Interview with Nadia Bizness

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**Camryn:** Alright. So, do you wanna just start out with introducing yourself?

**Nadia Bizness:** Yeah. So, my name is Brandon Nichols AKA Nadia Bizness. I’ve been doing drag for about four or five years, so yeah.

**Camryn:** Yeah. Awesome, awesome. Alright. So, when did you first hear about drag, and what was your initial reaction to it?

**Nadia Bizness:** Hmm... So, my first... here I’m going to turn my... my first experience with drag was through a cousin of mine. We... I call him Uncle Tony, but his drag name was Latanya Page. He exposed me to a whole new world.

**Camryn:** Okay, that’s great. Alright. So, when did you start performing as a drag artist, and why did you start performing?

**Nadia Bizness:** So, I started performing in... what? 2014, 2015? Uh, a friend of mine showed me his heels, the wig, the makeup, the glamor, and I was just like, “Oh my gosh, you... I can’t believe you do this for a living. Like, I have to try it.” And it was just a great experience. The first time I did it, my face was completely, like, just ugly and hideous, but I felt so powerful, and so... you know what I’m saying? So, I loved it.

**Camryn:** Yeah. Alright. How did your family, friends, and other loved ones receive you becoming a drag artist?

**Nadia Bizness:** Okay. So, I was actually fortunate enough to not have to deal with, um, the pressures of that. My family was always very encouraging. My mom even helped me get my makeup together, choose the right colors, choose the right shades, all of that. So, very supportive foundation.

**Camryn:** Awesome. That’s great, that’s great. Alright. Where does your drag name come from?

**Nadia Bizness:** Okay. So, this is a funny story. So, my original name was Nadia Fierce. It came from the Vampire Diaries. I love that character, Katherine and Nadia, that combination. So, my friends were talking one day, and they were, kind of, making fun of me. They were like “Oh, your name’s Nadia Fierce, blah blah blah. That’s so basic, blah blah blah.” And then, one day, I was like... they were like, “What’s your name again, girl?” And I was like, “None of your business” like, "I don’t want to talk about it." And that’s when it clicked. They were like, “Oh my god, Nadia Bizness.” And then, from there it just stuck.

**Camryn:** Alright. So, what is your personal... like, how would you label your drag? Are there any particular labels you use to characterize it? What’s your style?

**Nadia Bizness:** Okay. So, I like to meet edginess with... edgy, classy mixed with ratchet. That’s how I like to describe my drag. So, I love the whole leather look. I love the whole black. I love, um, pastels over, you know, my chest. I love all that stuff. Um, open exposure, thigh-high boots, high ponytail, that’s like my signature look. Uh, I like to look edgy, but polished.

**Camryn:** Alright. Is there anybody that influenced your drag, and who is that person, or what was the influence?

**Nadia Bizness:** A couple people. So, my mom influenced me. I love her style. I love her makeup choices. My friend Vaughn, he’s always been edgy and different, and I just love his confidence in anything he does. So, that inspired me as well. And then you know, people... celebrities like Beyoncé, Kim Kardashian, people who are fierce in their lives and just don’t care about, like, you know, what other people think about them. They just go out and perform and give a good show.

**Camryn:** Awesome. Alright. Do you consider your drag political? Why or why not?

**Nadia Bizness:** That’s a really good question. So, in a way, yes, because my drag is more body positivity. I am a... like, I would say I’m not, like, huge, but I am a bigger guy. And I believe in, you know, a bigger guy can wear, like, a two piece, he can wear a corset, he can expose his chest, he can have chest hair, like, you know, he can do bearded drag, he can have armpit hair and still look stunning and beautiful. So, my drag is more body positive more than anything.

**Camryn:** Yeah. Alright. Can you talk about your life as... what your life is like as a drag artist?

**Nadia Bizness:** Yeah, so, it’s actually really weird. So, being a wedding planner is my normal profession, and getting all of the details and work that I have to do, the clientele I work with is exhausting in itself. And, um, these people require so much out of you. But it switches gears when I’m in drag because, you know, all of a sudden, "Oh my gosh you’re a celebrity, you’re so beautiful. Oh my gosh, let me take this photo with you. Oh my gosh, like, wow, you’re so stunning.” So, it’s a different kind of world. Like, my normal self, you know, it's, it's weird, but when I turn on Nadia, it's like huge celebrity, huge attention factor, like, all that type of stuff, so... I hope that makes sense.

**Camryn:** Yeah. No, it makes sense. Are you a part of any drag family, house or collective?

**Nadia Bizness:** I was. I was part of the house, Legend. It's a house that my best friend, he started. But I, kind of, walked away from it just because it... when you... when you join a house, um, you follow their rules, you follow their brand. They want you to look a certain way. They want you to act a certain way. And I just... Nadia Bizness is not... she, she does not... I'm trying to think of the right word.

**Camryn:** She beats to the... or she dances to the beat of her own drum?

**Nadia Bizness:** Exactly.

**Camryn:** Yeah. Alright. How often do you perform, and where do you perform?

**Nadia Bizness:** Okay. So, I did perform recently back at, um, Hamburger Mary's Kansas City. I was in a drag competition with Widow Von'Du called Drag Survivor. I don't perform as often as much just because I moved to a new city, and the work here is just overwhelming. But it was a 12-week competition, um, and we performed every Thursday for 12 weeks. It was very intense, very challenging.

**Camryn:** Alright. Awesome. So, what goes into getting ready for a performance?

**Nadia Bizness:** So, as far as, like, this [unclear], the, the theme, the makeup choices, the outfit choices, the music choice, everything, it’s, it's... takes a couple days, sometimes weeks of preparation because you know you wanna tie everything together. So, it could... it could take a couple weeks to execute a plan appropriately.

**Camryn:** Yeah.

**Nadia Bizness:** Sometimes everything doesn't even go as well. Sometimes it doesn't go as planned. Like, you know, sometimes people don't get what you are trying to put out, a lot of [unclear].

**Camryn:** Yeah. Alright. So, what are the biggest challenges that you face doing drag and being a drag artist?

**Nadia Bizness:** I say the, the confidence factor is huge. You never know what your crowd is gonna react to. And someone like me who battles, like, anxiety and depression... uh, sometimes I wake up, and I'm like, you know, I’m just not feeling it today, like, you know, and I have a performance tonight, and I'm just not feeling it today. Yesterday, I could have been... for example, I could have, like, wanted to do this powerful song, Girls Who Run the World by, like, Beyoncé and just be a powerful movement. And when I woke up that morning, like, "Oh my gosh, I don't... I don't... I don't feel as confident or as useful", like, you know? "So, maybe I should do, like, a sad ballad or something like that just to express how I'm feeling." So, I'd say the confidence factor is huge.

**Camryn:** Yeah. So, you've done drag in a few different places now. Do you notice anything unique about each place that you've done drag compared to other places?

**Nadia Bizness:** Yes. So, there is a sense of, I guess, fastness is the word. So, St. Louis drag is totally different than Kansas City drag. Kansas City drag is totally different than Colorado Springs drag, like, you know, so.... To categorize those, I'd say St. Louis drag is more pageant, more tiara and crown, stuff like that, whereas Kansas City drag is more edgy, individualized drag, like that. And then Colorado Springs is more revolutionary, things like that, so...

**Camryn:** Alright. So, how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you as a drag artist?

**Nadia Bizness:** So, things change with tips. Like, normally, we can walk around and make as much ruckus and get as much money as we need to. With this, we have to stay, like, on stage. We have to wear certain masks. We can't move around. There are certain rules, things like that. So, that's been a giant headache as well.

**Camryn:** Alright. And do you mind letting me know what your pronouns you use in and out of drag are?

**Nadia Bizness:** Yeah. So, in drag, it doesn't matter to me, I use him, her, he, she, all of it. And then, out of drag, I use him and he.

**Camryn:** Awesome, awesome. Alright. And has drag influenced your sex and gender identities, and if so, how?

**Nadia Bizness:** Hmm... I would say, yes, and to a degree. When I'm in drag, I definitely feel more confident, more sexualized, more attractive, just because I have just so much going on. And then, when I take all of that off, I'm just a blank canvas, you know? So, I struggle back and forth with that.

**Camryn:** Yeah. Alright. Has drag influenced how you think about gender in general?

**Nadia Bizness:** Mm... drag, to me... like I said, it's a blank canvas. So, with gender, there are no boundaries. You can feminize it, you can masculinize it, you can do all this crazy stuff to just express who you are. So, to a degree, yes.

**Camryn:** I love that.

**Nadia Bizness:** But there's so much. There's, there's, there's bioqueens, there's drag kings, there's all kinds of categories of drag. So, I don't necessarily think that you have to put gender on it. Just go out there and do you and you perform.

**Camryn:** Yeah. Alright. And opposite of the other question I asked, have your sex and gender identities influenced your, your drag persona at all?

**Nadia Bizness:** No. Mm-mm.

**Camryn:** No?

**Nadia Bizness:** Mm-mm.

**Camryn:** Alright. So, we've talked a little bit about this already, but has drag impacted your confidence as a person when you are out of... whenever you are out of drag?

**Nadia Bizness:** I have to do a switch. Like, it's weird because, like... like I said, once I put on the hair, once you put on the makeup, once I, you know, put on all the, um, the façade of being a drag queen, my confidence just goes through the roof. And then, once I take it all off, I have to remember, oh my gosh, I'm not this, you know, fantasized person. I'm an actual human being. I have to go out there and still be able to put out this confidence that I do in makeup and a pair of heels, you know?

**Camryn:** Mm. Alright. And if you could go back in time as Nadia Bizness, what advice would you give her?

**Nadia Bizness:** Don't be afraid of what other people say about you. Continue the craft, perfect your craft, and keep going, for sure.

**Camryn:** Awesome. Alright. So, I'm curious about how your social identities have impacted your experiences of drag or vice versa. How has drag impacted your identities? And can you share more about how one of your social identities such as gender, race, class, age, geography, etc. and/or the interactions of these social identities have impacted your experiences of drag?

**Nadia Bizness:** Hmm, okay. So, I think the question that you’re trying to get at is... from what I take on it, uh... there is a sense of racism in drag and judgmental, like, all that type of stuff. Um, being a Black queen, you're expected to act a certain way, you're expected to be a certain way, you're expected to perform a certain way. I feel like there's a... there's double standard within that. So, I guess, with the social identity part, it's the same for me being, um, you know, Black male, Black queen, it's the same thing. I go through the same stuff every single day.

**Camryn:** Alright. So, now, I’m going to ask you a few questions about how you feel about drag specifically. So, how would you go about defining drag?

**Nadia Bizness:** How would I...? Say that question again?

**Camryn:** How would you go about defining drag? Sorry, it’s kind of hard to...

**Nadia Bizness:** No, it’s okay. Drag, simple... and I'll... and I'll give it to you simple. Expression. That's what it is, it's, it's expression. Who you are, how you feel, art, culture, movement.

**Camryn:** Love that. Alright. So, what do you think is the purpose of drag?

**Nadia Bizness:** I think it gives people a chance to express themselves in a fantalised... fantasized society where they feel like they can't be their normal selves.

**Camryn:** Do you think drag is sexual? Why or why not? And if so, how?

**Nadia Bizness:** Oh. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Um, sex work, kudos to you, kudos to the people who do it. Like, you know? It's not for me, but, you know, I've been asked to do a couple sexual numbers, and I’m like, "You know, I don't feel comfortable doing that. I don't want people even thinking about... fantasizing me over that way. But, you know, kudos to the people who do it, just not me.

**Camryn:** Alright. How do you feel about RuPaul's Drag Race?

**Nadia Bizness:** Well, I love RuPaul. He is a huge, um, influencer of mine. I love him to death. As far as Drag Race, drag has definitely become mainstream, in my opinion. It's... what is it on? It’s on VH1. So, you know, the whole world gets to see it. RuPaul is on a number of [unclear] mainstream commercials. And I think it's... I think it’s in a great place. People get to see the work that we do and really get to know who we are as a culture.

**Camryn:** Yeah. Alright. If you could change one thing about drag, the drag scene or the drag community, what would it be and why?

**Nadia Bizness:** I would say the community, since as a whole, in drag, it's very competitive, very judgmental. In the gay community, we try to, you know, preach to be together instead of being divided. That's not the case in the drag scene. It's very competitive, very judgmental. Sisters, that's what we call each other, sisters they can be very mean at times, harsh. And then, I just feel like they just need to take a second to look at what we're doing to each other and to perfect that and fix that.

**Camryn:** Alright. And what do you think are misconceptions people have about drag? And where do you think these came from? And what do you think we can do to help change them?

**Nadia Bizness:** Where do I think what? I’m sorry.

**Camryn:** What misconceptions have you noticed that people have about drag? Where do they come from? And what do you think we can do to help change them?

**Nadia Bizness:** I think that people think that it's not work. Like, you know, it takes work to be drag queen. It takes money to be in drag. Learning how to sculpt your face, learning what works for you, learning, learning just so much about who you are and expressing that individuality. Um, I think the biggest conce-- misconception is, people can hire, which people do, whatever, people can hire makeup artists and image consultants and stuff like that and just have them go out there and do their thing. But you’ve gootta have, like... to me, at least, you’ve gotta have some sort of, like, star quality. Like, you know, you can’t just... anybody could go out there in some makeup and heels and a wig and do whatever they need to do. But to me, you have to have some type of star quality, some type of performance aspect, to do what you need to do.

**Camryn:** Yeah. Alright. So, last question. If you chose one thing you want people to know or learn about drag, what would it be?

**Nadia Bizness:** [Pause] To just go out and have fun, be who you are, be yourself. I tell people that all the time. You just gotta be confident in who you are.

**Camryn:** Yeah. Alright. Is there anything else that you wanna add to the conversation here, or...?

**Nadia Bizness:** No. If you have any more questions, don’t hesitate to contact me and let me know and I could provide all that stuff for you.

**Camryn:** Yeah, awesome. Thank you for helping me out with this.

**Nadia Bizness:** No problem.

**Camryn:** Alright. Let me just get that...