

HARRY POTTER AFTER 2020

with LORRIE KIM and JC

Transcript

Episode 8.2

Interview: Dr. Brent Satterly, aka Clitoris Umbridge

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Caroline: You're listening to Harry Potter After 2020, an HP chapter reread podcast wherein two friends who read the books way back in the day as adults revisit the series through a post-2020 lens. Your hosts are Lorrie Kim, author of *Snape: The Definitive Analysis*, and JC, an educator and long-time HP fan. I'm your editor, Caroline. This is Season Eight -- our open-ended, irregularly published bonus content season -- and this is Episode Two with guest Dr. Brent Satterly, a social worker, professor, author, Harry Potter fan since the early 2000s, and drag queen performer of one Professor Clitoris J. Umbridge. As with other episodes deeply touching on TERFpocalypse and J.K. Rowling, and given our guest's expertise in queer youth and trauma, this episode does discuss such topics as suicide and self-harm, so please be aware of that going in.

Lorrie: I'm excited today to welcome Dr. Brent Satterly, and especially excited to introduce the two of you to each other, Brent and JC. Like JC, Brent is a professor of graduate education; he teaches social work education at Widener University and is also the author of *Sexuality Concepts for Social Workers*. In Harry Potter fandom, though, you may know him as drag queen, pride parade marshal, and keynote speaker Clitoris Umbridge. Clitty Umbridge often presents in full and terrifying pink regalia at conferences such as the annual Harry Potter Conference at Chestnut Hill College. Brent, one of my highlights from MISTI-Con 2023 was watching Clitty dance with Geoff Hutton, our podcast social media manager, who was singing, "If I fight Dolores, Dolores will probably win." Welcome!

Brent: Thank you so much! What a great memory, right? That was so magical. I'm excited to be here. JC, it is a pleasure to meet you.

JC: Yeah. I've heard so much about you.

Brent: I'm really excited to be here.

JC: Well, let's jump in. So Brent, when you first heard about this podcast, you contacted Lorrie to say that you really wanted to join us to talk about Dolores Umbridge. What do you want to tell us about her?

Brent: Well, much like Dolores, I am also a narcissist. I wanted to be on stage, especially if it was a podcast because when it comes to drag, all of your listeners can imagine that my makeup is actually so much more magical than it really is right now. No, I was thrilled to be here, primarily because any opportunity to connect, one, with my dear friend Lorrie -- but also to talk about post-TERFpocalypse and mediums where people can have conversations about issues related to social justice and ways that Harry Potter impacts the fandom now -- is something I find very inspiring. I will say that I also think it is really important to be able to have conversations in safe spaces, because not all spaces are safe to have conversations about Harry Potter in the here and now, and I think that's really important, especially as a queer person. Plus, I like to teach. It's what I like to do as my passion, so this feels like teaching in many ways. Even if it's a podcast-oriented conversation, it's still teaching.

JC: Absolutely. So how and when did you get into the Harry Potter fandom?

Brent: I believe I really got into it in the early 2000s, which meant I was in the throes of my dissertation, so Harry Potter certainly got me through a lot of painful stuff. Like so many people, I drank it in, and I think the thing that's different is I wasn't eleven when I picked it up, like so many Millennials. I'm a Gen X-er, proud of that.

JC: That's kind of the theme of our podcast, actually.

Brent: Totally. But the reality of it is that as a Gen X-er, I found so much of my time... I was alone a lot, and I ended up using a lot of fantasy and reading and fandoms as a way of connecting with people. There was no interwebs; all we had was the three channels on our giant box TV, a couple of random Time-Life magazines, and the Encyclopedia Britannica in the corner. There wasn't opportunities to connect with folks, because I grew up in small-town Pennsylvania -- a teeny, tiny town called Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, beautiful Americana -- I grew up as a young gay sissy boy in the age of AIDS. I can tell you that I'm grateful that I survived both AIDS and my hometown, but the experience of otherness -- the experience of aloneness, the experience of isolation and difference -- was so compelling and profound, and affected me in so many ways that I fell in love with the safe haven that Hogwarts provided and it was so amazing. There's so much of it that I just felt as a young boy who was marked different; it was almost like a cosmic joke in the idea that there was something different about me that I couldn't control, and that other people thought was odd and weird to the point of violence for being. While I don't know any wizard- or witch-bashing by Muggles, I do know that the level of hatred that we see in the themes throughout the series -- pure-bloods, Magic is Might... -- all of that is pretty terrifying. I could relate to so much of what it meant to be on the receiving end of that kind of hatred, and I think part of it was that Harry Potter gave me a space and a place like I had found in many other fandoms. I want to be clear: I'm not monogamous to Harry Potter, so I'm a poly fan, but the experience in Star Wars or Lord of the Rings -- oh, my gosh, I have Gandalf's staff right here behind me, this big thing -- the experience of the quest and what it meant to seek justice, which was a big part of my youth growing up... I didn't understand why people treated women so horribly in my world, because I was raised by strong women. My mom, my grandma, my aunts, my great-grandparents... All these strong women, and I did not understand sexism. I just didn't get it. And then I was also targeted because I was feminine; because I'm a sissy boy and because sexism can be defined as the devaluation of anything feminine, it became very much something that I understood and railed against. In Harry Potter, when I see kids fighting injustice that I felt was cruel and inhumane and murderous, yeah, I could connect with that, especially as I saw the deaths of people that I knew but didn't know in the age of AIDS as a kid. 'Gay people

die of AIDS. Gay people just die, that's what happens,' and it was often reinforced by the Ministry -- excuse me, by the church that we deserve it, that it's a just punishment. I think a big part of it was just the notion of basically, for all intents and purposes, saying no, I'm not going to stand for that. It's completely why I'm Gryffindor as a boy; the great thing about being a drag queen is you could belong to more than one house. Clitty is a Slytherin; true shocker, but that's a big part of how I ended up finding solace -- solace and safety in a world that often was not safe. Just my sheer... the way I walked and talked was targeted. I could totally see an educational decree specifically not swishing.

Lorrie: Yeah.

Brent: I could see that as a flamer, so I ended up having so much shame about that for so long that seeing people embrace who they are was such a fantastic role model for me. The courage and the bravery -- shocker, Gryffindor! -- and to be me meant I have to be courageous. I have to breach what oftentimes we used to call the Exile, because we would leave queer spaces and go into heteronormative world, which was the Exile. If we were ever in queer-only spaces... I say we; my husband and I have been married for thirty-one years now, but that's kind of part of it. So that's really -- I found so much solace and safety in Harry Potter.

JC: Was Harry Potter the first fandom that you really got into online fandom, or was there another one before that?

Brent: I'd say yes, and in big part because I didn't have time. I was a graduate student and a full-time social worker. I was doing HIV clinical social work at the time in the age before protease inhibitors, so people were dying. I was sitting in these hospices and going into people's basements and homes, where families had stashed away their dying gay sons, to be present with them, to sit with them, to hold them, stuff like that. A big part of what I want to talk about today when we talk about trauma is what it means to be seen, heard and known, which I think is a lot of what Harry Potter is all about.

JC: You've had this experience of the Harry Potter fandom being a place that felt like a safe place to you.

Brent: Oh, yeah.

JC: How did that change with J.K. Rowling's exposure as a TERF?

Brent: Yeah. How didn't it change? For lack of a better word, it was betrayal. And I know that that word is overused, but it was just betrayal. It was the experience of, "What?! This has to be wrong!" That kind of stuff, and it wasn't wrong. First reaction was doubt, denial, skepticism, the whole thing, because I was very out in my world on social media as a crazed Harry Potter fan on the socials and all that. Seeing so many of my queer community snapping their wands... I was gagged. I was just, "What?! What are you talking about? This just can't be right!" I remember the experience of it as so traumatic, and reading that horrible hate-filled essay that she wrote... I believe we were all in lockdown at the time.

Lorrie: Yes.

Brent: We were even cut off from in-person connection. We were all suffering serious Cruciatus curse in the moment, where we were just suffering from that pain and not able to connect other than phone text, which is great. We had lots of ways to connect that way, but there's something

to be said for holding another person, feeling their heat and sobbing, and there's healing in touch. Hello! Look at what Harry Potter's mom, Lily, did for Harry to protect -- it's in the skin; just so powerful. I guess the part that was most difficult was we live in a time of great division -- even more so now, which I can't even believe I'm saying -- where people call people out, call people in, and it can be incredibly painful and damaging to people. It can be damaging to their financial well-being, their reputation, their professional career, and all those kinds of things. I work in a field that is much more progressive. I'm a university professor and I'm a freaking out sissy boy drag queen. I'm gay, I'm a social worker, I teach human sexuality, I'm pro-choice, all the things, and I'm proud of all of that. I've done so much critical thinking to work how to get there, and feeling like people wanted me just to, in solidarity, snap my wand felt so unfair; life is so much more complex than a simple public behavior that communicates that I stand in solidarity with trans people. I absolutely stand in solidarity with my queer siblings who are trans and non-binary, but one of the things I know as a social worker is that there's lots of ways to help people. I can't even begin to tell you the number of Harry Potter heads who are queer -- who are trans -- who have sought me out as a, shall I say, elder, looking for solace -- looking for the same kind of thing that I found in Harry Potter years ago for my own healing -- and they'd say, "How can this person who... it's not fair. They created this space, and then they just yanked it away." I'm sure Lorrie could tell you we've had many a conversation about *Monsters*, and there is no answer. Whether you believe 'death of the author' or not, I think over the years I've decided that that is inadequate in explaining how people react to things like that. People react to things like this out of pain. They're hurt, they're damaged, they're wounded, they feel betrayed; it touches old, core pain. I was a director for an inpatient psychiatric dual-diagnosis LGBTQ unit, which basically means that I worked in a psych hospital as a director on a floor specifically for LGBTQIA+ folks who were struggling with both mental illness and mental health concerns, as well as addiction or substance abuse, what have you. By far, my most wounded patients were trans people. Please note, I said 'wounded', not 'sickest'. They're not sick; they're wounded. They're wounded by a hateful world, and Hogwarts for many of them was a bastion of safety and healing. The whole damn thing was the hospital wing, and I find it incredibly painful to have seen trans youth -- forgive me, I'm going to talk about the real things here; you might need to put a disclaimer here, because we're talking about suicide. People have experienced struggles with suicidal intent and ideation. Some people have completed suicide, some people have attempted suicide, some people have thought about suicide because they feel lost. When people lose a community, they feel lost. People aren't meant to exist without community, and part of being queer and being a Potterhead during the TERFpocalypse meant losing community or else. 'You need to snap your wand or else; else you're an enemy of queer people, you're an enemy of trans people.' I get all of that, I do. But I'm also a social worker, and one of the things that we know about is we can't oversimplify the human condition. The human condition is complex, controversial, messy, contradictory, the whole thing. It just is, so there's no one right way to respond to your own pain because you're the only person who knows the depths of that. I would not ask someone to say, "You can't like this thing that gave you so much solace and so much joy and love and community and friends, or else you're a bigot." Now, having said that, I also acknowledge the realities of people taking boycotts against bigoted companies, and we can do all the things like not support Warner Brothers, not buy official merch, the things that people have said all along and I get all of that, but I do think that that's a big part of what it means to me. To me, the best way I can support the Harry Potter fandom and queer folks is to continue to be myself, and I'm a magical person. I told you I was a narcissist, right? But I'm also a Gryffindor and a drag queen

who has a persona based on Umbridge. I thought I was going to have to give her up, and I was like, "No way!"

JC: Well, I would love to hear a little bit more about how you came to your drag persona. Tell us more about that. We're going to come back around to this heavy stuff, but I'd love to hear more about this.

Brent: The very first time I saw a drag queen was when I saw *La Cage aux Folles*. It's a Broadway musical play about drag queens, and the movie *The Birdcage* is loosely based on that with Robin Williams and Nathan Lane, which was fantastic. And I think one of the things that was so great is when I saw *La Cage aux Folles*, I was like, "What? What is that?" My mom said, "Those are men," and I was like, "Nuh-uh!" I felt excited! It was so like, "Whoa! I would never know!" I think I remember saying, "That's magic! That's got to be magic, right? Like how?" And I stared and I stared and I stared, and I went through all of these amazing moments as a kid. "Can I do that?" I never was like, "I want to put on my mom's clothes." Nothing like that. I was just fascinated by it because I was a sissy boy. I always felt like I was a boy. I'm not trans; I always felt like I was a boy, I always felt like I fit into my body. My gender identity matched my sex assigned at birth, but my gender expression was flaming. I saw drag queens and I was like, "I do that. I can do that!" I was also a theater queen, and I was like, "I want to bring this all together!" I will tell you: later as an adult, I had a beard and I remember thinking that I had to shave my beard if I wanted to be a drag queen, and I was like, "Oh." That made me take a hard look at myself personally, because the reason I grew my beard and my mustache when I was young is because people always mistook me for a girl, and I was very ashamed of that. I'm a hairy queen, so... I know, TMI, right? But I had a full beard by the time I was fourteen years old.

JC: Wow.

Brent: So as a result, I grew that beard and it was a big part of me and it's connected to my gender expression and identity. One of the things that ended up happening, though, is when Clitoris Umbridge (as she was known at that time) was born, I shaved my beard and it was so funny. I look at those pictures now and I'm like, "Oh, my gosh, that is so not Clitty." I've never done that again for Clitoris. Now, I feel like a lot of healing has come as my beard grew back in. I was like, 'I love this a lot,' because Umbridge really represented so much of the quintessential ugly bully. She's wrapped in kitties and roses and pink, almost like when people use rose spray after going to the bathroom and it just smells like shit and roses. That is so her! She's weird -- thanks to all the systems that have helped her -- and she has conquered so much despite her family. She's become successful, and ultimately... Two things: she is us. She is full of doubt, she is full of pain, and she is the mistress of denial. Squib brother, Muggle mother, all that kind of stuff. And as a gay man, I was like, "Oh, I get denial." And she could compartmentalize like nobody's business. She had the ultimate ability to engage in black and white thinking and deftly weave compartments -- compartmentalize herself to eliminate any kind of foul blood and replace it with this self-righteous purity -- and she was the authority in her own mind in all ways. It really spoke to me of all of my beliefs. I remember being like, 'Whoa!' I was writing a piece on using Umbridge in the classroom, and I remember thinking, 'She was all of my bullies that way, because they're full of self-doubt and fear and they just wanted to hurt other people to make themselves feel better, and they wanted to do that with someone who was other,' and I was very other. And when I donned Clitty, I could control all my bullies.

JC: Interesting. Yeah.

Brent: And that was a big part of how Clitty was born for me: I could control all of my bullies. I could control all the self-righteous bigots, oftentimes who are people of faith (Christians) who did a black and white reading of all kinds of what they would deem holy scripture to condemn me and mine on an ongoing basis. A huge part of my own experience of Clitty is that she was really about throwing off victimhood and reclaiming self, and it was a powerful thing. When I introduce myself and someone goes, "Wait, are you Clitty?" They know Clitty and they don't know me? Happens all the time! I'm like, "Well, yes, I am," and I'm so proud, and the fact that I'm proud... That's a lot of therapy right there, my friends.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Brent: That's a lot of embracing the flaming sissy boy inside me. It is just... It's so wonderful, and I get to be a role model. Six-year-old Brent would have loved seeing me.

JC: Oh, yeah.

Brent: Loved it.

JC: Oh, that's amazing. Can you tell us about the first time that you performed as Clitty?

Brent: Well, two things: I'm an academic drag queen, so I feel like there's times that I've conventionally performed on stage in front of audiences, but also I feel like I perform when I teach as Clitty, so it's different ways. Sometimes that happens in front of large groups, sometimes that happens in front of a class, and she gives me so many magical spells and tools to use to teach, but also to perform. The first time I performed with her -- you ready for this? -- I did "I'm Sexy and I Know It."

Lorrie: Ah, nice!

Brent: It was so funny, and it was at this campground that I belong to -- an LGBTQ campground in the Poconos -- and they were having a jock party. They wanted a drag queen to come and entertain them, and they were like, "We've heard all about you!" and I was like, "Okay!" Jocks are pretty, so I went and it was fantastic and I had a great time, and I was doing push-ups off trees and flaming and I knew the words and all of that. The level of the response -- cheering and dollar bills -- it was like, "Oh, they're worshipping me!" It was so freaking cool, and I know that afterwards people are like, "Oh, my gosh, that was amazing! Why aren't you doing more?" all that kind of stuff, and I was like, "Well, it was my first time. I'm a virgin again!" It was just so fantastic, and I remember feeling so confident -- and this is just true -- I felt like I could flirt with people who I thought were way out of my league, and they *bowed* to me.

JC: Amazing.

Brent: Drag is *power*, my friends. It really is, and I don't just mean it in a conventional, flirty attractiveness thing. Drag is power like when I teach... I've done a TED Talk on it using what Keenan and Lil Miss Hot Mess coined as "the pedagogy of drag," the idea of what it means to use drag. For me, I've always framed it as: it immediately demands attention. I walk into the room in drag, and I have attention *like that*; it engages students, it engages participants. One of my favorite non-Harry Potter moments was when at my university (at Widener) they asked me to do the 2023 Freshman Convocation Welcome speech to the largest class in Widener's history, and it was a group of faculty who every year get together and nominate a faculty

member to do it. It's a big, big privilege. I was like, "Ooh, more work. Yay!" I said, "Sure, I'll do it, but I have to do it in drag. Otherwise, could somebody else." So after numerous meetings --

JC: Oh, this story is making me smile so hard. Oh, my God!

So they went, and after numerous meetings with various higher-ups and all that -- at the time, anti-drag laws were just coming on the books and all that kind of stuff -- I totally did it as a Gen X drag queen, because these were all freshmen, brand new from various walks of life. The whole point is you meet people and interact with ideas that are new, that are different from you, and what's more different?! It was great, and I did a performance; I did "You Belong" by Pat Benatar and reflected on what was it like in college for me in 1989 and having pizza rolls and ramen at two o'clock in the morning and taking exams and all that kind of stuff, and what it meant, though, to explore and find *my* way, find *my* space, find where / felt like / belonged or didn't. At my college when I was younger, I didn't feel like I belonged, but at Widener I feel like I belong. So much of that is a path to healing as a big part of it, and the students were gagged. They loved it, and it was so...it was amazing. It's one of the highlights of my career.

JC: That is fantastic. What an amazing story! I think that for a lot of us who were in education -- I can't say this is true for everybody, but for a lot of us -- maybe we didn't have the best experience of school or of university, but we stayed because we wanted to change that, right? We wanted to create the kind of classroom or the kind of space we wish we had.

Brent: Yeah.

JC: I know I feel that all the time. I'm a math education person, so I feel this all the time. That's one of my big goals: to teach teachers how to create spaces where kids can do math and be successful. It sounds like that's a big part of what you do, too. That's what I'm asking.

Brent: Oh, yeah. When I teach in the classroom in drag, often it has to do with issues related to systemic oppression and the ways that that shows up in policies, in the ways that shows up in practices. There are so many examples that I can draw from contemporary culture sociopolitically that it's just replete in being able to demonstrate those. But ultimately, what drag then does is it provides spaces for otherness, and Clitty ends up helping because I am who I am. I also challenge students to get active. 'Don't just sit on your butt. You can't just wish it; that's not how this works.' I remember in 2016, after He-who-shall-not-be-named was elected, talking to the students -- this is an undergrad human sexuality course that I was teaching at the time -- and the students were like, "Yeah, well, it doesn't really matter." I'm like, "It absolutely matters. It absolutely matters, and I'll tell you why it matters: because SCOTUS, SCOTUS, SCOTUS, the Supreme Court." Of course, what we know happened is Roe was overturned and all that kind of stuff. But I was also saying things like, "Besides the possibility of losing the right to choose, there's also the possibility of someone else's values being able to determine what kind of medication you have access to," and I explained the notion of religious freedom versus individual rights, and if a pharmacist chooses, based on their own values system, not to give you the morning-after pill, Plan B, whatever emergency contraception, they would be able to do that based on their own values, and the students were like, "Nuh-uh, that's not true." I was like, "It is true." And in drag, I'm like, "Are you going to sit there and let it happen?" Audre Lorde says we need to get off our butts and not give up the future and get involved because we want a say in our future. When systems are against you... the way that often Dolores embodied against Harry, it was pretty incredible to see the level of difficulty that she could do just against Harry besides torture. "I'm going to take away your most favorite thing, Quidditch." Bam. Gone. She

could do that, not even with a wave of her wand; with a wave of her feather. That's intense. That happens now all the time, and we're about to see all kinds of horrific things on January 20th.

JC: Yeah, that's something I think about a lot, too. At the point in time that we're recording this, we are still in *Goblet of Fire*, so we haven't gotten to the fifth book yet, but I think it's going to be very interesting to revisit everything that Dolores Umbridge did in the current context.

Brent: Yes! I will be listening with bated breath and chocolate frogs.

JC: Chocolate frogs, for sure.

Lorrie: One of the things that Rowling has said that particularly stings in her transphobic statements is she seems to mock or dismiss when people say, "If you increase transphobia in the world, you increase risks of suicide -- suicide ideation, suicide attempts -- especially among young people." That's something that's on the top of people's minds because it's such an emergency, but she seems to think that that's an extreme argument. But you're somebody who's actually worked with youth who deal with these emotional extremes. What effects do you see on real people in real life from transphobia in the culture, spoken by culturally important people?

Brent: Oh, my. That's a great question, Lorrie, and unfortunately, it's often really tragic. I wish I could say it's not, but it is. One of the things that happens so often when people who have such megaphones -- and it's not just they're going to put out a manifesto -- it's the tweeting on social media platforms. The transphobic messages communicate to especially trans youth -- but also queer and non-binary youth, LGBTQIA+ youth -- that you're broken. That's what they communicate: you're broken. It's as seemingly simple as that, and not just "you're broken"; "you are a danger, you're a threat." I think one of the things that is tough is that you can't not ingest toxic messages from that. It gets inside you and it's part of you, and the challenge is it's not just coming from J.K.; she's just someone with a huge megaphone. It's coming from media of all sources, and people with big names who are regularly communicating anti-queer, anti-trans stuff. In the United States alone, there's over 400 plus anti-LGBTQIA+ bills that sit before state legislators in the United States today, and if you look at Erin in the Morning, which is a source for looking at trans... a watchdog group of anti-trans legislation, they really track all of that horror stuff that includes things like anti-drag laws, anti-trans laws, anti-document laws, bathroom bills, all those kinds of things. Kids learn where they live; they absorb. They see that stuff, they hear their peers talk about it, and probably the worst is Rowling as this external source who has been the author of something really precious to them, and that's incredibly damaging. But their peers hear all that stuff, too -- their peers who are not queer -- and they're like, "Yeah, this is..." because Rowling still has the authority with them -- folks who haven't ever thought about trans rights or what it must be like to be different in that way -- so it ends up easily impacting their sense of morality. "Yeah, we've got to protect little girls in the bathrooms. That's sick." But then the worst thing, if you will, is the fucking teachers say *nothing*.

Lorrie: Ooh.

Brent: They say *nothing*. It is *silence*, and it is *so damn loud*. And when they do that, they say it's okay.

JC: Right.

Brent: That's what they're saying. And even worse, they say you deserve it, so you get queer kids who end up feeling like shit because it doesn't come from one source; it's just that J.K. is a

really loud one. It comes from a whole lot of other sources. I know you're going to talk about this in the future, but if you turn on the TV today, you still see anti-trans stuff all the time and how trans people were literally used as fuel in the most recent political election in a way that is hateful and just awful. But as often as the case in many divisive elections, the use of fear and hatred is a very effective tool, as Voldemort could tell you. In that sense, I feel like what happens with youth: they ingest all of that, they end up feeling like crap, and their self-worth goes down the toilet. And they're young people. Their brains are still developing, and I'm not just talking about 13-year-olds. I'm talking about 18-year-olds, I'm talking about those in their early 20s. Myelination is still happening in the brain, all that kind of stuff. Adult-lescents struggle, too, in that way, and I think without social supports to serve as a buffer for that, you can end up seeing tragic results. It could be anything and everything from cutting (because physical pain sometimes is a lot easier to deal with than emotional pain), it can be something like isolation, major mental health reactions (like depression, anxiety, post-trauma, even hallucinations). But then you get to something worse: drinking and drugging and impulsive behavior, high-level risk-taking behavior, and of course, worse: suicidal ideation, intent, and action, and that has happened. If you've never looked up the Mermaids in the U.K., the Mermaids are a LGBTQ youth group that actually wrote a letter to J.K. right after that that was so compelling, and I highly recommend anybody look at it. What they said to her was, "Just talk to us. Just talk to us."

Lorrie: Yeah.

Brent: What a simple but powerful message. "Listen to us." They want to be seen, heard, and known. Go figure. In my opinion, the effect is profound, it is prolific, it is ongoing -- because we get tweets on a regular basis -- and it divides communities, as I've already talked about, in queer culture. Very painful.

Lorrie: Have you revisited the actual Harry Potter series since TERFpocalypse?

Brent: I have not been able to pick up the books. I have... To be fair, I did *listen* and I did download the audio book of *Order of the Phoenix*, which is my absolute fave. Don't ask me why. I did listen to that, and it was one of those moments where I went back and forth with, 'Oh, yeah. Oh, my God. Ugh! Why did she do this? Why did she mess this up so profoundly?' Initially, a lot of the magic was gone for me and it broke my heart. I grieved. I grieved a lot and it wasn't really for me until MISTI-Con 2023, when the magic came back all over me in the best way in full force. Again, community, right?

Lorrie: Yes.

Brent: In community there's healing, and I don't have to be like you. I don't have to respond the way you do. I can do this in my way, and that's a big part of what I think healing post-TERFpocalypse is about: there's no one way. There's no cookie cutter. Some people need to walk away. I respect the shit out of that.

Lorrie: Yeah.

Brent: Absolutely. Do what you need to do. Some people don't, and I think it is important to note that with all things like boycotting and stuff like that, there's a whole lot of other people besides J.K. who are affected by it, like all of the people who have ever been involved in production of the books, films, audiobooks, all of that. All were affected by her hatred.

Lorrie: Yeah.

Brent: So I think that's an important thing to register, and it's a tough thing in the capitalist society that we live in.

JC: Was there ever a point that you thought to yourself that you might have to give up Clitty, or did that never enter your mind?

Brent: Yes. No, it totally did. It's one of the primary reasons why for a while I was just being called Clitty. Well, I feel like Clitoris J. Umbridge is pretty telling about who she is, although it's so funny when people who stare at me... They're like, "Clitoris J? What is that?" Okay, think about it. Usually, what I do is, "It's not Mulva." It's the old Seinfeld episode. I'm going to date myself there, but it's the idea of it, and I did think about giving up Clitty because of that. I was so angry about it. I was like, "I am *not* giving up part of who I am for that hateful bitch!" I remember thinking that and I was so angry at her, but I did primarily shift to Clitty, which actually is... It's so funny because I think of my drag persona, all of me is Clitty. So whenever I do... I also do Winifred Sanderson and all that kind of stuff. It's Clitty doing those numbers, doing that stuff. When I do Clitoris, I feel like it's Clitty doing Clitoris. I know it sounds weird, but Clitty is who I am, and it's Clitty Umbridge. I love pink, I love all of the trappings that go along with it. I love the way that it's so fucking fake that it feels so real. Right?! It's just so fake that I'm going to show you a mirror of what this is, and that's what Clitty does. Here's a mirror. This is what it is, and when it's about things like systemic oppression, we need all of that we can get.

Lorrie: I think this might be a good point to tell or retell the story of how Brent saved MISTI-Con 2023. The background is that a bunch of us who were on the organizing committee -- just like the people who were coming as attendees -- were uncertain until the moment that we went there if this was even going to work, because we were trying to have this convention after TERFpocalypse. It was one of the first big gatherings that people could have after pandemic lockdown; people had tried to have conventions, and they'd gotten canceled or rescheduled again and again because of different COVID surges. Meanwhile, Harry Potter fans were just tired human beings because of the hatred coming from Rowling, and a lot of the people who remained in Harry Potter fandom were so very queer and so very trans. People who thought, "Yes, all of my friends have already been able to give this up, but I have not, so here we are. What are we going to do? But is the joy going to be all out of it?" So we get there and we had a number of challenges putting the con together; and then -- completely unrelated -- the morning of opening ceremonies, the person who was supposed to be our emcee had a really bad emergency and couldn't make it. We found that out at 7am on the morning of what was supposed to be the opening ceremonies. So we're sitting around the table going, "What do we do?" We start brainstorming, and immediately I think about all of our service extroverts; a number of us on the organizing committee are introverts and really depend on our service extroverts to always be thrilled and even thankful when we load them with the extra work of being center stage. And so I'm thinking, "Who do we know who would somehow be happy if we said, "Could we just focus this spotlight on you and only you, and give you a microphone and no limitations, and then shower you with gratitude? You wouldn't mind, right? This wouldn't be torture for you?" Okay, you can't see Brent laughing and laughing and laughing right now. "Having everybody stare at you while you have to ad lib on the spot... That's not going to be too much unpleasant pressure for you, right?" So we're all looking at each other, and I run into Brent, who had just come in from working out and was heading toward breakfast and said hello to me innocently. Meanwhile, I was like, 'Oh, I'm going to put my talons on you and not let go.' I

drag Brent into breakfast and I announce to the other organizers, "I have come with your savior."

Brent: "I have found you a Seeker!"

Lorrie: And then I had to go run something -- I had to go away -- but I just said, "Here, give Brent a microphone and a spotlight. See ya!" The next time I saw this group of people, you, Brent, had invented a whole plan in just minutes. I wasn't there for it, so I didn't know how that happened; I just was so grateful that this was something that was going to give you energy instead of drain you.

Brent: Yeah, it was... I feel like I'm overusing this word, but it was magic. It's one of those moments where it says to me why you need the diversity of Houses. There are times that you really need a Gryffindor to get off his butt and just do something, but I think one of the parts that I really appreciated was it was really healing for me and it was so fulfilling for me, not just from the experience of the TERFpocalypse; it was folks who were Potterheads who literally needed something that I needed to give.

Lorrie: Yeah.

Brent: It was symbiosis, and I don't think I realized I needed to give it until Lorrie was like, "Come with me!" Okay!

Lorrie: "We're desperate."

Brent: And I was like, "Okay!" It's so funny because I've been to MISTI-Con a few years prior, and I remember watching the opening and I was like, 'Wow, that's so great.' That night, I would say, I got all dolled up in drag because I brought all my drag stuff and got a chance to start... I was like, 'Okay, we're going to start the show.' I got to sing a little bit and dance a little bit and joke and introduce people, and I had the agenda to keep things flowing. A lot of it has to do with the notion of what it means to be in community. I took as much from everyone who was there as I gave, and I think that that was so valuable for me and healing and gave me a sense of purpose. Like I said, it was a time I left MISTI-Con so much -- I won't say healed, but so much more whole.

Lorrie: Yeah.

Brent: Because I said human beings are complicated and our hearts are funny things, but I felt like I belonged. I felt like, 'Oh, yeah, this is really... I got into Harry Potter fandom because of the people.'

Lorrie: Yes.

Brent: And I got to meet Lorrie and so many other folks, like one of my dear friends who I haven't seen in years but we connect on Facebook all the time. So many folks that I find magical, and it's given me, also, scholarly opportunities that I have been able to contribute to books through those connections. I'm writing a book, I designed a class on it, I published about that class. I've done lots and lots of scholarly academic presentations at different cons, many of who are not just Harry Potter cons but also professional organizations in my field, in my profession. That's amazing. How great! Honestly, I think all around, that was really healing and I got so much joy from it. I remember going to a session there specifically on queer joy, and I left there so full. Hearing other queer people just talk about their own experiences with each other

post-TERFpocalypse was like, 'Wow.' When people feel connected, they feel like they belong, and when you feel like you belong, you heal.

Lorrie: That whole event was a turning point for me in Harry Potter fandom, because like I said, it was one of the first times that we were getting together after lockdown and we had a couple years to wonder, how universal is this response to Rowling's transphobia?

Brent: Yeah.

Lorrie: Are we allowed? Those people who are really affected by her transphobia, whose betrayal is so full of hurt... Are we allowed to make this about us? Are there people who genuinely are just thrilled with Harry Potter in an unbroken way, who are going to make it controversial that we're hurt? Are we allowed to have this be center stage? We suspected, but we didn't know until we were there in person, that there was a way in which this was the only conversation happening in Harry Potter fandom for years after it went this way.

Brent: Yep.

Lorrie: Also, 2023 was when the crusade against drag queens in libraries really became a much bigger issue than in real life you would expect, because honestly, most library time is not run by drag queens.

Brent: I know!

Lorrie: This is really not a big thing that people should worry about, but we thought, 'No, we're going to respond to that.' Having our entire event be emceed by somebody who's in drag is a direct response to that.

Brent: Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's something that we would have needed more than we might have without TERFpocalypse to deal with. For me, as I felt the energy -- because it's not a queer gay trans fandom; it's a fandom that has all sorts of people in it. Is it okay to say, "This one issue, we're going to make it everybody's issue?" The response, overwhelmingly, was, "Oh, this is our issue."

Brent: Yeah.

Lorrie: And it's not us. We're not the ones who made it the issue. This is J.K. Rowling who made it our issue.

Brent: Yeah.

Lorrie: We were handed this, and this is our response.

Brent: Yeah. One of the sayings that I think has been so powerful is Lilla, who says, "If you've come to help me, don't bother, but if your liberation is bound up in mine, then let's work together," and to me that is what happened at MISTI-Con. I just thought that was really powerful.

Lorrie: So going back to the actual series, the pages and words, which JC and I have been doing every week. We've been tiptoeing in, a little bit nervous of what we're going to find, and then finding -- similar to some stuff that you've already expressed -- that sometimes we just feel the thrill and the love and the genius of it that's unbroken and it sweeps us up all over again,

and we realize there was a reason why this spoke to us in the first place and that's still there; the words are exactly the same. Other times, there's this horrible record-scratch moment where we see something that had always been a problem that's much more amplified now or we see something that should contradict transphobia completely, and then the hypocrisy and the contradiction is just enraging.

Brent: Yeah.

Lorrie: And it short-circuits our thinking and certainly takes us out of the story. That back-and-forth response definitely happens, I would say, with every chapter.

Brent: Yeah.

Lorrie: So yeah, we've been doing that. So far, what I've discovered is that the great majority of the time, the story is so robust and so compellingly written that actually, I'm able to engage with it. I'm never far from understanding completely why this took hold of me in the first place, and the resonant parts of the story are still resonant. Trauma, as we've been mentioning before -- which is something that as a social worker, you're a professional in dealing with all the time -- is such a major element of this whole series. There was one specific incident in which this series deals with trauma, and unlike Rowling's prejudice against trans people, this is an area where it seems to me that she heard some feedback and she incorporated it and she published a change of mind. This is something that happens in Chapter Thirty-Six of *Goblet of Fire*, which was published in 2000, I think. This is after Harry returns from the maze, the last Triwizard task. Dumbledore asks him to recount and relive everything. He has just been badly injured, he's seen Cedric die. He's been through everything, and Dumbledore wants him to start over from the beginning. Sirius, who's there, objects instantly and says, "No, this can wait until morning, Harry needs rest," and Dumbledore tells Harry, "If I thought I could help you by putting you into an enchanted sleep and allowing you to postpone the moment when you would have to think about what has happened tonight, I would do it. But I know better. Numbing the pain for a while will make it worse when you finally feel it." So I'm reading this and I'm just accepting it, because trauma is not something I'm an expert in, but I had friends who talked about this scene and they objected. They said that going through this so soon would have worsened the trauma for Harry, and he would have been better off resting first. I thought, okay, I have a vague notion from the 1990s (from pop culture) that the conventional wisdom I recall is that recounting what happened during trauma was supposed to be helpful, but I didn't remember about timing. When are you supposed to do that? Maybe... Has the thinking on that changed? The reason why that came up in my mind was in 2023, the Cormoran Strike novel that Rowling published, *The Running Grave*, she amended her stance deliberately and it sounds like a public retraction. I'm going to read what happens there, and then I'm going to ask your social-worker take on this.

Brent: You got it.

Lorrie: Robin, who is one of the main characters of the Cormoran Strike books, has a traumatic experience, and then she gets "biscuits, soup, and a nap" before talking to the police. Strike, the detective, says, "'You can tell me later. There's plenty of time.' He didn't want to let her go, but he'd dealt with enough traumatised people in the Army -- had indeed been one of those people himself, after the car in which he'd been travelling had been blown up, taking half his leg with it - - to know that being asked to re-live calamity in its immediate aftermath, when what was really needed was physical comfort and kindness, meant a debrief ought to wait." Those are the two

passages that to me seem to signal different thinking from the author, and I wanted to know what you had to say about it.

Brent: Really great passages. In all transparency, I have not read *Cormoran Strike*, but I appreciate the connection in terms of being able to look and reflect and see what appears to be, as you call it, a public retraction. Yeah, it's so interesting, because... First, I want to say that what I gather is that J.K. Rowling is no expert when it comes to trauma. Identity and experience don't really qualify you to be able to speak on trauma as it relates to clinical engagement -- training and reflection and supervision do. I think that's with anyone. I can't tell you how many times I've had very well-meaning queer people who are like, "I'm going to work with queer youth." I'm like, "That's great. You need training, because your only experience is your own and you cannot make the assumption of likemindedness and apply your experience to everybody else, because that will harm people," and that is a big part of why I am such a believer in education and training. However, saying that, I absolutely acknowledge that there is no cookie-cutter response when it comes to trauma. Everyone is different in what would work for them with trauma; having said it, though, the notion that there are the themes and items that I think are important as it relates to trauma... To start with, I consulted a colleague on this, because you sent me this question before we actually got a chance to speak today. My colleague, Dr. Don Dyson (who also happens to be my husband, hooray!) also is a social worker, and we chatted over coffee about it; our discussion really came down to you have to look a little bit at trauma reactions. They're about survival, and we go into what we call, in neurobiology, our 'lizard brain'. It's the lower brain that is trying to figure out how to survive, and sometimes those reactions are freezing (people who freeze), fighting (attack), flight (running away), or fauna (I'm going to try to be super nice to you, hoping that everything will be okay). And with that, there's no super one way to help people in those moments because everyone's trauma is different. There's episodic trauma (trauma that happens once); there's chronic, ritual trauma. There's collective historical trauma; looking from a decolonizing perspective of trauma, the notion of what it means to look at how communities have been harmed over time and how that can be passed along almost a legacy, if you will, from generation to generation. We've seen that a lot with communities of color, we've seen that with indigenous people, we've seen that with queer people. Those are important things to recognize. Rumi says that the wound is the place where light enters you. Trauma can give an opportunity for people to grow; I'm not saying that that's good, but I am saying that often, when people face pain, they can grow in unique and different ways that they didn't know about. There's lots of different schools of thought about how to work with traumatized people, and given the CDC's study a while back on adverse childhood experiences, that's a lot of people. We know that a lot of people have adverse childhood experiences growing up, that there are lots of negative incidents that occur that can result in damaging patterns emotionally, physically, cognitively, mentally, relationally growing up, and that's just the reality. But I can tell you this: removing choice from a person about recounting a trauma is traumatizing. In the section of the *Goblet of Fire* -- "If I could let you numb the pain, I would, but it'll come back all the worse" -- removing choice from a person about recounting a trauma is traumatizing. Forcing Harry to talk about it is, again, removing agency and power from Harry, and what we know about how to help people who are experiencing trauma reactions is to give them choice. Give them choice, a sense of empowerment, a sense of control over their own lives, and the choice can be something as simple as, "Would you like a tissue?" It's a choice, even on a micro level. To be fair, Dumbledore is infamous for making other people do painful things for his agenda; in that way, he's no different than Umbridge. The idea of what it means to... "Okay, I

want you to do this because I think it's right, I think it's what you need to do," and forcing someone to do that in that moment can be damaging. However, creating opportunities for people to process and talk about their trauma earlier on can create a sense of openness for how to make meaning of that trauma later on, not just shutting it down and pretending it didn't happen. Not just denying all of its existence, not just lashing out in rage by projecting about it on somebody else, and I think part of that has to do with a person's culture and their personality. Culturally, I think the ways that we often deal with trauma in the western world is, "Let's sit down in this nice room with these nice prints on the wall and a plant, and we'll talk about how you feel and what happened," and all those kinds of things, and eventually -- through narrative and storytelling and a lot of emotional expression -- where people can, what Satir would call, "go to the dark places." Virginia Satir was a famous communications therapist. She did amazing work in family therapy, and she would basically say, "I'm going to hold your hand and we're going to go to the dark places together." Such a vivid image is part of that experience, but there's a very famous story about mental health clinicians who went into Rwanda after the Rwanda genocide, and they were there attempting to do 'critical incident debriefing', which is a nice clinical term for "Let's go in after something terrible happens and try to sit down and help people." Nice, but the delivery was really unfortunate, so what ended up happening was people in Rwanda were like, "They wanted us to go into these dark rooms and talk about these horrible things that happened to us without the sun on our faces to warm us, without the music in our ears to give us life and dance in community with each other, without nature to breathe in air and heal our lungs, so we had to ask them all to leave." Culturally, there's no one way to address trauma, and approaching it from a culturally humble way is, I think, one of your best bets. I know we're talking about Rwanda, another country; I was talking about right here in the U.S. There are cultural ways to approach trauma, all unique different approaches as part of it, but the other piece as it jumped out at me was personality. Personality has a major impact. I actually thought about this -- forgive me, I took a couple notes on it -- and what really jumped out at me was the notion of how our personalities in Houses made sense, why we need the different Houses to be able to help navigate trauma. Thinking about a Gryffindor, we've got some of their House traits: courage, action. They're action warriors and allies on the road. They kick people on the butt to help do what must be done, and they can help people gain the courage to face pain. Slytherins, our wonderful serpents, are strategists and risk-takers. They're brilliant map makers for success and efficacy, and a willingness to say, "Hey, I am important, too."

Lorrie: Oh, nice.

Brent: And I think that's so beautiful, because a Gryffindor would just be, "Oh, no, I'm not important!" That's bullshit. We need Slytherins to tell us that we are important, too. Ravenclaws, my brilliant intellectuals. They're like intellectual theory gurus and macro-magicians. They zoom out and see systems, cogs, links. They ferret out puzzles and they figure out the long-term effects of how to navigate that kind of stuff over time, and I've seen that kind of stuff be incredibly helpful for building and healing relationships in trauma. That's how we will often look at things. There's a psychological defense mechanism known as reaction formation, where we engage in behavior that's completely opposite of how we really feel. Somebody who is a gay basher actually is gay themselves and hates themselves, so they're going to lash out at other people and harm them; it happens a lot. Or something like repetition compulsion. One of my favorites is the idea of when people continue to engage in the same maladaptive or destructive pattern of behavior in order to try to gain agency or control over it. It's why people continue to date the bad boy. "Oh, yeah, I keep going back to the same kind of person who treats me like

shit!" It's those kinds of things, and Ravenclaws can be like, "Yeah, I'm going to point that right out as part of that process." And finally, all the other Houses are really important, but this is where the Hufflepuffs really shine. They take the House Cup: they are the emotional champions, they are the healers, they are the ones who sit and hold people. They create and hold space and see beyond pain and defenses, even of people who are harmful. A Hufflepuff could look at Umbridge and be like, "She's really hurting." Gryffindor would not be able to do that, but a Hufflepuff would be like, "Wow, that is painful." They are the quintessential wizards and witches of being seen, heard, and known, because they will bring those warm biscuits. They will bring that soup. They will make sure that the bed is made for you to take a nap, and then when you get up, we can talk. I think maybe J.K. heard some feedback about this and changed her stance. I don't know. I'm not in her head. I don't want to be in her head, but all I know is that it's possible for people... People have the capacity to grow and change, and that is an important thing. Do I think, when it comes to TERFpocalypse, she has? No. It's actually gotten much worse, and she's doubled down and caused immense trauma and pain because of it. But in this instance, I think paying attention to the Hufflepuffs is really our way to go, and we start where the people are. We start where Harry is in that moment; we start where people who have experienced trauma as in that moment and be like, "What do you need?" And that sounds really simple, yet it is. "What do you need?" They might say, "I need this, I need that, I need..." or they might say, "I don't know," and then validate it and say, "Yeah. Okay, that's all right. How about I just sit here with you, and if you think about something you need, then we'll do that," and they say, "Yeah." I can't even begin to tell you, one of the best things about being a social worker is when clients give me the privilege and honor of being able to walk alongside them on a journey and go to the dark place, à la Satir, go to the traumatic experiences. But the thing is it doesn't end there. It doesn't end there. People, human beings, have the amazing capacity to grieve, to move through emotions. What we don't repair, we repeat. The idea of all these things is a really great opportunity for a social worker to sit and work with clients -- families, individuals, couples - - who experienced horrors and still have the capacity to walk with their head held high. To me, I will say more than anything, I've found disenfranchised communities to be the folks who end up doing that the most; some of that is because they've had to in order to figure out how to survive, and they call upon their cultural wealth in particular. I've seen that happen a whole lot in Black communities, where they call upon their history, their language, their kinship, their social capital, their ability to navigate adversity, so many things. It's important to be able to create space for folks who are just tired. I don't like the term 'resilience.' I think it's a trope, actually, that I think is basically the notion of, "Boy, you've been through so much in this hellish world! Pat on the back for keep going!" It actually is a term that really emerges from white supremacy, so I think it's an important way to understand when people are tired, maybe give them a bed. At the end of the day, again, there's no cookie cutter, but I do think paying attention culturally to where people are at -- and learning about their personality and who they are, and trying to help them around those areas -- is the best way to go, and ultimately know that it's their journey and you get to walk alongside them.

Lorrie: Well, something that you said that really struck me: you were talking about people saying, "Oh, I want to be a social worker and work with queer, young people," and you saying, "Great, go get educated."

Brent: Yes.

Lorrie: "Your single, individual experience of trauma cannot be extrapolated." That's exactly what I see Rowling doing when she decides to advocate for policy around denying equality to trans people based on some trauma that I don't even... I don't even know what her reasoning is, but she'll call upon the authority of her single person's experience and say therefore, "I know what would work for society."

Brent: Which is beyond arrogant.

Lorrie: Yeah.

Brent: And so potentially damaging. This is why we have science. We know things that can work and we want to hold our ideas lightly, because it's important to be able to be critical of those ideas, too, and not assume that everything's going to work for everybody. But to presume, "My experience is the right one, and I'm going to shove it down your throat whether you like it or not," is arrogant and damaging and *very Umbridge*. *Very Umbridge*.

JC: To bring it back to the theme of Umbridge, yes.

Brent: Yeah. That's the thing: she embodies so much of power and control and presumption based in pain, and I find that it's a theme that I think goes with everybody. Dumbledore had a tremendous pain; his own broken heart and the kind of stuff that he did shaped the whole series. Harry's pain -- loss, loss, loss, loss, loss -- so much of that is connected to people's pain and what they do with it. Presuming that "I know a policy," when you haven't taken a single freaking policy course in your whole life... It's one of the pet peeves I have about teaching. They get a doctorate and then they go and they get a job at a university, they get handed a syllabus and told, "Here, go teach," even though they've never had one single course on teaching in their whole life. I teach pedagogy, so when my students finish my course, I'm like, "So, now you are more prepared to teach than every single faculty now at this university, other than folks in the education department," and it's just an interesting phenomenon that we minimize those kinds of qualifications.

JC: Yes. As a teacher educator, yes.

Lorrie: JC is having a reaction right now to this.

JC: No, that's like... yeah. Yeah. Anyway...

Lorrie: That's one of the funniest things about going through this podcast chapter by chapter with JC, because I am not an educator. I take Harry Potter as literature and I take teachers in it as characters, so I'm analyzing that. Meanwhile, JC's teacher educator radar is pinging off the charts.

JC: This is not how schools work. We don't do things this way. This is so damaging. No!

Brent: I know!

JC: It's fiction.

Lorrie: But it's not, though. It is also not. It's also how people do go to school and experience this, and it's really showed me that this is seven long books about pedagogy.

Brent: Totally!

Lorrie: Especially when we talk about, for example, the contrast between Snape and Lupin -- one of whom is not particularly gifted at the subject but has training in how to teach, and the other, who is a genius in his subject and is a really good example of various things you should not do.

Brent: Yes.

Lorrie: Your mastery of the subject matter is really only one portion, and to ignore the fact that teaching is a discipline that has proven methods and successes... I don't... Yeah, it makes me very confused why people don't see that this is actually really important.

JC: It's interesting, too, because this is also a part of what's happening in our country right now.

Lorrie: Yeah.

JC: In the United States, there's a tremendous teacher shortage and many states are responding to this by just saying, "Well, we need an adult in the classroom and we're stripping away requirements." In Texas for the last few years, the number of new teachers hired in the classrooms without teaching certification of any kind outnumbered the ones that did, so we have more than fifty percent of our new teachers literally walking in off the street at every grade level. Whatever your perception of what should be happening in a classroom is, that's what they're doing with no training, no preparation, no hint of how people learn or how brains work. When we think about all of the things... Brent, you were just talking about trauma. Trauma-informed instruction is a big thing that we talk about in schools, and we work with pre-service teachers and in-service teachers on being aware of and thinking about trauma and thinking about ways that your teaching can support or not support the students who have experienced trauma. All that's out the window when you don't have it, so looking at the situation of Hogwarts where you have people who are good teachers -- we were just talking about Flitwick a few days ago versus Snape -- yeah, that's reality. That is exactly what's happening in schools that I am visiting all the time. Yeah.

Brent: Right. "You know, we need a new... We've got a gamekeeper. He can do Magical Creatures. Come on!" Completely, and it makes me ill to think of what you described, JC, as happening in Texas, but I've no illusions. I've heard about that, and to me, the thing that is sad and scary is the kind of harm that they will do -- not only to the kids in the classrooms, but do people learn how to read and write and critical thinking in various professions and those kinds of things? I guess I'm one of those crazy progressives who feel like we should be pouring billions of dollars into the school systems and teachers should be paid whopping salaries and it should be highly competitive, and people like football players and rock stars should try to take second jobs to pay their mortgage. But that's just me.

JC: Yeah. I really hoped I would eventually live in that world, and I don't know if I'm going to get to. Could've been worse, but yeah.

Brent: Yup. Talk about trauma.

JC: Yeah.

Lorrie: Well, in this atmosphere, where drag queens are under fire, experts are somehow the enemy.

Brent: Yes. Yes, indeed.

Lorrie: And trans people are the scapegoat for apparently everything. I'm so, so glad that we can have these conversations, because the fight is necessary, whether we're up for it or not, so we may as well talk to each other and get strong about it.

Brent: Yup. Yup. It is absolutely important that we have time and space to be able to grieve, to process, to do what we need to do to take care of ourselves. I often think of advocacy as like a choir: we're all making some beautiful music in the work we're doing to advocate for the disenfranchised and remove barriers so people can use their own voices, not speak for them, which I think is really arrogant. But just like in a choir, the person next to me has to rest on occasion; they have to rest their voice and I'll take over for a while, and then you switch.

Lorrie: Yeah.

Brent: That's a big part of advocacy work, and the good news is there are lots and lots of organizations out there that are already doing great work; join them and be part of that, something that fills you with passion and excitement and enthusiasm in a way that helps you be whole and helps you heal. It's a good thing. *Clears throat as Clitty* If I may say...

Lorrie: Do we have closing things that any of us wanted to talk about?

Brent: I think, probably for me, just being able to be here and talk about these things gives me hope. When you have hope, there's so much; the possibilities are just fantastic. I don't mean that in a squishy kind of way. I mean it as, "Look at the things that we can do when we put our heads together and try and create change and make a difference," and we're going to need that, I think, in this contemporary United States or whatever it's going to be in the future. But I also know that Dumbledore's Army, despite the name, was not a faculty committee; it was not some kind of organization or social service organization or anything like that. It's a group of kids who got together to resist, and as far as I'm concerned, that is the way to go.

Lorrie: Thank you for getting together with us.

Brent: It was a pleasure.

Lorrie: Yeah. And I'm so glad you two know each other now, and thanks for making the community with us.

Brent: Yeah. It was wonderful. Thank you so much, and a shout out to Dream Quaffle for all the amazing work you're doing. Woohoo!

Lorrie: Woo!

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