

I laughed, giggled, and cried through my entire watching of the documentary. What inspired me the most was how he persevered despite all he had to go through. It's not easy being born queer in the south in a religious household. While I wasn't born in the US, I'm in a similar situation. LGBTQ+ rights in Bangladesh is poor, and I'm scared of coming out to my mom and dad. So I can relate to his struggles, especially in a time before the internet and social media. Another thing that stood out to me was the scene with the misty forest in the documentary. Freeman was talking about how he felt being in drag and playing his role as Stephanie, and how he used she/her pronouns for his alter-ego. While I'm aware that he's a gay man and he doesn't see himself as a woman, his description of coming out and being himself reminded me of my own experience of finding out and accepting the fact that I am trans. I still remember almost tearing up and this swelling sensation inside my heart as I heard Freeman narrate. It's a shame that he passed away cause from watching the documentary, I can see that he's the kindest, and most humble individual I've seen. He's done so much for the community, and I wish I had the chance to talk to him. I also hope the documentary comes out cause I want to watch it again and share it with others.

The documentary was a very beautiful telling of the life of Charles Stamper or "Freeman". The director and the many others who helped create this film knew and loved Freeman very much, and it shows throughout the movie. Freeman lived a very interesting life and was a great storyteller. He talked about the hardships he faced growing up a gay man raised in a Southern Baptist family. He discussed marrying a woman he never loved, because he felt pressured to. He also mentions getting enlisted into the army and becoming a typist at the Pentagon. This is where he got the opportunity to go to the Miss America pageant. This pageant is where he found his love for drag, and during the trip is when he really came to terms with his queer identity. He then mentions the highlights of his drag career. He had one won queer awards, made square dancing more popular in gay communities, and hosted the Gay Olympics all as a drag queen. Freeman then talks about the aids epidemic. He pays tribute to an old friend who lost his life to aids and talks about how difficult it was to be a gay person during that time. Freeman showed a great deal of bravery throughout his life. He was loved dearly by all his friends and made many advancements for queer people, especially in Louisiana. He funded a scholarship at ULM that is only available to the LGBTQIA+ community, had many loved ones that worked and went to school here, and visited the Lambda Society occasionally. I truly wish I could have been able to meet him.

The documentary "Freeman" exceeded my expectations. The documentary went into detail about life and many achievements of Charles freeman stamper including his childhood, his journey as a member of the gay community and his legacy as a whole. The film explained many key points in his life such as his experience in high school, his time as a secretary, and his career in drag. The format of the documentary allowed for Stamper to give commentary on the events of his life as we the viewer see images and video media from the events in his life. This allowed for the audience to get the most authentic representation of his life story as it came from Freeman himself. Him telling his own story gives the film a more emotional and conversational tone when compared to biographical film that don't have the input of the person the film is about. I think this style is particularly important for the nature as it allows for Freeman to better explain his struggle in the gay community, especially for people not in the community. The documentary gave important insight on his life was as a member of the gay community in the late twentieth century, as we saw life threw the eyes of freeman we saw the struggles and the victories of the gay community during this time period. The documentary concluded with freeman's work back home with the university of Louisiana at Monroe and his work with scholarships and the school in general.

Overall I found the film interesting because I had no clue someone so famous came from the college I am attending.

There will always be people in our lives that will see us for who we are and who we can be. You should always follow your path because even though it might be painful at first, in the end it will be one of the best decisions you will make. Freeman showed this in his schooling where he knew what he wanted and he went for it. This led to him receiving an extremely rare opportunity and was given an extremely great honor when he was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal. Then he went on to walk Broadway all day one Friday looking for queers and when he had no luck he continued trying and succeeded the next day and had an experience that really showed who he was to himself. In order to discover more about yourself you need to try new things like Freeman did when he went with his friends to his first drag show. It also revealed that many people are afraid of how others will think about them but the only way to grow and experience joy in life is by just being yourself regardless of what others think and just having fun. In order to continue expanding and growing to reach your fullest potential you must talk to others and make friends that will support you like a family. You must share your thoughts and life with others so you can build the family-like relationship everyone needs in their life. Finally, anything you do will increase how you experience and view your life no matter how small.

In the beginning of the documentary, Freeman starts out by talking about his home life and his relationships with his family. He was not that close to his family, as it was in a strict, rural Baptist area. For instance, he called his mom "mother", as he did not feel as closely bonded to her since she was controlling. In high school he played in the band, and one of his teachers and principal bought him a costume after they found out he was skipping lunch to save up enough money for it. He did a few pageants in high school, but did not know that the drag scene was for him or that he was gay until later, after he graduated from Northeast Louisiana State College. He was recruited into the military and was one of three people to go on a special mission at the Pentagon. He got a chance to get tickets to the Miss America pageants, which he had always loved watching, and was told to "watch out for queers" on the boardwalks. So, he went and searched for them night after night, and then realized he was gay after his first intimacy experience. He got into drag as "Stephanny" and quoted that she brought out the part of him that says, "I'm here, and you will pay attention to me." He was extremely involved with the Gay and Lesbian Square Dancing community, going to events such as the Gay Games, and forming the Olympic Rings with square dancers even though the supreme court overruled them, making them change the name from 'Olympics' to 'Games'.

The beginning of the documentary went into detail about Freeman's life, talking about how he grew up in Louisiana, how he absolutely despised his twin brother for no particular reason and about how he did not really feel close to either of his parents. Something that I noted was that he never called his mother anything else besides, "mother", yet he called his father, "daddy". I was unsure if this was supposed to allude to that he cared for his father somewhat more than his mother, he did mention that he just did not care for his mother at all, specifically because she was very controlling in the household. He attended college at ULM, but he did so before it was actually called ULM, he went there while it was Northeastern Louisiana State College. It was also in the time where the school still had a degree in secretary sciences, he was, what he believed to be, the only man in the entire country with a degree in secretary sciences and due to the time period, I would bet that he was correct. He mentioned he married someone while he was attending college, he had met her at college where she worked in that math department as the

secretary, and he worked just across the hall from her as the scholarship office secretary. However he never loved her at all, he married her solely because he has a very caring nature and that he saw marrying her as a way to constantly be able to take care of her and to make sure that she was never hurt.

The most important thing I learned from watching FREEMAN was just how much impact one person could have on such a large and diverse community. Even though I am not a part of the LGBTQ+ community myself, I still felt a sense of connection to Freeman's story. As an African American, I have also dealt with struggles due to being a minority; however I do acknowledge that my struggles somewhat pale in comparison. I would consider myself a confident person, but I also admit that I can have trouble forming meaningful relationships with others. Seeing the way Freeman was able to foster genuine and long lasting connections with people despite coming from an unfortunate background was a true inspiration. The fact that he also went to ULM, though it went by a different name back then, also gives me encouragement. I am not completely sure what path I will take in the future, but hearing about how Freeman persevered through countless struggles throughout his life gives me confidence about my future endeavors. Something else I learned was how the LGBTQ+ community functioned in the past. I knew that they faced much criticism back then, but I never knew about all the different ways they came together to encourage each other and foster a healthy community. I'll never truly understand what they and many others today went/go through but I'll always stand with their beliefs. No one should be ridiculed or shamed because they live their life differently from the majority.

Upon finishing the movie, FREEMAN. I was pleasantly surprised at what I had learned during the documentary. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I knew I would find the movie inspiring. What I did not expect was the emotion I would have felt. I love the message of learning to give back to the world. There might be tribulations, hardships, and trials that we all may face in the world, bringing us down to our knees and begging for some sort of purpose to our lives. Some of us may find that in due time. Others may never learn that until the sand in their hourglass runs dry. Charles Freeman's life is one of hardship and perseverance. Of humbleness and generosity. Of love and compassion. What makes his life unlike so many others is his undying commitment to give back to his community for what it has gifted him. Mrs. Morris paying for his suit so he could eat was a very profound moment in the film for me, showing how any normal person can show basic empathy and impact that individual's life for the better. I felt a genuine sense of joy watching the film, learning about someone I had never met in my life recount his story of self-discovery. As someone working through that same situation on their own terms, being able to see that mirrored on the big screen was highly impactful. I appreciate taking the time to watch this film. Like Sutherlin said himself, Freeman would have loved nothing more than to see himself on the big screen for so many people to look up. I'm glad to say that I am one of those who will do what they can to follow in his footsteps and give back to the world in a way that he would be proud of.

The documentary FREEMAN by Dr. John Sutherlin tells the incredible life story of Charles Freeman Stamper. He wasn't just one thing—he was a drag queen, a decorated veteran, a pageant advisor, and an advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. His life was all about breaking barriers, living authentically, and doing it all with style. Some folks knew him as “Stephanny,” but this film shows he was way more than just a performer. Freeman didn't just make waves in his personal life—he made a difference in the world around him. He even defied the Supreme Court at one point! His generosity stood out the most, though. One of his sayings, “I'd give you the dress off my back,” sums up his heart perfectly. The documentary really makes you appreciate how he used his life not just to succeed, but to uplift others along the way.

Freeman also stayed connected to ULM, where he graduated and later became a big supporter. He earned almost every award the university offers and made a huge impact on the campus community. The film doesn't just celebrate his achievements—it shows what it means to live boldly and generously, making a real difference. Watching FREEMAN left me thinking about how powerful it is to live your truth, no matter what others expect of you. It's a reminder that life is better when you not only chase your dreams but also help others along the way. I'm a huge advocate for this way of thinking and living.

This documentary was a beautiful portrayal of queerness in a way that is not commonly seen. People are used to thinking queer people are overtly flamboyant and from big cities, but it was really interesting to learn about someone more like me: from a small southern town. I learned that there was a big Gay and Lesbian square dancing group in San Francisco that really impacted Freeman's life and created a safe place for him to have fun while expressing himself. I really resonated with the idea that you just have to let yourself go and be who you are in order to find meaning in life, and I thought Freeman was the perfect and most inspiring choice of person to showcase that. I also learned that there were many more niche queer communities during the late 20th century, which I thought was really cool in terms of seeing how far we have come now. The documentary discussed the "Gay Games" which were essentially the Gay Olympics, and this is a piece of history I had no idea occurred. There is so much LGBTQ history that we never get taught, and I am so grateful this documentary was able to show me some parts of my community that I did not know about, especially the ones that shaped who we are today. I found it very inspiring that even back in the 1950s, queer people were beginning to express themselves and come to terms with their identities in a time that was so full of prejudice.

Freeman is a unique documentary film about the life of Charles Stamper- known as freeman or "Stephany". Freeman has a long and complex history, especially as a gay man in the mid 1900s. Freeman's story is one of great struggle but also stupendous success, and has a number of lessons that anyone- not just other members of the gay community, can learn from. Freeman talks about how he never felt love or that he really fit in anywhere. This was a mix of circumstances that many people have felt, with a bad home and social life- it's easy to see how these thoughts permeated throughout his youth. Luckily, Freeman found a passion early on which was art- specifically music at this time. Everyone can benefit from gaining a new passion, especially to help with going through a tough time such as Freeman was. Freeman later moves on, experiencing love- both of which end in either heart break or dissapointment. His story of leading his wife on when he never loved her served to remind me just how important honesty can be. It was also fascinating to hear about how he swore off love, as i'm sure many can relate- though hopefully not everyone is as broken as he, and that they can heal in full. In conclusion, there are far more details about Freeman's life that are fascinating and can serve as great stories- and sadly they can not all be summarized in a few paragprahs or even a film, but at least we can try to learn from Freeman's life a little from these small tidbits.