphy because I could do that for hire. And then I started doing it more with Steve, and it's been great.

01:00:54 Benja Thompson: That's very cool. Yeah. How long have you been doing calligraphy?

01:01:01 Artemis Frederick: Five years.

01:01:02 Benja Thompson: Oh, wow. How did that start?

01:01:06 Artemis Frederick: I got a, a pen, a calligraphy pen, and it was just a really beautiful pen. And I decided that I wanted to know how to use it. So I learned.

01:01:16 Benja Thompson: So there you go.

01:01:24 Artemis Frederick: It's a good party trick.

01:01:35 Benja Thompson: So what would be something that you hope to see for Mill Valley in the future?

01:01:45 Artemis Frederick: I'm glad to see that the library is doing stuff for Pride Month, right? Especially, they're going to have a drag queen at the theater doing Storytime for Kids, which, I think that's great. I think just more queer exposure for kids at, at young ages especially like that is great. I want more of that.

01:02:07 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

01:02:07 Artemis Frederick: Um, I hope that the schools have more queer, inclusive history here, because this is an environment where that could happen. I think this place – more than people would like to say that it is – but it's not so conservative that if kids were learning queer history in their classroom, that people would be up in arms about it. If the books that people were teaching in elementary school had queer characters, just more stuff so that kids could learn sooner. Because I didn't learn any of this until I was already a teenager, like not even learning it about myself. Just learning about it, period.

01:02:52 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

01:02:53 Artemis Frederick: And I wish that I'd known about it when I was younger. Not even just so that I would know myself better. That is also true, but just to have that be a part of my life for longer.

01:03:04 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Yeah. Because it's a whole history that's so often hidden.

01:03:08 Artemis Frederick: Right. Yeah. Even if, like, this is taught to somebody and they never have a realization about themselves, like, they're just cisgender, they're just straight. But now they have this, exactly, this history that is so important, and they have deeper empathy for other people. And they're able to understand other people's identities better. That is so important. And that doesn't... that's harder to make happen if it's not something you're raised knowing.

01:03:34 Benja Thompson: Yeah.

01:03:35 Artemis Frederick: When, when it's not normalized in that way.

01:03:37 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Yeah. And having had the information made accessible.

01:03:47 Artemis Frederick: And know that it's not something shameful or something that you're not supposed to think about until you're older, that it's, you know, something that is a part of everybody all the time and that it's okay to talk to your mom and dad about it if you have questions and you can learn about it in other places than sex ed, which is where I was taught.

01:04:12 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Yeah. To not have it like, limited to one sort of cordoned off area of one cordoned off area, right?

01:04:21 Artemis Frederick: Right. And just think, okay, now we've addressed it and that's all we're going to say about it.

01:04:25 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Hmm. What would be a piece of advice that you may be able to share with fellow members of the queer community? Or perhaps a piece of advice that you would give a younger version of yourself?

01:04:45 Artemis Frederick: I think the thing I've been thinking about recently with not having to have a specific label for your identity, I think I would... it's not necessarily advice I would give to people because like I said, labels can be great. Like it allows you to find your, like, a niche thing that you are, therefore able to, if other people have that label as well, you're able to have that instant connection with other people. That's something I have to do a little bit more work now with labels that are really, really broad, with knowing if someone else has those very broad labels, we might not see eye to eye on stuff at all. But for people to know that it's okay to not want to use labels and it's okay to feel like labels don't necessarily fit and that's nothing wrong with you. Um, that just sometimes labels don't cover everything, and that doesn't mean you should have to fit yourself back into something.

01:05:42 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

01:05:43 Artemis Frederick: I think that that would be something I would want people to know.

01:05:48 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Thank you. Is there anything else you'd like to discuss or share?

01:06:01 Artemis Frederick: If someone has neo pronouns, do your best to learn them.

01:06:04 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm.

01:06:05 Artemis Frederick: It's tricky at first, but so are they/them pronouns. And it gets easier with practice. And as somebody who used 'them' for a long time, it means a lot when people do use them.

01:06:16 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. It's a nice way to show care, right? Attention around someone's preferences.

01:06:22 Artemis Frederick: Right. And to just put a little bit more work in and just keep trying. Even if you messed up in the beginning and if you mess up with someone's pronouns, just correct yourself and move on. Don't make a huge deal about it.

01:06:38 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. Yeah, absolutely. Okay. Well, thank you. Yeah. This has been great.