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‘Interviewees: Patty Dukes and Rephstar
Interviewers: Dr. Oneka LaBennett and Dr. Natasha Lightfoot
Date: December 14, 2007

Dr. Oneka LaBennett (OL): So why don't we start with you and why don't you just state your name and your date of birth.

Patty Dukes: Hi, my name is Patricia Marte and I go by Patty Dukes. My birthday is 11/13/1979.

Rephstar (RS): And my name is Amilcar Alfaro, my birthday is 1/21/81. And I go by Rephstar. I knew I was missing something.

OL: So let's go back and forth and ask each of you, each of these questions. Why don't we start with you Patty. Why don't you tell us where you were born. Specifically what neighborhood, what street. Like be as specific as you can.

PD: Well, my family is from the Dominican Republic and my mother and my father moved to Puerto Rico and I was born in Puerto Rico. And then I came to the Bronx when I was about five years old and I lived first on 176th St., just off the Grand Concourse. And then we moved to 167th St. and Jerome Ave., where I am at now. So I've been there for about twenty something years.

OL: And that's interesting are both from the D.R. but they moved to Puerto Rico.

PD: Right. My father was in the military and because of his military status at that time, you know he was able to get like a free pass in the sense of going to different. We lived also on St. Croix, my sister was born in St. Croix, so he went to Venezuela, he went to different places, but my mom was like OK, she wanted to stay in a really local place nearby me. But it also did help that Puerto Rico had citizenship and this allegiance to the United States, for us to be able to come to the United States. Because at that time it was the big push of everybody from the Caribbean saying, the United States is where it's at. The land of opportunity, but you got to learn English, like all these new things that people were sort of tempted or scared to do. But my father being in the military we were able to do that. And make it here, yes.

OL: So you were seven when they moved to the Bronx?

PD: Five years old. And I started public school right away.

OL: So tell me what your household was like when you were growing up? How many kids there were, what the house looked like?

PD: Right. Well my brother who is actually my aunt's child, my aunt had about seventeen children in the Dominican Republic. And she wasn't able to take care of him at the time. He was like the, fifteen or something at the time. Number fifteen, and my mom didn't know if she could have babies or not, she was having a couple miscarriages and sort of adopted him, and she moved with him to Puerto Rico. Luckily got pregnant with me and then my sister right after that. So there's just the three of us, and we lived in the Bronx with my mom and my dad, and my dad was actually a super, after he'd finished his military service, he was sort of, he did welding, he did a lot of stuff with his hands. He used to work in the Staten Island Ferry, and did a lot of construction work, but sort of wanted to have something that was less dangerous, he would constantly come with you know like just dirty, you know with all the welding stuff. So he wanted to be a super, and it helped out because we were also able to get like a little bit of rent reduction. If you're a super's family you get a little bonus that way. So it was just the two of us, my mom and my dad, and then three of us kids.

OL: Did your mom work outside the home?

PD: She never had a job outside of the home. She was always like a family caretaker. Took care of us, make sure we went to school, I mean running around taking care of everything. And you know my dad was always gone. Sometimes, there would be times, as part of the super he would have to work at a building where he would have to live at that building, so I would only either visit him after school if I walked over to that building or on the weekends. But usually after school I would come home and do homework and get ready for school the next day. So there was

periods of time where I wouldn't even see him because he always working to like bring back the money because my mom was the one at home.

OL: And what was the building like that you were living in? Was it a big apartment building or --?

PD: It was a big apartment building. One of the, and I still live in it now in that apartment, and I'm really lucky because my father, one thing that he wanted when we came to the Bronx. He was living here, a year before we came, so he lived here a year and then sort sent us to come to the U.S. but his big thing was that he wanted us to live near a park because we used to always go the beach in Puerto Rico and go to the parks. And when I got off the plane and I saw New York, I was like oh my God it's dirty, it's grey, it was just horrible. So as far as my eyes, because it was October and November, no leaves are on the trees. So I just thought that there were no trees, you know you don't know. At five years old you are like oh my God there's no trees. Nothing. I freaked out at five, and then my father was like no we are going to go back it's going to fine, seriously it was traumatic. But luckily he moved us right in the Bronx, where there was like a big park, Mullaly Park was right there. You know so he loved the fact that there was a park there. So he wanted to work hard and make sure that he found a really good apartment near the park, near the school, and we're still at that apartment. And that just goes to show how much planning and that's so important, and like where you live. Nothing to say bad about the projects though because I have friends that live in the projects. But he sort of wanted to give as much as he could, to not live in the projects and to have sort of like an independent building. Which at that time for people that were poor, you felt, I live in the good building, I'm a little bit better off, even though you don't have a house. You know you're not like the Huxtables but you're a little bit better. You know, but we were still poor, very poor. But you know I guess to them it sort of felt good to have their own little place.

OL: So how about you Rephstar? Tell us about what part of the Bronx. Well you could use Washington Heights.

RS: Yes, I grew up in Washington Heights. Both my parents, my mom came over when she was very young.

Dr. Natasha Lightfoot (NL): From where?

RS: From Puerto Rico, so my father was actually born and raised in the Bronx. His father was Puerto Rican, they came over and his mother was Jewish, Russian Polish. So his mother came over after the Holocaust, and his father had come over the forties, when there was big migration from Puerto Rico. The same thing with my mother. During that big migration, her mother came over and then sent for the kids a few years later, and they came over.

NL: She worked in the factories right?

RS: Yes, my grandmother worked in the sweatshops and the factories downtown. She did a lot of garment work. And my mom grew up actually in the Upper West Side, when it was still the 'hood. Back when it was West Side Story and stuff like that. So they met, they were actually, both of them were kind of on the path of just kind of creating change in their communities, and then being really politically involved.

PD: You're grandmother was a union worker?

RS: My grandmother was a union worker, and she got her. Until the day she passed away, she was getting her pension I guess it is, and she had everything on lock.

PD: She would tell stories of how she would get all the girls to get. She told me how they would have in the windows they wouldn't be able to open them, and the fact that she would organize the girls and tell the, the managers off. She was a firecracker, a short little Puerto Rican. And she was not with it.

RS: When they came over they had to go immediately to where, Lincoln Center is, that was all like Irish community. And she had all these stories of just like, a lot of conflicts and racism, and just physical battles going on between the two kind of immigrant communities. So that kind of like, I guess rubbed off on my mom. Just being around such a strong woman, and she got really involved, she was involved in a lot of different political movements but more specifically about the independence of Puerto Rico and also like helping out with the Young Lords Movement. She was already a little older at the time that the Young Lords came around.

PD: A lot of mentoring.

RS: Yes, a lot of mentoring and published a newspaper and stuff like that.

NL: Really, what was the name of the newspaper?

RS: Alante, that's the Young Lords newspaper. So she was like involved in like putting it together.

PD: I mean she was with, I mean the whole.

RS: She was a little older though, so she was kind of like their mentor in a lot of ways. For a lot of those kind of people. So she continued with that work and my father, growing up in the Bronx he went on to college and everything like that. They are both college educated, even though my mom they told her she would never go to college, she couldn't read or write. At that time in high school they would kind of like put you to do home economics, so they said she took home economics and graduated from high school with a home economics diploma. Which basically said you can't read or write but you know how to cook or something like that. She taught herself how to read and write and put herself through City College and made that happen for herself. She became a social worker, and it took a long time, she's proud of it, she made it happen. My dad went to college, he was going to be a some kind of medical profession, he graduated to be a

physician's assistant, at the same time though, he was doing a lot of work with, there was a lot of squatters out here in the Bronx. I mean I don't have to say it, in the '70's.

NL: There were a lot of people that moved in and kind of just you know, pirated electricity, pirated water.

RS: There was a lot of dilapidation. So my father was involved in a lot of the organization of those people and setting up tenant's associations, and taking over buildings, and just taking back the community. He also went out to Nicaragua and did medical work out there.

NL: The Iran Contra and this was happening.

RS: So they were very politically involved, and that's a big influence I guess in my upbringing, and what I do today. And they still are today. My mom, she's an educator, she teaches community organizing at a number of colleges. She's at Hunter, she's at John Jay University, and throughout the years they've done. My mom was involved in Take Over City College in the '80's. I remember as a child, being up at City College for like weeks. They had back doors chained up, cops coming in, you know what I'm saying, and I'm like.

PD: She still does Caravan to Cuba.

RS: She just finished going to Cuba.

PD: I think she's going to Mexico.

RS: No, that got scratched.

PD: She always has a plan or something that she is working on.

RS: I grew up in Washington Heights though, when they met. They met, my father gave up, he didn't want to be a physician's assistant anymore, he kind of got into more social work. Work and transitioning that, and my mother, social work as well. So it's like two social workers.

PD: He was an only child.

RS: Yes, and I'm the only child of this like production. And there was a very, I mean as they say it was very specific purpose for me being born in that they wanted to leave some kind of lasting change on the world. And even in my name, Amilcar, I'm named after Amilcar Calall, who is a cultural revolutionary. And it's really influential in the work that we do today as hip-hop artists and just as artists in general, we're are using culture to kind of make change. I grew up in Washington Heights but I spent a lot of time coming to the Bronx as a skater. I used to skate back in the days and as she said Mullaly's Park was right across from her house but it was also the only skate park in New York City for a long time. You know what I'm saying. And this was before like skating, it's new renaissance, you know what I'm like got back. And it was like, 'hood like you know what I'm saying people would get shot over there, the thing is closed you would have to flip over the gate to get in, there is no kind of insurance or nothing like that.

OL: How old were you around this period?

RS: This was my teens. So I'm like fourteen, fifteen.

PD: Like the mid-nineties.

RS: Yes, any year I'm a year under. So if it's '96, I'm fifteen, if it's '95 I'm fourteen. Right around those times, hip-hop was doing its thing, we were out there causing trouble. Writing graffiti all over the place, and skating up a storm. So we started going to the BX and skate a lot, and it was always like a mysticism of the BX. Being that we was in the Heights, and we had a whole thing going on in the Heights, like oh we are going to go to the Bronx now. Like even though it was right across the bridge--.

[Crosstalk]

RS: And that was the only place we went. Other than that like you know what I'm saying, you would never catch us in Brooklyn or Queens or nothing like that.

RD: For my family it was like a getaway trip to go to Washington Heights. My mother would only go to the supermarkets in Washington Heights, because she wanted to go and be with other Dominicans, there was a huge Dominican population. So for her it was like let's go be with the family now on the weekends. We'd go to Washington Heights, and a lot of Washington Heights people come to the Bronx so we're so close there are two bridges that, I mean the Marble Hill the whole connection there.

RS: Also, my grandmother was always, my grandmother from my father's side, she always lived in the Bronx. She lived right across the street from the Bronx Zoo, so that was always a cool experience to be going out there with my father and visiting and like we would hang out and go to the Bronx Zoo. The Bronx Zoo and the Botanical Gardens have been a really big influence on me just being respectful of the environment and caring about the environment and having that as one of the focuses in my life. One time I wanted to be a herpetologist when I was younger, it's the study of reptiles you know what I mean. And that was big because of the Bronx Zoo and just hanging out there and going down there and stuff.

PD: And your mom started Casapa Lakes, was it in the Bronx, that's about--?

RS: Oh, yes.

PD: It's like a non-profit organization, a women's development organization.

OL: Say what it's called again.

PD: Casapa Lakes, just around like 138th St., 139th and she was part of the founding, or she started it.

RS: Yes, she was one of the founders of it, it's an organization to support women through holistic healing, so they do a lot circles with chi's and yoga, holistic medicine and really that vision came out of--. In the nineties they were doing a lot of that work and what she wanted to do was bring that work to the community to just the people in the 'hood life. You know what I'm

saying, so that, that location where that is, right across from the projects and so it's bringing a lot of this kind of like mysticism and just like holistic idea to the community. Where it needs to be done, and they also do like a lot of stuff like rape counseling and dealing with a lot of like just real issues.

PD: And it's still around, the space is still there, it's really great.

OL: I want to hear a little bit about what it was like for you growing up, like what your household dynamics were like and your siblings. What kinds of things you were into as a child, because I want to think about how you sort of became interested in music, whether that was something that was in your house?

PD: It was really interesting, I think because of my father's influence. I mean my mother was very you know, like homemaker and really just a girly girly type. And my father was really like the man's man, you know he would wake us up at like six in the morning on a Saturday to go like jogging, you know military style. And I used to hate but in some way or another, I sort of was such a tomboy, you know I always was in sports and my brother, every time he would pick up something I wanted to whatever he was doing. You know what I mean, whether it was basketball and that time then it was like music started coming out as far as like the Wu-Tang and all this more harder and aggressive stuff. While my mom and my sister were listening to more like bachata or the meringue, the stuff like from the country but I was more into like Mary J. Blige. So culturally I was completely different though than my family. Even though we were all Dominican and Puerto Rican, I was definitely more of a New York kid. The hip-hop kid, my sister is still that Dominican girl that listens to Spanish music, she doesn't really listen to hip-hop, I'm the hip-hop type, you know what I mean. So it was interesting though, I'm also the darkest one, I must say that had a lot to do with it was far as skin color because my mother is really light, she's kind like him a little bit lighter. And my dad was really, really dark.

RS: And your sister is like lighter.

PD: Yes, so my sister is like this and my brother is like this. I'm the only one like this, which is not saying that I'm like, but you know for my family's scale I'm like the darkest in the room right. So that had a lot to do with my upbringing and how I related to my family and how they treated me and how I saw myself. And even the little things that I would pick the dogs.

RS: There is a lot of internalized racism in the Latino community in general. Often, we have it a lot too.

PD: Yes, so there is also a lot of resentment, you know what I mean. Like I love my family, and now I'm able to have conversations with my mom and she is able to understand like what that did but we had conversations where they would be like you know you're the dark one, you know you know the ugly one. I was made fun of because of my lips, because they were too big and then if I listened to like Mary J. Blige, you know you're trying to black, you're trying to be--.

NL: I'm wondering if that actually made a difference on your socialization outside of the house.

PD: Absolutely.

NL: The people who you chose to hang out with?

PD: I mean that was so, I even remember in junior high school, I mean obviously in this classroom, you have Dominican girls, you have Puerto Rican girls, you have Black girls, you know girls from Trinidad, girls from, you know the Bronx was pretty diverse. People think it's just Black, no there's like a range of--. But my family though, saw Black as just Black, African-American Black, right so there was this thing of don't hang out with the Black girls, because you trying to be black. You know, you're trying to be like them. So if I had this one friend, you know, and I asked my brother to give her a ride to my house, because he was picking me up. My parents always made sure that I was picked up and brought back and like they were constantly, you know were watching you at lunch time. You know who you were hanging out with.

RS: We're not watching you, God is watching you.

PD: From God too. I was shook of God for mad years. I mean like God was watching me. I was shook of God, I keep telling my friends like I was so shook of God.

NL: Church?

PD: Yes, every Sunday. Sunday's I would have fights--.

RS: Her sister came to Fordham so--.

PD: She's very Catholic but, I had arguments with like the priest or whatever, that's a whole other thing. But I ended up becoming, you know, who I became, became through all these struggles. Because my family would be like why are you bringing this girl home? My brother would go immediately and start snitching. Mom you know who she brought in the car? Her friend Shawnee, you know she's black?

NL: That would cause a problem.

PD: Already, I mean and that girl was the smartest girl in the class. You know, was really cool and educated and smart and lived right up the block. It was like the nicest girl in the class, so they're like, you know, but the Spanish girls were the ones that were making out and cutting class, alright you want me to hang out with them? Okay, the first day I hung out with them, they were like let's cut class. Let's cut class, let's do this, I was like oh my gosh, shook, shook, shook. Those were the girls that I wasn't necessarily feeling comfortable with though, not because of, they were just different in the music that they listened to, how they dressed you know, this whole flicking the hair and stuff you know. That was just their style, and that was fine. I was cool with Shaniqua, I was cool with those girls, but at the end of the day, when there was a problem when I felt like I needed someone to have my back, those were the girls that had my back. Those were my sisters, the black girls. Do you know what I mean? We're the Sonias we're the Shaniquas.

And Spanish girls was running, they were telling their mom or doing something. You know what I mean, oh my God! You know, my face, you know they were always worried about their face, and how they looked, which is interesting, it's like my face, my skin, don't scratch my--. But black girls didn't give a shit--.

[Crosstalk]

PD: And they were listening to Mary J., and then you know Queen Latifah, I was like oh I like this. So I was kind of like sneaking around really loving this hip-hop stuff. You know, but loving, as far as being a tomboy and everything like that. But constantly, I mean the skin color, even dolls that I would just pick, you know I remember going to Caldor's, when it was Caldor's, it was actually Alexander's.

[Crosstalk]

PD: Alexander's was like the premier, you know you go there for your first day of school outfit, you know. So remember the year when the Cabbage Patch kids came out, that was huge, huge here, and they had all these range of colors of Cabbage Patch kids. And they had, you know, the dark ones, the lights ones, the ones with hair, the ones without, I automatically saw this one little brown baby with one little tooth and like it was bald, it was so cute. I thought it was adorable, I'm little, I pick it up, I'm like mommy I want this. My aunt comes, why you want this ugly thing for? Snatched it out of my hand, threw it to the back of the pile and picked up this little white boy, with little frizzy hair, with perfect teeth and said here. And any little Barbie, and after that I hated any toy. I really didn't play with toys. I didn't play with Barbies, my sister had all the Barbie collections and all this stuff. I hated it. My sister would have like, I hated being all the typical girly stuff, my sister would play, why you doing that, why you acting like you got a baby, stop doing that! Now she has two kids, you become those things that you set out to be also when you're little. And people don't see that like, put a microphone in front of a little girl as opposed

to a baby. That's my thing, but in my house, how I would play is like okay, I would watch TV and memorize lines. I would write them down or just like memorize it from watching it sometimes. And then rehearse it. And get my sister and my friends to like participate, and we would just perform in front of family. Every Sunday they were always there anyway.

NL: What would they rehearse?

PD: Anything, scenes from Bad Boys, from Will Smith, from the--. I mean monologues, anything.

OL: This started when you were like in junior high or high school?

PD: Junior high. But I didn't take it public, I was like in my house because I felt like comfortable and they would be like Oh my God. They would call me Ms. Hollywood, you know because I always had these dreams of like grandeur. And everyone had just like regular jobs, and I had like these dreams. Oh that's just, she's just dreaming, she's just, I don't know what she's doing. But once I started going into high school, was when I really started to like just see, okay these choices around me. That people have made, and including my family and why they are where they're at, and not like wanting to be in the same place and wanting to be something different. Just knowing there was a world out there, and especially once I started going downtown and seeing the village. It was like hold on a second, hold on a second. There's sushi, what is sushi? I remember the day I brought sushi home, like mom look at this. What's this, oh my God, you know so little things of just food to culture, to music. I loved the fact that I ended up joining this program called Urban Youth Theater at Henry St. Settlement. Every Saturday and Sunday.

NL: When did you start that?

PD: I was in like my senior year of high school. I did a play in high school, which I was like terrified to do in like tenth grade.

OL: By the way, what high school did you go to?

PD: [Inaudible] Lincoln Academy of Science. I went to P.S. 73, and then 145 and then to Hostos. Did a play around the tenth grade, and I for some reason, the first day that I like walked onto the set, I felt comfortable, which is weird. I've always felt nervous, in school, in the classroom, I felt nervous being around people, I was a very quiet kid. I have no idea, when there's hundreds of people in the audience, I literally walked out and just sat where I was supposed to sit and I was like--. I just looked out, I was like this isn't bad. Like it's not bad, it's not bad, I fell alright here. There's something weird but I feel right.

NL: Worked for you.

PD: Worked for me. And I didn't know why and I sort of had to keep following it. I found this flyer, you know I used to help out with my teachers and their offices and I would be like what's that Mr. Whatever. Oh, this is a program, but not like teachers would be giving stuff, oh that's some program downtown. And I'm like but no let me see the flyer and I'd look and there's a Teen Acting Program, I'm like can I call? Yes, whatever, do what you want to do. I've even had like you know those internship sessions, where they come in, okay what do you want to do? And I was like I want to be a journalist, I want to be on the camera, I want to talk to people, I want to meet with people. Oh, why do you want to do that? That's like such a man's job, are you serious?

OL: Your teachers said that?

PD: Yes. You know, this was like, this was shocking to me, I was like what?

NL: Yes, like why are you trying to kill my dream?

PD: Why are you trying to kill me?

OL: What about your appearance? Was it surprising to them when you started getting cast in things, that the dark one, you know would be sort of somebody potentially be a star.

PD: I mean, they kind of didn't take it seriously until things started happening. And I think still they don't, I think it catches them by surprise when I'm walking through the street and other people are like, oh my God, they want my autograph or they see me. They wonder, why? It's still because if I tell them, they don't understand a lot of the things. Oh, I was on the radio yesterday. What radio? Oh, okay, what you want for dinner? Like they're not aware of pop culture to say I was on BET or I was on MTV, to understand the importance of it, as opposed to I was on the corner on the local paper. They degrees are the same in that sense, you know what I mean? But my mom was very supportive, my dad was a little bit more hesitant, and I feel like sometimes it was a little bit spiteful, because I would go to, I mean rehearse, I was so dedicated as a teenager. I would have to wake up at six in the morning, get downtown to be there by like nine, full day of acting classes, and Sundays too. My father would have a day with my sister and they would come to pick me up from my acting class with balloons and then they had gone to do stuff, and they would be like oh you could've came too, you know you just wanted to be Ms. Hollywood and you know do your thing. I was like mad, seething, like God why couldn't you just wait for me. I'd be like you know what, it's alright because it's not about right now, it's not about right now, it's not about right now. And a lot of my friends didn't understand why I kept saying that. And they said no, we are just going to go hang out, no it's not. I used to talk about the future so much, that they didn't really get it. I don't even know why I did, but I'm so glad that I did. It kept me safe, you know I didn't end up getting pregnant, which ended up happening to a lot of my friends. I ended up making it to college and stuff so you know.

OL: Where did you go to college?

PD: Hunter actually.

OL: And when you started college was there any pressure from your parents, to study something where you would go into a profession or anything like that?

PD: I think so. I mean my sister was the one that sort of wanted to be a doctor. So the fact that she had these aspirations of wanting to be a doctor, it was like okay then be something else that is sort of similar to that. My sister didn't end up being a doctor, she's a teacher right now. She's a teacher slash housewife you know with her kids and stuff. But I think my mom after a while, she started seeing that I'm like, dedicated. I mean this is since sixteen, that I was like dead set. I mean I've always [inaudible], but sixteen was like, I was going to do it. She was very supportive because she, later on she was like you know what, I wanted to do all these things, she never had a job, she didn't go beyond a fifth grade education and my father maybe a third grade. So for her to see me just being decisive in the fact that I wanted something, and that I wanted to travel, and seeing me do that without her having to give me [inaudible] is huge. I was able, you know, theater took me to California, to Costa Rica, you know the Royal Shakespeare Company in London, me like my words, my poetry, my rhymes, who I am, took me to these places. Not a single dollar I needed, and you know like, I just dreamt big and it happened. And after that they can't tell you nothing, they like damn she knows something I don't know, you know what I mean. Now they're all waiting like, she about to blow up, somebody call me when she does.

NL: Right, we are trying to ride the coattails.

OL: When did you start writing rhymes?

PD: Well, I mean it's interesting because I didn't feel like I had the permission to do that, until later on. I used to always listen to like Method Man or other rappers and I would transcribe their rhymes and then repeat them back. Just to get their flow and their rhythm and their cadence, like to get it over the beats. So I would constantly like, memorize it and recite it. I didn't know necessarily how to organize a rhyme, and it's very much different than organizing a poem or anything else. I sort of had to learn everything else before I write a rhyme, which I'm much more grateful for because I understand how to write in general. I started writing plays at sixteen, I

wrote my first play, got mine produced at the theater, you know was in it, got my friends in it, then I started writing poetry, which was more condensed. You know like, point, rhythmically there was more rules and then rhyming. You know, and that's where sort of I started meeting Rephstar, is when I was starting to write rhymes and like get it out there. And so he sort of encouraged me to like, go straight, go do it out there and start in Cipher. I was terrified of Cipher, there were no girls doing it.

NL: I was going to ask you about that. What happened when you showed up as the only girl from miles around.

PD: Terrified. I think it had a lot to do with him being there. Because I don't know if, I don't know, I feel like the guy's that were his friends were cool with me. I think it took a lot of, whoever the guys were there, in order to say this female is alright, it does. Sometimes it takes a brother to tell another brother, it's cool. Because sometimes a female can't tell another female, brother it's alright right now. They don't listen to you in the same way a brother can take another brother. Like the same way that if a guy said to me, a female, a brother can check a brother, you can't touch her right now. A girl can't go up to a guy, hitting a girl, what you talking about I'm a hit you too. There's a real difference in power dynamics I think, you know I think between men and women.

RS: That's if you like dealing with real MC's, people who are about rapping, like for real. They respect skills, like, I mean at the end of the day it doesn't matter male, female, Black, White anything. Like if you're nice, everybody has to accept that, like it's just like that. So it's really about taking that step and putting your foot out there and kind of believing in your talent and making it happen. That's where it gets hard in a lot of just the masculinity of the situation and just how society makes it. It's hard to take that first step, but if you have skills and you took that first step, it's kind of like cool after that.

OL: How old were you when you started doing this? Going to Cipher's and writing rhymes?

PD: I mean, I'm twenty-eight now, so this was definitely in my twenties that I got the courage to like go out there and like do it. And really it took a trip to California, when I went, and I visited you know young people in prison all the time, but specifically I went to this trip and I visited Ry C. the youth, adolescent center, it's what it's called but it's really the prison, which is really interesting. It's called a community center but it's not, it's like a total detention facility. And I was meeting with the boys, you know, and I was there visiting as an artist and they were like yo you spit? And I was like yes, I rhyme, and I was pretty shocked, I mean I don't just like when people say spit on the spot, I'm also very hesitant it's like then you do something, and it's like what do you want me to do? I don't know how to impress you, I don't know it wasn't a thing for me before. But the kids are like what are you talking about you don't want to spit or whatever, like we're locked up where are we going, if anything you have a voice right now, you free and you're not going to use it? Are you crazy? Just the way that they challenged me and how I saw the whole situation, was phenomenal, phenomenal and I ended up rapping to them. But then it became a cipher and that was the most like, fun and they had even said that was the first time they saw a female rap. So right there they showed me I have the power to do this, but also me rapping, I had a reflection on them the fact that I may be able to show them a female that can do it. So this exchange was like awesome, you know?

NL: They had born and raised in California, hadn't seen any women?

PD: Any. And I still meet young people today, right now in the Bronx. I've been to school in the Bronx, I've been to schools in Brooklyn, I've traveled. They tell me that they have not seen a female emcee, in front of them, rap. And it's shocking, and that's why I'm even more, then it motivates me. Like little things like that are like you know what, I got to keep going, I got to keep on, people need to know that there are. It's not even for me, it's for the sake of the

movement. Wherever I go I want to encourage other girls to like pick up a pen and write because it's not about me, it's about the [inaudible], and Blueheart's and Lelo's and the other female emcees, dj's in the world.

NL: I was wondering what was the first live hip-hop show you had ever went to, that you can remember? Did that have an effect on you?

PD: Well I think, I mean the first thing that I was thinking of was like commercial but it's interesting because like the commercial stuff didn't really have that much of an effect on me at all. It was always the local, grassroots, community center open mics, those changed my life.

NL: So where did you go to those?

PD: That's where I met, at the Nuyorican Poets' Café. That's where I went, and that's where I met Leonard, who gave me my name as Patty Dukes. You know what I mean? He's the bomb, he's like my mentor, my brother, my like best friend. But there's a community of artists in New York that scooped me up. I was the little girl running around with Reggie Gains, Willie Perdomo, you know, Pedro Pietre, Leirme, Flaco Navaja. I had Suher Hamad, Sandra Maria Steles, like you know, Sonia Sanchez, like they're just hanging out right there next to me. And I didn't know who these people were, like that, I was from the 'hood, I don't know who these people are. I start reading and I'm like oh snap, then I go and travel, and all the people are like you know this? And I'm like I had no idea, how lucky. At that point, you know, to the world of like culture, and Latino, and African American just poetry and art and music, and I'm a part of that. They took responsibility to it too, you know?

OL: I love the story of how you got your name, Patty Dukes, will you tell us?

PD: Yes. It's funny because Leonard hates that I tell it because, you know, it doesn't paint him in the best picture. Well, actually the same thing of just volunteering. I was not an activist when I first started, I didn't know nothing about politics or anything like that. I was part of UNT and

someone had said, If you want to volunteer as your first show, they're doing some political prisoner event. I said sure whatever, so because we would get to see a show for free, I did that all the time as a high school student. I would help out to get to see free shows back in Inwood. This was back in high school, so all of a sudden, I'm helping out, and all of a sudden all of these performers, La Bluma performed, I thought she was fantastic. The final group performed, and it was this group called Universes, and I'm not sure of the full group, but I found out it was [inaudible], there were five of them, and they were the most fantastic poetry, musical ensemble group that I have ever seen. And still yet, that I've seen. I don't think there is any group that has come up, that has surpassed what they've done. In New York, in the world, seriously. And I'm looking at them like, I am watching the most amazing thing in the world, and all my eyes can do for some reason, was focus on Leonard. I thought, especially because I was still in theater, I thought he had tremendous stage presence, his diction, I was like my God. [Inaudible]. I was like what? Where is this coming from? You know what is this? I was just intrigued, but then once like the show was over at the end, I looked at Leonard and I'm like he looks mean. He was just in the corner with like [inaudible], and I was with my friend and she was like oh my God he did really good, should we tell him? I said you can go tell him whatever, I'm not talking to him, he looks like a jerk. She goes up to him to say good job, he's like yeah whatever and turns away from her. And I was like see that's what you get, I could tell he was a jerk. Fine, so this is like a little back and forth just girlfriend talk, but then the lady that's with him was there that night, came up to us and was like hey you girls, are you from that theater program? I was like, yes. Were you helping out today? I was like yes. Are you interested in having a job? I'm like yes, what do you mean? I had just quit my job working at the movie theater, working there like two weeks because I said I was, I'm not, this is not for me, I need something that's like for my brain. Mental, not physical, and I said oh my God yes, I need a job, she's like do you want to do theater and get paid for it? I

said oh my God, are you serious, yes. She's said come in tomorrow for an audition. I walk into the room to audition, who's the person I'm auditioning with? Leonard. I said oh my God, it's the jerk from yesterday. Had no idea. I auditioned with him and everything, everything's cool, we ended up becoming like really good friends, but he would always call me Goody Two Shoes, he was a kid that grew up in Brooklyn just hardcore. Like, there was some sort of attraction to each other because where we come from as far as our interest in theater. But growing up style, I was the good girl with all the A's and stuff, and he's like what? That's not him. I have no idea what the argument was, but we got into like an argument and he like punched me in my arm, like playing around. But he's heavy handed, he been locked up, he's heavy handed. You know what I mean? And plus it was right in my arm like POW! And that sucker hurt, and I never felt like my bone hurt, I literally. He goes outside, he's talking to all his friends in the park. But all I see is his head, back of his head, and I'm really not the type to go up and hit a guy or do anything of that sort, until that moment. I saw his big shiny head, and I saw his friends, but he was facing that way, saw his friends, and I'm like don't say nothing, I rolled up right behind him, caught the back of my hand. And just like I know his mama would do, I mean you could hear it for three blocks. He like turned around, all his friends were laughing, everybody screaming, laughing, and he's like who the hell do you think you are, you think you're Patty Dukes or something? I say you're damn right, and don't you forget it. And I walked back into the school, after that I walked in like the next day, hey what's up Patty Dukes? I'm like who, what? They like what's up Patty Dukes, I'm like who's Patty Dukes? It stayed, like the egg was for a while, like why are you calling me Patty Dukes? Why are you calling me? My name is not Patty Dukes, for at least three months. After a while I said Leonard, I don't care, whatever. It's my name. I even tried, no it's Trisha, like I tried to change it. No different, nicknames did not matter. And that's what happens, people call you something, based off stuff that you do, when you are from around the way.

Whether you're skinny, or like based on your physical features, or like that you've done something silly. And you can't do nothing, it stays.

OL: It's a name that fits you also.

PD: It does. It kind of does you know? And later on in life, I actually met one of the women that played the best friend of, on the Patty Dukes show, and thought it was just riot. How sweet it was and loved that I had it. And I was like thank you, but you know, it does have different connotations, you know which I'm always having to like change for people. The Daisy Dukes, you know, the boots and the shorts and stuff, but that's not like, I'm like no, it's Patty Dukes, you know I'm a badass. I'll hit you back, baby come at me type of thing you know?

OL: That's great. I wanted to go back for a second, you said you wrote that first play when you were like thirteen. What was the play about?

PD: Interesting, it's called 'Dear Father,' and it was, at the time I didn't really have a lot of good communication with my father, and this was a play that I wrote, to just sort of have this dialogue with the character that this girl is about, and her father. She had got an acceptance letter to be an artist in school but I'm forgetting the name of this woman. And her father not wanting to go, he's an alcoholic, and not wanting her. So it was the whole debated between the daughter and the father, the brother sort of like helps to make that happen for her. And let that happen, because my father did drink a lot, you know what I mean? So were things that I picked up from my real life, and that [inaudible]. And then other things that I was going through, the same way. And even, there was this one night I remember doing a show, and we would come on and give the play and backstage we were balling. I mean we were teenagers, I remember a girl who used to run out do the play, do the scene and run back balling because we knew one of my friend's father was in the audience and he just walked in crazy drunk. You know he was knocking into people when he sat down and as teenagers, adults don't understand, sometimes when it's open mic and these panel

shows we are trying to talk to you, because I used it as a communication. And the parents usually came to stuff like that, and there was messages but if you chose to pick them up or not, is another thing. Sometimes kids don't talk to you like, hey mom I have a problem, they'll write a poem about it, read into it, because it was there. And all the girlfriends in the back are like oh my God he's here, I can't believe he showed up to the play, and the play was about that, which you know was hard to deal with, it brought us closer though. My theater friends are now like, you know they're doing wonderfully, they're doing films, they're doing what they got to do. But if it wasn't for theater, if it wasn't for the music, the art, I don't know what a lot of us would be.

OL: So what was your college experience like at Hunter?

PD: That was really interesting. I wasn't too fond of the whole college experience. Because it wasn't conducive to the artist. Which is interesting because I just did it, you know, I didn't know that college was necessarily the study of something. As opposed to the practice of something. It's very different, and I think that a lot of people don't seem to understand the difference between the two, because if not I would've went to a conservatory or I would've went to somewhere, where I would've gotten more direct practice, and hands on as opposed to like learning what was the first light fixture in theater, when did electricity start in the theater, like you know, just like Jeopardy questions basically on theater, so I could be able to teach theater. That wasn't my goal. I wanted to know how to write plays, I wanted to learn how to direct, I wanted to learn stories, filmmaking all of that, and it wasn't helpful then. So then I understood that's where like what theater class was, okay let me go into something more creative, I started going to the creative writing department. There you could [inaudible], learn the creative writing or the creative everything department at Hunter. By the time I made it to that I was in the third or fourth year. And the first year everybody was there, happy freshman, people of color there. Once you start moving on, it's like oh my God, where's the Latina, I don't know where she's at, you know

people started dropping out. I ended up because of work and my father passing away, I had to start going to night school, wasn't during the day, so more people of color went to night school then during the day. And the clear divide was just there, but also now going into the creative writing department, now it became about the work. But the work then wasn't accepted until [inaudible] of the college. But it was accepted in the literary world downtown, with the New York Theater workshop, it was accepted with the New York Times but it wasn't accepted at Hunter College, I don't get that. I was at Hunter College and I wrote plays about it. I wrote one [inaudible], but they don't want me to print it. It was all for monologues, from one girl's teenage years about being in prison and I submitted it to the class and you know to a writing workshop, and it went around and the writer in the class usually is required to give you feedback or whatever the case may be. I mean in the sense of oh my God the language, I don't understand it, did the writer go to prison herself? Because this is so raw, you know the teacher kind of didn't get it.

OL: Do you think--?

PD: I think that they kind of expected, I'm not sure, which kind of just like got me at the heart but the one Spanish girl that was in the class, after class was like oh this is really good. Like you know the people of color were like oh my God, this is like from the streets. This is the work, this is the work, this is my part of the [inaudible]. That's what hurt me so much, that in school I wasn't being accepted, but guess who I was downtown with? I was with Reggie Gains who was working on Bringing the Noise, Bringing the Funk, with Danny Hop who was-- I was with the people that all these people were reading in class and I'm like ya'll crazy. Because these people read my play and liked it, and told me that this is what it is, that I need to be doing this and you people are being in your college textbooks, reading about Reggie Gains and all this stuff and I'm hanging out with him and he's telling me what it is. I don't see the connection, and they never

really made that connection for me and it's still really difficult for me to even like, it sort of stopped my pace in pursuing a graduate or whatever because I'm having so much more fun in the field, doing experience and working you know? And learning and being able to work with them and people that took me to the Royal Shakespeare Company in London and getting trained direct from the lady, the first woman who wrote vocal training in a book. As opposed to reading it from a book, I love to be able to be trained and taught by the people directly. There's a big divide and I don't know if that was your experience, because you went to Syracuse for a little bit. But it wasn't conducive to the artist, and I kind of could see why there's that many artists in these big institutions you know what I mean? Because it's more for the academics.

[End of Side A]

[Begin Side B]

PD: But the Downtown theater scene calls professors who teach theater. It's like the people--.

NL: Who don't work, do teach.

PD: Which is like what does that mean then?

OL: So you went to Syracuse and then you transferred to Hunter?

PD: No, he went to Syracuse for a little bit. Because he went for business and fashion and something else, as far as what his interest were. So I don't know his experience with was the same but, because you know Hunter is a little bit smaller than Syracuse.

RS: My experience in Syracuse, I mean I was on a whole different trajectory than she was in terms of like what I was doing and what my background was in terms of growing up and stuff like that. Like, I was as a youngster, I was always intellectually inclined. Like go to school and get good grades, and also seeing everything through like this political paradigm that my parents kind of set up for me, from a real young age. I mean we have tapes, from like, I'm like one years old on like a little audiotape talking about like racism and slavery and stuff like that. So that was

real influential in my upbringing and also like just growing up in meetings. I was one of those kids that they would be having meetings about the next demonstration or the next fundraiser or the movement and I'd be like the kid like running around stapling everything together for them or like licking all the envelopes. So that was a big part of my upbringing, and then also just growing up in Washington Heights and running around in the streets. Like was the other half of the upbringing and it would conflict a lot but at the same time it made a lot of sense. Because my parents came up in an idea of rejecting, in the same kind of idea of rejecting all these kind of institutional values, that come along with being a professor at a college. I mean now they are but they're always causing trouble in those institutions. My mom took it over, so I grew up with that like really ingrained in me. And I was always challenging my teachers, I went to River East which is on 116th and Pleasant, in Manhattan Sector which is a high school but they also had a little elementary school in there. And they always tried to put me in alternative public schools though, that had the kind of certain ideals, same ideals as I had growing up. So I was amongst kids from the 'hood, but also we had some other kids that weren't from the 'hood, who was in that school as well. And just growing up in that, and doing well in school and then also being in the streets. Like running around and like I would just go out and be outside all night and like not come back for like a day or two.

NL: That might be because you were a guy growing up.

RS: Well I mean there was rules. Like my parents tried to tell me like not to go, but I wasn't really hearing that, none of that, like--.

PD: But the consequences are not the same.

RS: And also I was probably a single child and all these kind of things like play into it. But all that being said, I was out there hustling and running crazy and also like I kind of at a certain point like in my teens, not necessarily rejected the ideas but I mean if you grow up amongst

people who are saying a change going to come, a change going to come, and change didn't come.

NL: You are living in a post revolutionary period.

PD: And I'm the like beginning of it, I'm like the start of it.

RS: I'm like yo, I been there seen that. I really respect none of these people. Like a lot of the people she spoke about as artists were people that came up amongst my parents or my parents mentored some of those people. My mom in particular, some of those artists that she mentioned, but I really rejected all of that. I wasn't trying to be there, I was in the hood, like with my peoples in the 'hood, we was listening to like hip-hop music, like Nas, Biggie, and just real hip-hop, you know and then also other kids. Like there was Rocafeller she's a B-Girl, down with Full Circle. She started teaching classes in George Washington High School, so that brought B-Boying into it. We were kind of luck because, even though, Washington Heights is known as the epicenter for East Coast drug traffic, in the East Coast, in the United States actually, Washington Heights stands out as one of the biggest drug trafficking points and so it's hard to come up there and not really be involved in that. Because everybody is hustling, everybody has something and everybody is getting money. And so it just happened, it's like a natural thing, it's not like you have to ask somebody or anything like that.

NL: Do you have to find a way to get down?

RS: No, it's just you down already because you there. So that, that played into it but then we had this whole artistic thing happening with like, it was almost like a Renaissance with the old school in our area. I can't speak for the whole Washington Heights, but in our area, in the 160's where I was at, we used to come out and throw the linoleum down in the middle of Broadway in '95 and '96 and start break dancing. You know break out the stereos and stuff. And we'd also write graffiti.

OL: Was that a way for you to kind of get out of trouble and get involved in other things?

RS: Not really, I would say that we were totally caught up in trouble. We were doing both. And it was the same kids that like were doing both things.

NL: Would the police come like try to break it up?

RS: Yes, the police would definitely come. It was definitely one of those situations, this is like, like right after Dickens.

NL: Okay, so this is Giuliani

RS: Yes, this is when Giuliani first came in. Dickens we was chilling, everybody was kind of like doing their thing, nothing was happening. Then Giuliani came in and we was getting tickets for just--.

PD: After school programs started getting cut, I mean kids were, that's where all the kids went buckwild.

RS: We were getting tickets for just being on the corner, like if you were just standing there--.

NL: I think the combination of like post crack and like post funding. After that you just have like nothing.

RS: But the art, what I would say it did for us is that the kids were involved in those artistic pursuits, having been able to grow beyond what it is now. You see what I'm saying? Because you got the kids, I know that the kids that were my peers, were b-boying with me and skating and rapping, right? Those kids are pursuing things in their life, they have that kind of like that move, that passion to make things happen. Whereas the other kids that were just watching or just hustling, that's all they were doing, they're still just doing that and it's not going anywhere. You see, so it kind of gave us this idea of progression, of moving forward. To your question about college, going to college. Just, I just wanted to illustrate like I really didn't go to like so many programs and stuff like that for arts or anything like that. Most my artistic influence is from the

streets and just being around other artists in the streets and drug dealers and homeless people and just people hustling, trying to get money. So that was a big influence in what I was doing, but at the same time I was doing well in school. School came easily to me, so I tried to go to college, plus the school that I was going to Central Park East Secondary High School, 106 and Madison, got to see the graffiti wall of fame out there everyday. Which was amazing, growing up sitting in my class watching the change for like four years, so that was all like just fresh and kept me on my move. I didn't want to go to college. Like she said, I was kind of like what is it going to do for me, I was just doing my rapping and I wasn't necessarily thinking thought about the future, I was just thinking about the now in terms of being an emcee and being a b-boy and being a graffiti artist. And just living my life how I was living it. But since I did so well in school, my teacher was like, one my advisors she was like real adamant about sending me to college and making sure I get to college. So she had a relationship with Syracuse, mystically all the paperwork got filled out, and I wrote an essay or something and sent it in. Went off to Syracuse with a great scholarship and everything like that. But I was so steeped in the environment that I was in at the time, in being, just being in the 'hood and running around like, doing a whole lot of things that aren't easily let go of, I guess you could say. You kind of like carry that with you in a lot of places.

OL: And then you're up in Syracuse, New York.

RS: Yes, and now all of a sudden, Syracuse, New York. Of all like Long Island. The way that it was, the way I characterize Syracuse is, that you have a lot of rich kids who couldn't go to Princeton. Or who couldn't go to Harvard, so they ended up in Syracuse.

NL: I have a friend from Washington Heights who went to Syracuse Prep and he just like off of his rich friends up there.

RS: That's how I was living. I was living that same way. I took my habits from where I grew up, in terms of like hustling and getting money and when I went up there, I had never. Even though I had more exposure than let's say Patty in terms of just in different economic groups and being involved with different types of people, just growing up generally. I never was presented with the kind of institutionalized racism and segregation that happens in someplace like Syracuse.

Because I mean it was straight up segregated, where you had like all the white people living in the Mountain, Mount Olympus and all the people of color live in Brewster Bowling which is on the bottom of campus. Syracuse has a place separated the same way, and then you have the economics, you have, all the white people could do what they want. All the people of color have to like, eat in, eat whatever they give you and you can't go nowhere and blah, blah, blah. So when I was presented with that, I would say that drove me a little crazy, you know what I'm saying?

[Crosstalk]

RS: So when I got to Syracuse, I wasn't ready for that whole environment and hit me real hard. And I went a little crazy like I said and just got involved in a whole lot of things I probably shouldn't have been involved in. But I still did good in school and I kept switching all my classes. I went for business management when I first got there, then I switched to fashion design and I really couldn't lock down on one thing I wanted to do. So I ended up getting out of there and coming back to the city, and when I came back to the city I started going pursuing music more. I immediately got myself, my whole vision on college kind of changed. Instead of going for a series of classes or going for a degree, I decided that if I wanted to learn something and they had a class available, I'd just go take it. And forget about everything else, you know what I'm saying? Five-hundred dollars, six-hundred dollars, I'd go take it, learn it, and apply that knowledge, so I did that with City College. Went to City College, and stuck myself in a Sonic

Arts Program. Learned some, Sonic Arts is the music department over there. Learned some basic music stuff, I stayed there for like a year, then I got out of there and I went straight into music, making music and I worked with a number of non-profit organizations. I actually met Patty through working with an organization that was developing female emcees. It was an organization that we had both been through an organization called Public Allies, which is an AmeriCorps Program.

PD: Just to go with the question of how we met. Actually, I was working on a play, called Evelena's Heart by Evelena Tennetti who's actually an activist in the Bronx. She's fantastic so I wanted to make sure her name got dropped. His mom, knew the writer and also the lady that was in the play, Sandra Rodriguez, and called me up out of the blue and said, also because I was a production assistant and working with the New York City Hip-Hop Theater Festival, the first year and the second year. I was always part of the first committees of everything in hip-hop.

RS: She was like my son is grinding hard.

PD: My son is not doing so well. He's you know, I have this kid, he just got out of school he needs to get into something. I'm like in rehearsal and I'm like what what? Can you talk to him, can you talk to him? I'm like okay, have him call me. Didn't hear from him.

RS: I wasn't trying to call nobody. Because my whole trouble with the thing was, I was like these theater people, what the hell does theater have to do with anything? And I didn't really care about like school people, people that went to school. Like in saying that really don't have nothing to do with me. Like why am I going to be calling them?

PD: Okay, so then I tell the mom or whatever. He doesn't call me, they call him immediately because all of a sudden five minutes later I get a phone call from him. Talking about yeah, what's up? My name is such and such, you know I'd really love to help out, I said okay come help me right now, I need to go pick up some audio equipment. First day we met, started hanging out ever

since, in the sense, brought him into the hip-hop theater festival. You know Malik Yogel was working with it and all these other folks he got to sort of see that. And just to see what I was sort of involved in and we've been working together in different projects every since. Public Highlights was a program that I did and then I told him, you should do this. Obviously, whenever I do something, if anybody else can benefit, I'm like, and he's the same way. And that's why we sort of just continued to work together.

RS: When I got into Public Allies, the thing with Public Allies is it's an introduction to the non-profit community in New York City, so it's really helpful in a number of ways. And I think it was an influence on both of us in terms of, where we at now in our music, in our art because we just did a show at M&N, Manhattan Neighborhood Network, which is a big non-profit over in Manhattan. We show shows in the Bronx, Bronx Night. So that always plays into our art, in terms of having those networks and being in the non-profit community and working with kids. We started an organization that was trying to reach out to female emcees, and bring them, and just looking at the game as a whole, we were looking at it and saying well there's not enough female emcees, there's not enough females in the game in general. Or the females that are in the game, aren't being recognized for what they're doing. So we wanted to create an organization that would support females in the art of emceeing. At the same time.

OL: And this is the girl's hip-hop project?

PD: Right, but then also, specifically for the Public Allies thing was A.D.I, the Artist Development Institute. That was a project that Tony Blackman started and he was sort of like working with her towards that.

RS: So then, we brought in Patty Dukes amongst another group of emcees. And we spent basically a year of work shopping rhymes and cipherring twice a week.

OL: How did the girls react to it?

PD: It was great. I mean I think pretty much every girl that participated is still doing it in that sense. So I know it sort of changed my course in what I wanted to do and it made me more confident. So I really loved it. I think those kinds of programs need to exist and should happen.

RS: And we're both doing work like that now in terms of imparting--.

PD: And working with young people and stuff--.

NL: Is there anything more you want to say about, kind of where you see yourself going?

RS: I just want to give a shout-out to Voices Unbroken, an organization out here in the Bronx that does work with the prison populations and they've collaborated with me to do a cipher workshop for young people every Friday on 149th and 3rd Ave. So just organizations like that are really important and really supportive of what we do. And that's a big part, in terms of just being artists and where at least I see myself in the next ten years. And planting the seeds to have kids come up and keep doing what we're doing, keep that alive but also support us when we're out there. You know trying to make it bigger and still have that grassroots network of young people that we've kind of imparted this to. That's really important. I know that's important for me and I'm sure that's important for Patty.

PD: Yes, I mean I still do work in the Bronx. I'm a teaching artist. I work Dream Yard, do work with The Point, various organizations so--.

NL: You said Dream Yard?

PD: Dream Yard. That's, that has a pretty much like a collection of artists, that they sort of send out to schools with contracts. Like to do artist residencies and I work with the Dream Yard Action Project. And that's like a high school program, I've worked with the same group of kids from 8th grade, some of them are in junior year and I meet with them on Saturdays. In the summer we go on trips, we went to San Antonio. We flew all the Bronx kids over there, we did

projects. So I do the commercial stuff, we do the Pepsi Blue Carpet Bash, we do MTV, we do all that stuff, and I still do all the stuff in the community.

RS: Yes.

PD: Like there's no break. And it's not even about money, because we do tons of free shows.

RS: It's about a lifestyle really. At the end of the day, this is our lifestyle. It's not like we just go somewhere and put a show on for people, it's always happening and we're working with kids.

We work with the Bronx Museum and also one of the important things she said that she worked with those kids for the last four years. And in the 'hood there is not a lot of consistency. People aren't around like that. Me too. The kids that I work with, I've been working with them in different programs. And they keep following me as I move from different programs.

PD: I tell them I'm not going to let them go. They want me if anything, they also see that dedication, they're like you know what? I want them to be able to do that for the next kids. Look out for them so. Thank you.

OL: Great Interview.

[End of Interview]