

Ty Yule
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

The Transgender Oral History Project
Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies
University of Minnesota

August 27, 2015



The Transgender Oral History Project of the Upper Midwest will empower individuals to tell their story, while providing students, historians, and the public with a more rich foundation of primary source material about the transgender community. The project is part of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. The archive provides a record of GLBT thought, knowledge and culture for current and future generations and is available to students, researchers and members of the public.

The Transgender Oral History Project will collect up to 400 hours of oral histories involving 200 to 300 individuals over the next three years. Major efforts will be the recruitment of individuals of all ages and experiences, and documenting the work of The Program in Human Sexuality. This project will be led by

Andrea Jenkins, poet, writer, and trans-activist. Andrea brings years of experience working in government, non-profits and LGBT organizations. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting project, please contact Andrea.

Andrea Jenkins

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1 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins, and I am the oral historian for The Transgender Oral History Project.
2
3 TY: You so fancy.
4
5 AJ: Today is the 27th of August, 2015, and, uhm, I'm gonna ask you if you would state your name...
6
7 TY: Right.
8
9 AJ: Your preferred pronouns, your gender identity, and your gender assigned at birth.
10
11 TY: Uh, my name that I use is Ty Yule. And, uh.
12
13 AJ: Y.U.L.E?
14
15 TY: Y.U.L.E.
16
17 AJ: Okay.
18
19 TY: Uh, like Christmas. And my gender preference, right? Gender or?
20
21 AJ: Preferred pronouns.
22
23 TY: Preferred pronouns are male. Uhm.
24
25 AJ: He/him/her? I mean he.
26
27 TY: He/him. Sure.
28
29 AJ: [Laughs].
30
31 TY: Uhm, and, uh, what was the next question?
32
33 AJ: And your gender identity?
34
35 TY: Gender identity. I don't even know how to answer that. I, it's, I'll just say trans man, trans
36 person.
37
38 AJ: That's fair.
39
40 TY: Okay, I just find that, the, the whole, uh, identity, problematic for so many reasons. Uhm, and
41 complicated and complex.
42
43 AJ: I understand, and I have some very similar feelings. And what was your gender assigned at
44 birth?
45
46 TY: I was, uh, born female. Uhm, yes. I just started transitioning four years ago.
47

1 AJ: Really?
2
3 TY: Mhm. At the age of 41.
4
5 AJ: It's a little later...
6
7 TY: Later in life.
8
9 AJ: ... stage than what we see young people coming out today.
10
11 TY: I know. It's a brand new world.
12
13 AJ: Yeah. Well I want to get to that in a little while.
14
15 TY: Alright.
16
17 AJ: We'll talk about the six and seven and eight-year-olds.
18
19 TY: Uh, yeah.
20
21 AJ: Uhm, but tell me about your earliest memory, Ty.
22
23 TY: Mhm. My earliest memory in general?
24
25 AJ: In general. Just the first thing you remember.
26
27 TY: Uh, memory is an odd thing. I think that it gets constructed and rearranged over time with the
28 stories that you tell and especially if you tell the same story often enough you remember that
29 that's what happened even if it's inaccurate in some way. But the story that gets told often
30 enough by myself and my mother is my earliest memory as well. It, uh, I remember, uh, I was
31 born in 1970.
32
33 AJ: Mhm.
34
35 TY: And when I was two years old, and this is an odd memory, for somebody later in life became a
36 trans man or it's sort of cosmic, I don't know.
37
38 AJ: [Laughs].
39
40 TY: But, uh, my earliest memory is of the Sunny and Cher show.
41
42 AJ: Mhm.
43
44 TY: And I was obsessed with Cher, and I think that had to do with the fact that my mother is also
45 sort of glamorous in a very similar way that I think is similar. Kinda think they're both drag
46 queens...
47

1 AJ: [Laughs].
2
3 TY: ... even though they're females. Uhm, and Chasity Bono was exactly the same age as me...
4
5 AJ: Wow.
6
7 TY: ... in the show. And I used to remember thinking that I will be a much better, that I was better
8 looking than Chasity and I would be a much better fit for Sunny and Cher and be a better TV
9 child.
10
11 AJ: [Laughs].
12
13 TY: And, uhm, I actually told the Day Care Center that I attended when I was two that I was actually
14 Sunny and Cher's child and that I was just on loan to my parents. And, uh, my parents thought
15 this was hilarious and started calling me Tara Bono. Tara is my birth name. Uhm, and it just
16 gotten shortened to Bo. And that's the name they've called me for the rest of my life. And, uhm,
17 when I started transitioning, I really wanted my name to just be Bo but nobody really, wasn't
18 catching on.
19
20 AJ: [Laughs].
21
22 TY: So it just became my initials, Ty, which people say Ty.
23
24 AJ: Wow.
25
26 TY: So, uhm, also, the idea, uh, I wrote a little story about it but, uh, the whole connection, like,
27 Chasity and I came out in about the same year. We were both about sixteen, seventeen. Uhm,
28 and Chaz started transitioning a little earlier than I did but, uhm, we both kind had a really heavy
29 period and then as we've taken testosterone longer and gotten more comfortable with
30 ourselves we've kind of slimmed down and, uhm, so we both started transitioning about the
31 same time too. So it's kind of odd but that is my first memory is the Sunny and Cher Show.
32
33 AJ: That is a fascinating, fascinating memory...
34
35 TY: [Laughs].
36
37 AJ: ... and accompanying story.
38
39 TY: Yeah.
40
41 AJ: Uhm, yeah. Just saw Chaz Bono on the I am Cait show a couple of weeks ago.
42
43 TY: Oh. I haven't seen that show. I don't have TV.
44
45 AJ: He looks great.
46
47 TY: Yeah.

1
2 AJ: He's slimmed down quite a bit.
3
4 TY: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I saw that.
5
6 AJ: The whole beard thing. [Laughs].
7
8 TY: Mhm.
9
10 AJ: Yeah, he's looking good.
11
12 TY: Yeah, trans men and facial hair.
13
14 AJ: Working with young people.
15
16 TY: Yeah.
17
18 AJ: [Laughs]. Uhm, so tell me about where you went to elementary school. Where did you grow up?
19
20 TY: [Clears throat]. Uhm, we moved around a lot but, uh, I was born in Minnesota. And then when I
21 was two I moved to Iowa. And so my first elementary school was a one room school house
22 kindergarten. Uhm, then we moved again to a different town in Iowa. And I went to Teres
23 Elementary School. Do you wanna know about amazing antidotes from childhood that happen
24 to do with my transness or?
25
26 AJ: No, I'm just trying to get a sense of what was school like for you. You know, were you bullied?
27 Were you a popular kid? Were you...
28
29 TY: Oh.
30
31 AJ: ... a smart kid. Like, how, how was school for you?
32
33 TY: I was a very smart kid, and I was also huge. I've been my present height and almost my present
34 weight since sixth grade.
35
36 AJ: Wow.
37
38 TY: And so when I entered kindergarten I was probably a foot taller. I was seventy-five pounds too
39 which is pretty big for a kindergarten.
40
41 AJ: That's a big five-year-old.
42
43 TY: And, uhm, so I was like Ferdinand the Bull though. I was, I was way bigger and stronger and I
44 think smarter than most of my peers so bullied, like teased me...
45
46 AJ: Right.
47

1 TY: ... and then they'd run away.
2
3 AJ: Mhm.
4
5 TY: Uhm, so I got teased for my size. Uhm, but then I also got picked for all P.E. sports activities first
6 because I was stronger and faster than any of my peers. And I ended up usually, uhm, smaller
7 kids sought me out for protection.
8
9 AJ: Mm. Wow. Okay.
10
11 TY: And, uh, uh, I remember, uh, the first..
12
13 AJ: You were somewhat of a jock. You were an athlete.
14
15 TY: Yeah, yes. And, uhm, but kind of a weirdo too. I wasn't a part of the normal school. I didn't get
16 to participate in the reindeer games of either girls or boys.
17
18 AJ: Yeah.
19
20 TY: Cause even at that age I was, I was big but I was also a little too masculine to do girl things. Like
21 if I got invited to a slumber party, I usually was the one that had to sleep by the door to protect
22 the other girls or if they got scared or something. Uhm, that was just my role.
23
24 AJ: Wow.
25
26 TY: And at, at an early age that was just my role. And I remember being crushed out on, my first
27 crush was Deborah Hansen. She was the smallest girl in school. And I carried her books and
28 protected her from the boys. She was very pretty. So, even at an early age, that was, that was
29 just who I was. And the boys tended to, and I moved to school to school and at four different
30 elementary schools groups of boys just invented the game to see how many boys it would take
31 to tackle me.
32
33 AJ: Hm. Oh wow.
34
35 TY: So, I didn't mind.
36
37 AJ: Independently?
38
39 TY: Yeah, independently.
40
41 AJ: From one school to another school that you were coming and that's what they used to do. Like
42 they just figured this out.
43
44 TY: Mhm. Mhm.
45
46 AJ: Wow.
47

1 TY: So [clears throat] and I think that it was, and, I mean, I don't know, I have memories of feeling
2 odd gender wise.
3
4 AJ: Mhm.
5
6 TY: But I also have memories of feeling sad. My mother is a very pretty cis woman.
7
8 AJ: Mhm.
9
10 TY: And, uhm, but she also wanted to be respected for her intellect and capabilities all the time.
11 Uhm, but she, she was pretty. And, and always wanted to look beautiful. And, uhm, fashionable.
12 And it confused and bothered her that, I mean, I wasn't a bad looking child. I was just so ugly,
13 large.
14
15 AJ: Mhm.
16
17 TY: It, that she tried to make me look pretty but when I got to school I was expected to roughhouse
18 and because girls didn't want me to try to be a girl.
19
20 AJ: Uhuh.
21
22 TY: And being girly, they just thought that was hilarious.
23
24 AJ: [Laughs].
25
26 TY: As I walk over they would try to put makeup on me but it was just like putting makeup on my
27 little brother or something you know?
28
29 AJ: Right.
30
31 TY: And, uh, and, uh, the boys just thought it was ridiculous when I would wear dresses to school
32 and would tease me about that. It's funny how little kids know what gender you are.
33
34 AJ: Mhm.
35
36 TY: Cause they know it makes them uncomfortable if you try to be like either one of them or...
37
38 AJ: Right.
39
40 TY: ... try to, you know...
41
42 AJ: It's really interesting.
43
44 TY: But, uhm, so, uh, yeah, I, I remember feeling sad that I will disappoint my mother because I
45 wasn't more like her.
46
47 AJ: Mhm.

1
2 TY: So I remember actually just feeling like sad that I couldn't be either. That I couldn't be a girl and
3 that just made me sad because I was disappointing my mom. And then so people expected me
4 to be tough and masculine but then when it came time to, you know, playing football or being
5 included in boy's activities, like, of course I would never, I was never included because I was a
6 girl. So I would never get the entitlements and the, the privilege of being a boy.
7
8 AJ: Mhm.
9
10 TY: And I was just really bad at being a girl. It was terrible.
11
12 AJ: Oh.
13
14 TY: I was terrible at it so.
15
16 AJ: Did you have brothers and sisters?
17
18 TY: No, I'm an only child.
19
20 AJ: Only child.
21
22 TY: Mhm.
23
24 AJ: And your home life, was your, was your dad around or? You talked about your mom quite a bit
25 but...
26
27 TY: My dad, uhm, both my parents are extremely good looking, smart, capable people. Uhm, my
28 dad was very masculine. He was a jock. And he was the cool jock that smoked.
29
30 AJ: Mhm.
31
32 TY: He's, they're all from Owatonna, a small town in southern Minnesota.
33
34 AJ: Okay. Uhuh.
35
36 TY: They went to high school together. They weren't high school sweetheart or anything. Uhm,
37 they're both middle kids and they both just wanted to get out of Owatonna. They both have
38 older brothers who were the...
39
40 AJ: Where they're a parent.
41
42 TY: Yes and much younger sickly smaller sisters.
43
44 AJ: Wow.
45
46 TY: It's bizarre that they both have that situation. So they just want to distinguish themselves by
47 being very successful. They were both really poor when they got married, and they're not

1 any more. They live in Southern California. My dad was around but, uh, when I was younger, he
2 took a sales job so he traveled three weeks out of the month usually. I remember being very
3 mad when he would get home because, that would, he would dominate my mother's time.
4
5 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs].
6
7 TY: And, and so.
8
9 AJ: Yeah.
10
11 TY: Uhm, my mom would, uh, you know, I guess, I don't know. She would let me sleep in the bed
12 with her, and I don't know, I just...
13
14 AJ: It was the two of you guys. You were close.
15
16 TY: I know. It was really irritating because he was so cocky and arrogant and my mom just liked him
17 so much.
18
19 AJ: [Laughs].
20
21 TY: But then I ended up wanting to be just like him...
22
23 AJ: Wow.
24
25 TY: ... which is not surprising.
26
27 AJ: Yeah. Cool. Uhm, so you hinted at this a little bit already but when was the first time you
28 realized you were not the gender you were assigned at birth?
29
30 TY: That's just such an interesting question that I have a lot of feelings about. You know, I went
31 through a period, and I know that my, you know, everybody's journey and experience is
32 individual. People are individuals. But I tend to have somethings that are some personal feelings
33 about it or about my body that I don't think are as common in the trans masculine community.
34
35 AJ: Okay.
36
37 TY: And [clears throat] I spent a lot of time thinking about this. I went, when I, after I went through
38 puberty, which I did very early at like ten...
39
40 AJ: Mhm.
41
42 TY: ... I, uh, I think that there was an interest on my part to have a certain amount of power in the
43 world, and I would not be able to do that masculine for some time. So I pretty early on became
44 sort of sexually reckless with men. And there was a way that my body, especially since I had
45 developed so much earlier than my peers, uhm, there's still a certain amount, it's why I don't
46 want to get chest surgery now.
47

- 1 AJ: Mhm.
2
- 3 TY: Uhm, I didn't have similar problems with my actual physicality. Like I had problems with my
4 weight. Like I didn't like being heavy but I've always struggled with that. I've gone up and down,
5 up and down, up and down. But, uhm, I, I think I also developed sort of... it, it wasn't feminine. It
6 was more of a, or, it was feminine but it was more of a sort of drag queen dominatrix sort of
7 personality. That's, I ran around on Halloween sometimes. I don't know if you've ever seen me
8 in drag.
9
- 10 AJ: I don't think I have.
11
- 12 TY: There's lots of pictures but, uhm, yeah, uh, I, I found that I had a lot of power over men because
13 of my body.
14
- 15 AJ: Mhm.
16
- 17 TY: And that, but then, I mean, I, but...
18
- 19 AJ: And you enjoyed that?
20
- 21 TY: I wouldn't really say enjoy it but it became, I mean, I think that people in general that
22 experience any amount of adversity in their life develop different ways to deal with it. And a lot
23 of them are self-destructive.
24
- 25 AJ: Mhm.
26
- 27 TY: Uhm, and it was pretty self-destructive. Uh, I was essentially, uh, uh, uh, sort of engaging in
28 activities that would annihilate my body or negate my body by, uhm, uhm, by using my body
29 and it would sort of leave me in this sort of circular pattern of feeling shame about what I had
30 done and then sort of craving the humiliation again. And I know this is a little deep for early on
31 in our talk.
32
- 33 AJ: That's okay. It's great.
34
- 35 TY: But, uh, uhm, but as self-destructive as it was in the end, uh, that part of my personality got me
36 through, like even though it was like ridiculously self-destructive, uhm, there was a certain
37 amount of power in being able to manipulate other human beings.
38
- 39 AJ: Sure.
40
- 41 TY: And, uhm, yeah, so, so there was that aspect. That was important and a part of my life but
42 mostly at school I was certainly butch and more masculine. And then I came out as a lesbian
43 when I was, I came out when I was sixteen but really I have my first girlfriend at fifteen. And that
44 was a big tragic love story, and I didn't, we lived in a small town in the middle of the California
45 desert. Like halfway between LA and Vegas, uhm, where people were very conservative and just
46 bigots across the board. Those are horrible, horrible, like high school experience. Uhm...
47

1 AJ: Bar, Barstow?
2
3 TY: Barstow. About thirty miles south of Barstow.
4
5 AJ: [Laughs].
6
7 TY: Uh, there's a town called Victorville...
8
9 AJ: Uhuh.
10
11 TY: And you can get off at Victorville go fifteen miles east into the desert and there's a town called
12 Apple Valley.
13
14 AJ: Okay.
15
16 TY: And that is where I went to high school.
17
18 AJ: Got it.
19
20 TY: So Barstow-esque.
21
22 AJ: Yes.
23
24 TY: Same, same concept.
25
26 AJ: I've been to Barstow.
27
28 TY: I'm sorry.
29
30 AJ: [Laughs].
31
32 TY: It's horrible.
33
34 AJ: Sort of like a throwback to the '50s.
35
36 TY: Yes, that's exactly when those towns were created in the '30s, '40s, and '50s as an escape for
37 semi wealthy people that have sort of, I think they were kind of kinky spas and getaways for
38 whatever but they mostly just wanted to get away from the diversity in LA.
39
40 AJ: Sure.
41
42 TY: So, uh, it was, it was very white and very conservative and very kind of hickish.
43
44 AJ: Mhm.
45
46 TY: Bunch of rednecks out in the middle of the desert. Think they can just do whatever they want.
47 But, uhm, uh...

1
2 AJ: So you're sixteen when you came out.
3
4 TY: Sixteen when I came out, had my first girlfriend. That didn't go very well. We were completely in
5 love but, uh, we ran away together to San Francisco because that's where we heard the gays
6 were. We were only there for about three weeks, and we didn't find any gays.
7
8 AJ: [Laughs].
9
10 TY: And, uh, we didn't have anything to eat. We were mostly staying in the bus station in the
11 women's restroom.
12
13 AJ: Mm.
14
15 TY: And, uh, we came home and they took her out of high school and all of this culminated in, uh,
16 very dramatic, uh, suicide attempt in the, in her mother's backyard one night.
17
18 AJ: Mm.
19
20 TY: And then they carted me off to, uh, an inpatient facility for two and a half months.
21
22 AJ: You attempted suicide?
23
24 TY: Mhm.
25
26 AJ: Okay.
27
28 TY: And the, my gayness at the hospital. I mean, I was in a locked facility with other troubled
29 teenagers, and that's a horrible place to put troubled teenager with a bunch of other troubled
30 teenagers. [Laughs]. And, uhm, but whatever.
31
32 AJ: Seems a little intuitive to me.
33
34 TY: Yeah, uh, and my psychiatrist, the guy that I only saw maybe once a week for ten minutes...
35
36 AJ: Mhm.
37
38 TY: ... told my parents that my sexuality was just a phase. And, but I knew I had to behave myself
39 otherwise I was never getting out. And they give you points, levels, you know.
40
41 AJ: Mhm.
42
43 TY: Anyway, when I got back to high school everybody knew why I was gone. My whole high school
44 knew. And I had a friend who would walk me from class to class. They were terrified of her,
45 uhm, because she was one of only five black people in my high school.
46
47 AJ: Mhm.

1
2 TY: And, uhm, she was from LA, and everybody was just scared of her because they didn't... and she
3 was kind of scary.
4
5 AJ: [Laughs].
6
7 TY: But she was my best friend, and she kind of protected me. And I just didn't talk to anybody in
8 my high school but, I knew that I had to come out as a lesbian. Finally my mother was just
9 screaming at me one day like what's wrong with me cause I was always upset or whatever.
10 Finally told her I was gay, and she was like, [sigh of relief] "At least there is something wrong
11 with you."
12
13 AJ: [Laughs].
14
15 TY: Or something. And I started going to bars and I was always, uh, more comfortable being butch
16 at, uh, you know... Uhm, I didn't realize that I would have, that I would be able to date feminine
17 women. The first gay bar I went to was this scary place in San Bernardino Riverside, I think.
18
19 AJ: Hm.
20
21 TY: And it was surrounded by military bases and it was very dark and sleazy and the butches in there
22 were like hard. They scared the crap out of me.
23
24 AJ: [Laughs].
25
26 TY: And I was just sixteen. I went by myself. And, uh, so and, uh, so slowly I, over the next few years
27 I, you know, stopped sleeping with men and being a lesbian and going into lesbian bars allowed
28 me, allowed my masculinity to just sort of develop more.
29
30 AJ: Mhm.
31
32 TY: You know, cut my hair and dress a little differently. Because for the very first time in my life I
33 was attractive. Like I was attractive to guys but mostly in a sleazy way.
34
35 AJ: Mhm.
36
37 TY: Not in a light of day kind of way.
38
39 AJ: Right. Or let's be, hold hands and...
40
41 TY: I didn't even want that.
42
43 AJ: Right.
44
45 TY: I, cause like I didn't want to date you.
46
47 AJ: Uhuh.

1
2 TY: That's not what's happening.
3
4 AJ: [Laughs]. Right.
5
6 TY: That's not who you are in my life. But, uhm, women for the first time found me attractive. They
7 were attracted to my butchness. And I didn't even know that was possible. I didn't even know
8 there were other gay people or gay bars in the world.
9
10 AJ: Mhm.
11
12 TY: I found out, and it sort of changed my life. And then, uhm, I went to San Francisco when I was
13 twenty-one with a girlfriend of mine. And that opened up everything. I didn't know that like
14 lesbians in LA are like that the L Word. That's what they look like.
15
16 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs].
17
18 TY: And then you go to San Francisco, everybody is hot and feminine and they all drive Jeeps and
19 fake boobs and big hair.
20
21 AJ: Right.
22
23 TY: Uhm. [Laughs]. Professional jobs and, uh, it was very bizarre cause the area is pretty, uh,
24 focused on your looks. And then I got to San Francisco in the '90s and all of the dykes were big
25 and they had shaved heads and they wore chains and they had tattoos and they drove
26 motorcycles and drive trucks and the nineties in San Francisco was this like, just beautiful little
27 moment for queer activism.
28
29 AJ: Uhuh.
30
31 TY: And everything was radical. ACT UP and Queer Nation and everybody was making zines or
32 making porn or, you know, these radical queer sex workers. Everybody was sex positive. And
33 everybody was doing performance art. And it was amazing. And I didn't even know that I was
34 part of something special. I just thought that, that's...
35
36 AJ: What the world did.
37
38 TY: Yeah. But San Francisco is not like that anymore. And the nineties I miss a lot.
39
40 AJ: Yes. [Laughs].
41
42 TY: So, uhm...
43
44 AJ: So you sort of gradually came to this recognition of...
45
46 TY: Yeah, and, oh, I'm sor—
47

1 AJ: otherness.
2
3 TY: Yes, gender otherness. I was, I was always, I, you know, gender, you cultivate your gender
4 identity. I didn't even think until I got to my 40s. I mean, I thought about it all of the time but it
5 really is, uh, it's like armor. It's like a façade. I didn't understand. I never felt like I was in the
6 right, like, I needed, like that I was actually a man.
7
8 AJ: Mhm.
9
10 TY: I still don't.
11
12 AJ: Mhm.
13
14 TY: And, uhm, and I don't even know what that means after my experiences in the world. I don't
15 know what it means to suddenly say that I am a man. Uhm, or that I was born in the wrong
16 body. Uhm, this is around space in my life...
17
18 AJ: Mhm.
19
20 TY: ... to stop being just exhausted all of the time by being an other.
21
22 AJ: Mhm.
23
24 TY: And I also know about, I mean, I'm very aware of the relative privilege that I have cause now I'm
25 just a middle aged white guy as far as most of the world is concerned.
26
27 AJ: Yeah.
28
29 TY: And I pass as that.
30
31 AJ: Yeah.
32
33 TY: And there's a huge amount of privilege in that. Like now I'm just a short scruffy guy. Like I'm just
34 not rich. That's kind of the only, uh, the only little pocket of privilege I don't have but, uhm, I
35 know that... and a lot of times I feel like I punked out. Like I sold out. But honestly at, at, I was
36 fairly comfortable being a butch dyke in my little queer urban enclave just cause I have existed
37 in, uhm, pretty, pretty insulated, insular queer urban spaces and communities now for twenty-
38 five years.
39
40 AJ: Mhm.
41
42 TY: And it allows you, uh, there just wasn't a lot that told me I had to transition to be comfortable.
43 Plus it just wasn't an option in my 20s. Nobody did it.
44
45 AJ: Mhm.
46

1 TY: Even in San Francisco. And it wasn't, it wasn't until, you know, the last half of the '90s that I
2 even knew any trans men.
3
4 AJ: Hm.
5
6 TY: Uhm, and I didn't know any trans women until I got to Minneapolis.
7
8 AJ: Who was the first trans man that you met that influenced you?
9
10 TY: Ah, well, I don't even know if he was influential but the first trans man I had an experience with I
11 knew as a butch dyke when I first got hired. I work, in San Francisco my job ended up being, I
12 was a truck driver and a warehouse worker for an all organic women owned, woman operated
13 produce distributor called Veritable Vegetable, which is an amazing organization.
14
15 AJ: Mhm.
16
17 TY: And, uh, sixty-five women doing, you know, traditional male labor and they taught you how to
18 drive trucks and forklifts and...
19
20 AJ: Oh wow.
21
22 TY: So of course it was all lesbians and we all slept with each other. And...
23
24 AJ: Uhuh.
25
26 TY: ... and everything. And it was a great place to work. Uhm, my boss who initially hired me... It was
27 amazing. There were two of them. Both my managers and later I found out they were having an
28 affair, and it was this super high femme, like dragon lady red hair...
29
30 AJ: Mhm.
31
32 TY: ... and this crusty, grumpy old butch...
33
34 AJ: [Laughs].
35
36 TY: ... like cane and just was surely and hilarious. And later they actually made a movie about her,
37 him.
38
39 AJ: Uhuh.
40
41 TY: Called A Boy Named Sue.
42
43 AJ: A Boy Named Sue.
44
45 TY: And Sue was her name. And she transitioned into Theo, uhm, and they made a movie about it.
46 Uhm.
47

1 AJ: I've heard of this film.
2
3 TY: Yeah, uhm, but that's the first trans man I knew. But I didn't know Theo or not very well. But I
4 certainly knew Theo before he transitioned and was like a forty year old crusty butch dyke
5 named Sue who is my boss.
6
7 AJ: [Laughs]. Right.
8
9 TY: Yeah. Uhm, so, and then there was one other trans guy that I barely knew. I don't even
10 remember his name. But, uhm, I don't know. And I think that the trajectory of the community of
11 trans men is very different than the trajectory of, if there is a community of trans men and a
12 community of trans women. There are so many other socioeconomic factors that play into those
13 communities but, uhm, that, it has become so more, so much more of at least a visible
14 phenomenon. But I also think that there is just an increasing number of, of trans...
15
16 AJ: People.
17
18 TY: ... people. But, trans men in particular. I think that butch lesbians. [Signs]. I mean the thing is
19 that we can, it's easier for, and I don't want to offend you, but it's easy, it's very easy to take a
20 bunch of testosterone and look like a guy, even though you're a short guy.
21
22 AJ: It's not offensive first of all.
23
24 TY: You know, it's, I mean passing is this other aspect of trans community that I, I, it's so fraught
25 with, uhm, problems and issues and, and, you know, the, like suddenly nobody, like I don't
26 experience daily barrage of, I mean, just, just attention really.
27
28 AJ: Mhm. Any trans women do. You know? Because it's, yeah, we're more easily identifiable...
29
30 TY: Right.
31
32 AJ: ... as trans people.
33
34 TY: Well, height.
35
36 AJ: Yeah.
37
38 TY: Musculature. Like.
39
40 AJ: Yes.
41
42 TY: I mean.
43
44 AJ: All of the above. [Laughs].
45
46 TY: We'll just be little tiny guys.
47

1 AJ: Facial structure. All kinds of signals.
2
3 TY: Yeah.
4
5 AJ: Uhm, no, it's, it's, well, this conversation is not about me. It's about you.
6
7 TY: Well, I think it's fascinating. It's something that I've always wanted to talk to you about like
8 passing and the politics of passing.
9
10 AJ: Well, I think it's a fascinating idea. I'd like to hear your opinion on it. Uhm, I have come to the
11 point in my life where I'm no longer concerned about passing. I identify as an out trans woman
12 so that's who I am.
13
14 TY: And you're famous.
15
16 AJ: [Laughs].
17
18 TY: And beautiful.
19
20 AJ: Well thank you.
21
22 TY: Talented.
23
24 AJ: But, uhm, it is a big issue for people and, uhm, I mean, you've, you've stated some of your
25 thoughts about it. And you do, you fit in as a...
26
27 TY: Yeah.
28
29 AJ: ... as a straight hetero looking guy.
30
31 TY: I know. And I have to bind. And I have to wear clothes that, you know, my butt has gotten a lot
32 smaller. I used to have a very wide ass.
33
34 AJ: [Laughs]. Uhuh.
35
36 TY: Uhm, you know, and your face kinda squares out a little bit because I think you just develop jaw
37 muscles.
38
39 AJ: Mhm.
40
41 TY: Uhm, facial hair. You lose this hair [waves hands in front of male hairline].
42
43 AJ: So all of that is from testosterone?
44
45 TY: Mhm.
46
47 AJ: How long have you been on testosterone?

1
2 TY: Four years.
3
4 AJ: Four years. Do you think that there will ever be any other medical interventions in your future?
5
6 TY: No. I mean, if there ever came a day where I had to get rid of my breasts for some reason I
7 would.
8
9 AJ: Mhm.
10
11 TY: It, it's not that big of a deal. I, I think that the surgeries that are available to me...
12
13 AJ: Mhm.
14
15 TY: ... don't appeal to me.
16
17 AJ: Hm.
18
19 TY: Like the appeal. I, I think there are a lot of trans men just antidotally from friends that I have,
20 that have such a focus on negativity, especially on their breasts...
21
22 AJ: Mhm.
23
24 TY: ... that it's something that they have been uncomfortable with their entire lives. They don't want
25 anybody to touch them. They're not a part of their sexuality. That they need to be gone. My best
26 friend Benny just, that was the very first thing. And, uhm, and I don't have that. And, uhm, I, but,
27 so and when I'm just around the house when I'm not working or on camera, I don't, I don't
28 bother wearing binders. I don't care.
29
30 AJ: Sure. [Laughs].
31
32 TY: I don't care. I, I like, and it would be nice if, you know, the binary male and female and the idea
33 of transition was a little more, I don't even want to say fluid because that would, that is a
34 political declaration because gender fluid is a thing...
35
36 AJ: Mhm.
37
38 TY: ... and I don't... it's not that I would be offended if somebody called me that. It's just, I think that
39 it's a political identity that is associated with a culture that I am less familiar with.
40
41 AJ: Not a part of.
42
43 TY: Yeah. I'm a part of if ostensibly just because I'm, I'm a part of the larger queer community.
44
45 AJ: Mhm.
46
47 TY: And, but, uhm, you know, it's not really how...

1
2 AJ: That's not your label.
3
4 TY: No. I don't really know what my label is.
5
6 AJ: Mhm.
7
8 TY: It's not important if somebody, it doesn't happen very much anymore that people use the
9 wrong pronouns or, you know, female pronouns.
10
11 AJ: Sure.
12
13 TY: Or I don't really care. It's like coming out to my neighbor, Darlene, who's eighty-one.
14
15 AJ: Mhm.
16
17 TY: She still calls me Tara sometimes and...
18
19 AJ: [Laughs].
20
21 TY: ... she and tells me how handsome I look. But also tells me that I was so pretty as a girl. Things
22 like that. And I'm not gonna take offense to that.
23
24 AJ: I think you know when people are being offensive.
25
26 TY: Yes. Yes. And I don't ever want to be... I understand, I really do understand the emphasis that a
27 lot of trans people put on correct pronouns and correct labels and [signs] but I think that there's
28 something... You know, just like the situation with assimilation and gay marriage like we were
29 discussing earlier.
30
31 AJ: Mhm.
32
33 TY: I think there's something lost in, uh, individual, freedom of individual expression. And there's so
34 many, there's so many rules to gender and, and, uhm, I don't know if I want to be just a straight
35 white man even though that's how I'm perceived, and I know that I benefit from that.
36
37 AJ: Mhm.
38
39 TY: It's very confusing. There's a lot of internal conflict about it. But the testosterone has really
40 taken away a lot of the internal sadness that I used to feel.
41
42 AJ: That's good.
43
44 TY: And I don't even know why. I don't, I'm less emotional and I think testosterone does that. It
45 could.
46
47 AJ: It could.

1
2 TY: Uhm, I don't cry really anymore.
3
4 AJ: At all? [Laughs].
5
6 TY: Sometimes but not nearly as often. And I think that the actual hormone of testosterone, I mean,
7 maybe it's all in my head. I'd be curious. Uh, but I started, uh, feeling less sad even before I
8 started taking testosterone. And I think maybe that's about just declaring one or the other.
9
10 AJ: Yeah.
11
12 TY: And I don't know if that's about declaring that I'm gonna be this thing. And before it was just so
13 amorphous and confusing to everyone.
14
15 AJ: Mhm.
16
17 TY: Uhm, because I was so obviously a butch dyke. Like sometimes I would get mistaken for a guy
18 but not for very long.
19
20 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs].
21
22 TY: And, you know, and, uhm, and that would either cause, uh, you know, animosity if I'm with, you
23 know, or around some like straight guys...
24
25 AJ: Mhm.
26
27 TY: ... that want to cause trouble.
28
29 AJ: Right.
30
31 TY: Or I was sort of exotic or, you know, uh, I don't know. It just caused confusion.
32
33 AJ: Yeah.
34
35 TY: And just being the focus of confusion day in and day out was exhausting. And I think I gave up.
36 And I feel like a punk sometimes.
37
38 AJ: Awe.
39
40 TY: I do.
41
42 AJ: Really?
43
44 TY: Yeah.
45
46 AJ: Huh.
47

1 TY: I think that there's a certain magic in being identifiably queer. Uhm, and it's a certain energy
2 that you get from it because you have to work so hard at getting through the day every day that,
3 uhm, I don't know if, I, I miss it though. And I feel strange about that. I, you know. It's certainly
4 easier.
5
6 AJ: So here's an interesting thing. I'm curious what you think about this.
7
8 TY: Okay.
9
10 AJ: So, uhm, you know, young, younger people are coming out more and more every day. And when
11 I say younger, I'm saying six, seven, eight years old.
12
13 TY: I know.
14
15 AJ: And, and many times, particularly, in middle income and upper middle income families, the
16 parents are very supportive and the medical system is very supportive and so, consequently,
17 young people are taking, uhm, you know, hormone...
18
19 TY: Hormone therapy.
20
21 AJ: ... blockers.
22
23 TY: Yep.
24
25 AJ: Androgen blockers and doing HRT and hormone therapy. Uhm, and so, they're sort of bypassing
26 that whole visible queerness or visible transness identity...
27
28 TY: I know. Mhm.
29
30 AJ: ... which is going to change what it means to be a trans person.
31
32 TY: Yes.
33
34 AJ: It's not gonna be, you know, I'm not saying it's good or bad or whatever but I'm curious as to
35 what you think about it. Uhm, because you talk about how there's this magic in being
36 identifiably queer.
37
38 TY: There is. Uhm, I think, that experiencing, I mean, it's so hard because you lose people all the
39 time. You lose, you lose young queers, even older queers still commit suicide...
40
41 AJ: Mhm.
42
43 TY: ... and get lost in drug addition and alcoholism and because adversity is hard.
44
45 AJ: It's very difficult.
46

- 1 TY: And then being pounded like that on a daily basis emotionally and sometimes physically in your
2 life creates a resilience and an elegance to your soul, I guess. And your ability to express yourself
3 and makes you tough and, uhm, gives you, I think, often, not always. There's certainly a lot of
4 gays and lesbians that I didn't find this in.
5
- 6 AJ: Mhm.
7
- 8 TY: But it creates a, I think, a profound empathy in people that have experienced a lot of adversity
9 that expresses itself in a unique community building way, uhm, of, uhm, your ability, I think
10 one's ability to understand the experiences of others and be comfortable in a, a, an array of
11 experiences and understand, maybe not the exact experiences, but the pain that somebody else
12 is in.
13
- 14 AJ: Mhm.
15
- 16 TY: Uhm, I think only comes from a lifetime of adversity.
17
- 18 AJ: Sure.
19
- 20 TY: And I'm not saying that a six year old hasn't experienced considerable adversity cause I think we
21 all did by the time we're six years old.
22
- 23 AJ: Mhm.
24
- 25 TY: Uhm, and hardship and emotional trauma but, and, you know, as a parent, of course if, I mean,
26 if I was in the same position, of course I would want to be supportive and not say actually, I
27 think you should just go get the shit kicked out of you for a few more years so that you're a nice
28 person...
29
- 30 AJ: Yeah.
31
- 32 TY: ... when you're older. That's not going to happen. That's not. That's not good.
33
- 34 AJ: No.
35
- 36 TY: But I do think that our, our new friendlier, uh, I mean, it was hard fought to, to get to this place
37 where parents would even consider that and the fact that there are trans people in the media
38 has allowed parents the option like, like, you know, cisgendered, heterosexual, middle income
39 folks that might not have any exposure to that. Certainly I didn't...
40
- 41 AJ: Mhm.
42
- 43 TY: ... in the '80s, you know. I didn't know about gay people. I certainly didn't know about trans
44 people.
45
- 46 AJ: Right.
47

1 TY: And, uh, so that's allowed for the possibility for a young person to even have that option. And
2 so, the way that, you know, those historical, cultural changes effect then the community of
3 queers in their 20s and 30s and 40s in years to come. I, I think it could. First of all I think it's a
4 positive thing...

5

6 AJ: Yes.

7

8 TY: ... for a child to have supportive parents.

9

10 AJ: Mhm.

11

12 TY: And supportive of their individual issues and concerns in identities. Second of all I think that the
13 problem I might be able to and, and this is my exact problem with the trajectory of mainstream
14 GLBT politics or gay and lesbian politics over the last ten years is that there's then in a nicer,
15 gentler world the people that are still experiencing who, who don't have supportive parents,
16 who aren't middle to high income, who experience queerness alongside of other, uhm,
17 intersections of oppression or, you know, it's possible to not have supportive parents even if
18 you're white, middle income...

19

20 AJ: Yeah.

21

22 TY: ... uhm, those people with those, you know, I feel like it's gonna create more of a fissure like the,
23 the fracturing of, of the queer, of the GLBT movement will continue. I'm actually sort of, not
24 excited but I'm curious to see if the time is coming for, uhm, queers or trans people to have a
25 more independent and fully formed movement...

26

27 AJ: Hm.

28

29 TY: ... that allows, uh, separating from mainstream gay and lesbian movement.

30

31 AJ: Sure.

32

33 TY: Because they're all different, they're, they have different issues.

34

35 AJ: Yeah. Yeah.

36

37 TY: Uhm.

38

39 AJ: What do you think that the agenda should be? What are the issues?

40

41 TY: Well, it's, I mean, it's not a monolithic community.

42

43 AJ: Mhm.

44

45 TY: And, uhm, but the gay and lesbian movement was started by trans people. And in the beginning
46 both in San Francisco at Compton Cafeteria Riots and Stonewall, uhm, it was, there were, uh,

1 issues of racism. You know, there were trans people of color. Uhm, and issues of poverty that
2 are attendant with being a trans person of color.
3
4 AJ: Sure. [Laughs].
5
6 TY: And, uhm, and so there were coalitions created that dealt with those issues then that sort of
7 dissolved over time. And I don't know what kind of radical politics are still going or are going to
8 come out of... I, I don't feel like people want to be so radical. Like in general.
9
10 AJ: Mhm.
11
12 TY: Since the end of the '90s I don't know if everybody just got tired or, you know, nobody's, uh, I
13 mean, Black Lives Matter movement and the various riots in different cities are the only
14 evidence of radical politics that I can still see.
15
16 AJ: Yeah.
17
18 TY: So I don't know if...
19
20 AJ: There was Occupy Wall St. for a little while.
21
22 TY: Yes. And I, and I was, I was curious about that movement and also it's a, it's a great concept and
23 I was glad that it was happening...
24
25 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
26
27 TY: ... but I also didn't see... I mean it wasn't particularly, I don't know. These are, of course Oakland
28 always being the sole exception.
29
30 AJ: Mhm.
31
32 TY: Uhm, uh, there weren't a lot of, I don't know how much headway, I don't know how radical it
33 was. And I'm not trying to detract from that movement. I just think that political movements in
34 general have changed and the energy surrounding them has changed. And I think that there's a
35 lot of cultural factors that have effected the way, uhm, activism in, in general is pursued. Uhm,
36 so I don't know and, and I don't fully understand how activism in general has changed. I just
37 know that I, that for me maybe I'm just old. Maybe that just happened.
38
39 AJ: You know, I think we live in a fairly apathetic, uh, community now.
40
41 TY: Right. I think a lot of that, I'm sure, you know, it started happening when people started having
42 wider access to the internet. And so somehow our computer age, internet age has affected
43 political activism. And I, I don't fully understand the ramifications of what I'm saying but I know
44 that's probably...
45
46 AJ: Well now you can "like" a political cause.
47

1 TY: Yes.
2
3 AJ: Or you can share a political cause. And you've done your part. Thank you.
4
5 TY: Yeah, one of my first memories in San Francisco when I got there when I was twenty-one years
6 old. This butch dyke. And I was just amazed at the, the variety of queer you could be and, and
7 there was just so much going on. In 1991, uhm, California passed a billed called AB101, and it
8 was a, a fairly benign sort of, it was a nondiscriminatory bill, uh, that had to do with housing and
9 employment for, uh, for...
10
11 AJ: AB9?
12
13 TY: AB101.
14
15 AJ: 101.
16
17 TY: And, uhm...
18
19 AJ: And that was in 1991 you said?
20
21 TY: Yep. Or '92. '91 or '92. And I was, uh, and it passed because California has, you know, voters can
22 pass things.
23
24 AJ: Right.
25
26 TY: They can do, if it...
27
28 AJ: Referendum.
29
30 TY: Referendum, yes, system. So the governor Wilson at the time, Pete Wilson, uh, vetoed it.
31
32 AJ: Mhm.
33
34 TY: So this, this GLBT nondiscriminatory, you know, having to do with housing and employment and
35 education bill passed. Uhm, and then Governor Wilson, who was very conservative, uh,
36 republican, uh, vetoed the bill. And that was pre-internet, pre-facebook, pre-cellphone, you
37 know, we had none of that.
38
39 AJ: Mhm.
40
41 TY: Uhm, and I was at school, San Francisco State. I was at class and within hours not only had I
42 heard about it but within hours there were probably twenty thousand people gathered in the
43 Castro. Like...
44
45 AJ: Wow.
46
47 TY: ... like just gathered in the Castro right on Market and 18th or in Castro.

1
2 AJ: Mhm.
3
4 TY: And within three hours of Pete Wilson somehow vetoing that bill there were 200,000 queers
5 marching down Market St.
6
7 AJ: Wow.
8
9 TY: And, uh, they marched all the way down to the state building and lit it on fire. And that was
10 actually one of my first experiences with trans women. It was this amazing night. I was actually
11 upfront in the march. When we got to the state building people started throwing rocks through
12 the windows.
13
14 AJ: Mhm.
15
16 TY: Somebody got in there and lit it on fire. And there were police in full riot gear that came out the
17 front door and, and they had their shields up, and I was up there. And they were probably
18 about, uh, eight trans women on either side of me. There were other people there but one of
19 the cops actually, uhm, pepper sprayed like the women standing next to me.
20
21 AJ: Oh wow.
22
23 TY: And three of the women pulled mace out of their purses and maced the cops.
24
25 AJ: So is this in Sacramento or?
26
27 TY: No, this is San Francisco.
28
29 AJ: San Francisco, okay.
30
31 TY: Mhm.
32
33 AJ: [Laughs].
34
35 TY: It was amazing.
36
37 AJ: Wow.
38
39 TY: Uhm, and I don't, and even with all our technology, I don't see that kind of response anymore.
40
41 AJ: Sure. No, you're lucky if you get two hundred people out.
42
43 TY: Yeah. So, uhm, so there's something about the way activism happens now, uh, that is very
44 different. And I don't even know how to... I spend a lot of time trying to pick apart the reasons
45 for it. Uhm, but I, I don't fully understand what has happened. There's also no rock and roll
46 anymore.
47

1 AJ: [Laughs].
2
3 TY: There's no punk rock. There's no rock and roll.
4
5 AJ: Yeah.
6
7 TY: This generation has killed it.
8
9 AJ: Wow.
10
11 TY: Like rap is, is very, it's not what it used to be.
12
13 AJ: Yeah. Not even close.
14
15 TY: Like there's no...
16
17 AJ: It's pop music now.
18
19 TY: It's pop music. It's all pop. Nobody is mad about anything.
20
21 AJ: Yeah.
22
23 TY: And everybody is afraid of being mad...
24
25 AJ: Mhm.
26
27 TY: ... also I think. You're not supposed to be mad anymore. Or angry or violent or, and I think that
28 those things used to be important to activism.
29
30 AJ: Sure. You, I know that you were, uh, an owner or maybe a co-owner of one of the few queer
31 bars in the cities.
32
33 TY: Yes.
34
35 AJ: The legendary queer bar...
36
37 TY: That's the only reason you're here interviewing me today.
38
39 AJ: ... called Pie.
40
41 TY: Pie. Pie bar. Yes.
42
43 AJ: I, I just want to hear like what was the impetus for Pie? What were some of the moments that
44 made it a special place?
45
46 TY: Well...
47

1 AJ: How do you feel about it? Why did it go away? Like tell us about Pie.
2
3 TY: Okay. Get comfy.
4
5 AJ: [Laughs].
6
7 TY: Uhm, uh, so, of course, you were one of the inspiring moments...
8
9 AJ: Hm.
10
11 TY: ... where you just have small inspiring moments. It's 2006...
12
13 AJ: Uhuh.
14
15 TY: ... and as I said I experience a lot of more radical activism in San Francisco.
16
17 AJ: Mhm.
18
19 TY: And I was part of a scene. It was a bunch of dirty punk rock dykes and, you know, we'd go to
20 clubs and get drunk and do a lot of drugs and we'd get it free and we'd do a lot of relatively
21 illegal things.
22
23 AJ: [Laughs]. Sure.
24
25 TY: Uhm, I, I, you know, I knew the San Francisco Hags. They're, they're this, uh, they let me be their
26 little mascot for the most part. And they were way tougher and cooler than I could ever have
27 been.
28
29 AJ: Mhm.
30
31 TY: But I had all this experience and energy and by the end of the nineties, I was exhausted. I was at
32 the end of my twenties. I wanted to buy a house. I had a partner at the time. Uh, when we
33 moved out here in 1999 to Minneapolis cause we still wanted to live in the city but we wanted
34 to live in a liberal city and we wanted to live in a city that we could afford.
35
36 AJ: Sure.
37
38 TY: So that pretty much takes away the coast and Chicago.
39
40 AJ: And New York.
41
42 TY: I don't want to live in the south so you have Minneapolis and I was from Minnesota even though
43 I never spent any time in Minneapolis. We just drove out here one day. We put all our stuff on a
44 truck. We drove out here in my 1966 Chrysler with our two cats.
45
46 AJ: [Laughs].
47

- 1 TY: We were gonna buy a house which we did a few months later. And, uh, then we start, you know,
2 thinking we want to be grownups. We start wearing more sweaters...
3
- 4 AJ: [Laughs].
5
- 6 TY: ... and less leather and, you know, we both kinda get fat and, and, uh...
7
- 8 AJ: [Laughing continues]. This is hilarious.
9
- 10 TY: ... and we get jobs and all of a sudden both of us were, you know, she's got tattoos everywhere
11 way more than me. And all of a sudden we were just like, "This is so boring."
12
- 13 AJ: [Laughs].
14
- 15 TY: "This can't be it. This can't be what we're doing for the rest of our lives." And, uhm, you know,
16 we were great friends and a great house and I was going through this huge personal turmoil and
17 sadness and I didn't understand why I was sad all of the time, blah, blah, blah. Anyway, so I quit
18 my job, and I went back to school. And then we both started exercising, and we met some new
19 people that were younger and the, you know, the gayborhood over in Powderhorn. We met a
20 bunch of arty lesbians who were really cool. We threw great parties and stuff. And then my last
21 semester at the U, I took a, a great class called, uh, Dissonant Sexualities in US History.
22
- 23 AJ: Hm.
24
- 25 TY: And, uh, Professor Kevin Murphy, who you probably know...
26
- 27 AJ: I do know.
28
- 29 TY: ... taught that class.
30
- 31 AJ: Kevin is on the advisory board for this project.
32
- 33 TY: I'm sure he is. And it was a fantastic class and the last, on the, the last, uhm, little section of our
34 class was a section on the dykes in San Francisco in the '90s and the punk rock scene and the,
35 you know, uh, Queer Nation and ACT UP and all the...
36
- 37 AJ: That's you.
38
- 39 TY: Yeah. And I was like, "Hey, I know all about this."
40
- 41 AJ: [Laughs].
42
- 43 TY: And I ended up actually teaching that or speaking that, well facilitating that particular section.
44 And, uhm, and, and I realized that what I was part of was something special. And I didn't know
45 that.
46
- 47 AJ: Mhm.

1
2 TY: I, and, so it gave me this different perspective on all of the people I knew and all of the
3 experiences I had and that, and I slowly started to realize that not only was Minneapolis
4 different... Cause when I got here I realized that the people in Minneapolis were a little gentler...
5
6 AJ: A little bit.
7
8 TY: And like I, I wouldn't tell all my stories here.
9
10 AJ: Sure. [Laughs].
11
12 TY: Cause I didn't want anybody to feel sad or, you know, scared of me.
13
14 AJ: Mhm. [Laughs].
15
16 TY: So I kind of, you know, pull back my personality a little bit. But also right then what was
17 happening in, in general politics is somebody, and I don't know, I don't even remember who
18 brought up gay marriage again. It's not like we never discussed it. It just wasn't important. It
19 wasn't as important as everything else that was going on.
20
21 AJ: Sure.
22
23 TY: You know, the '90s were dominated by activism surrounding HIV research. But...
24
25 AJ: Just the organization ACT UP...
26
27 TY: ACT UP.
28
29 AJ: ... is very much a part of that.
30
31 TY: And Queer Nation was a more radical activist group not only dealing with AIDs research but also
32 just in general, just sex positiveness and self-expression and, uhm, and I think it was Queer
33 Nation. Maybe it was ACT UP that put up a house size condom on Jessie Helms' house. Do you
34 remember that?
35
36 AJ: I think that may have been ACT UP. [Laughs].
37
38 TY: [Laughs]. Which is hilarious. Anyway nobody does anything fun anymore. Uhm, so, uh, so the
39 issue of gay marriage all of a sudden front and center and was the only political thing that, that
40 gays and lesbians talked about. Like all of a sudden, uh, and I, maybe it was brought up by the
41 right.
42
43 AJ: It was. It was brought up by a republican. They were, all the rage was to put these constitutional
44 bans on marriage.
45
46 TY: Yeah, they got enough play talking about abortion. They needed a new boogie man...
47

1 AJ: Right.
2
3 TY: ... and it was the gays are gonna get married.
4
5 AJ: Yes.
6
7 TY: Okay. So, and then I saw you at Queertopia...
8
9 AJ: Uhuh.
10
11 TY: ... and I had seen so much bad... I mean it was kind of beautiful just cause it happened all the
12 time in San Francisco...
13
14 AJ: Right.
15
16 TY: ... performance art. But I had seen so much bad performance art and I, it was terrible. And then I
17 saw you and I, I realized that there was still hope. There was still people that could move me and
18 make me care about queer politics and that there was still a voice out there that wasn't this
19 assimilation voice...
20
21 AJ: Mhm.
22
23 TY: ... in that there were, there was still an emotion, a place in my heart that could be moved into
24 action and caring about our community. And, uhm, uhm, I think at that same show there was
25 the Trans Voices Choir so.
26
27 AJ: Yes.
28
29 TY: And, uhm, the woman that sang, the trans woman that sang the Christina Aguilera I am
30 Beautiful song.
31
32 AJ: It's beautiful.
33
34 TY: Oh my god. I'm gonna start crying right now. See that makes me cry.
35
36 AJ: Awe. Wow.
37
38 TY: Uhm, so on my personal trajectory I was sick of being boring. And, and, and...
39
40 AJ: [Laughs].
41
42 TY: ... and, and, and...
43
44 AJ: Sort of normative.
45
46 TY: Normative. Yes. Exactly. And then you inspired me and then Kevin's class inspired me and I was
47 getting in better shape and then that incident at the Townhouse happened where, you know,

1 uh, a gay club owned by a lesbian put a security guard in front of the men's room door at the
2 Townhouse which at the time was the only place that lesbians ever went.
3
4 AJ: Right.
5
6 TY: I didn't go because it was lesbians I didn't really want to interact, it was softball dykes, yet that
7 was kind of their only place that they went.
8
9 AJ: Right.
10
11 TY: Uhm, we put, uh... and they were checking birth IDs lest a trans man peed in the men's room.
12
13 AJ: Oh.
14
15 TY: And, uh, so, uhm, so I was really mad. And, and moved.
16
17 AJ: Mhm.
18
19 TY: And, and my relationship with Patricia was ending. And so I kind of snapped. Like there's this
20 intersection of my own personal, I don't know, psychological breakdown or breakthrough, uhm,
21 uh, that I couldn't face myself cause I was, I was in the process of wrecking my relationship but
22 instead of sort of going into a hole I decided to, I just one day I woke up and I said, "I'm gonna
23 throw myself into fixing this and bringing back the sentiment of the '90s and San Francisco and
24 all the activism that I, the emotion and love of our community." I'm gonna remind the gays that
25 it's amazing...
26
27 AJ: Mhm.
28
29 TY: ... and fabulous to be queer. And we need a place...
30
31 AJ: Oh my god.
32
33 TY: ... to do it. And that's...
34
35 AJ: Oh my god.
36
37 TY: ... and that's what happened. I woke up one day and I said, "I'm gonna open a queer bar." I was
38 working at Linden Hills Co-op stocking shelves...
39
40 AJ: Uhuh.
41
42 TY: ... working for like, I don't know, \$11 an hour or something. And my friend Benny, that was his
43 third job. Uhm, and that was before he transitioned too.
44
45 AJ: Mhm.
46
47 TY: Uh, was, that was, he was working there stocking shelves with me and I...

1
2 AJ: What's Benny's last name?
3
4 TY: Benny Benson.
5
6 AJ: Benny Benson. Okay.
7
8 TY: Mhm. Uhm, he was still Amber, although everybody just called him Benny. Uhm, but, uh, we
9 had been friends for a while and we're, we're certainly brothers. We're comrades. We have
10 similar life experiences and socioeconomic backgrounds. He's seven years younger so he's like
11 my little brother. I feel very protective. He wasn't even out when we met as a lesbian. Anyway,
12 that's another long story.
13
14 AJ: Yeah.
15
16 TY: But a love story nonetheless.
17
18 AJ: [Laughs].
19
20 TY: Beautiful love story.
21
22 AJ: I see.
23
24 TY: So I came to work in the morning, and I said, "Yeah, so I was talking to Patricia one night, last
25 night, and I got really mad about all the gays wanting to get married and being mean to all the
26 weridos and the trans people and everything."
27
28 AJ: Yeah.
29
30 TY: "So, I'm, I'm gonna open a dyke bar. And I'm gonna, and we're gonna have fun and I want you to
31 be my bar manager." And he was like, "Okay." And he like took me seriously.
32
33 AJ: Wow.
34
35 TY: And, uhm, I had my mother and father, my grandfather passed away. My dad's dad.
36
37 AJ: Mhm.
38
39 TY: And left my parents \$50,000, and my parents decided to give that to me but they thought it was
40 going to be for something else.
41
42 AJ: [Laughs].
43
44 TY: I told my mother that I was gonna do it, and I was determined. That was April of 2006 when I
45 woke up one morning and said I'm opening a dyke bar.
46
47 AJ: Uhuh.

1
2 TY: And then immediately that became my entire life. And I think it was probably because I couldn't
3 face, I mean, we've been together for ten years. I couldn't, I was too sad about my impending
4 breakup and divorce, and I thought I was a terrible, horrible person. I cheated on her, and
5 whatever.
6
7 AJ: Mhm.
8
9 TY: And, uhm, I couldn't stand myself so I started, I decided to focus on this and that's all I did. I
10 went to work and I road my bike around. I, uhm, I, my first stop was the public library. I went
11 with the liquor code.
12
13 AJ: Mhm.
14
15 TY: And I knew of this law in Minneapolis where if you have a new liquor license you have to also
16 have food and, but you have to make 60% of your revenue from food and non-alcoholic
17 beverage sales.
18
19 AJ: Mhm.
20
21 TY: And I knew that that would not be possible. So I went to a public library. I read the liquor code,
22 the entire thing and I found this exemption clause in the liquor code that says if any new liquor
23 license if you are in a contiguous seven acre plot, zoned I2 or more, and that is at least 500 feet
24 away from the nearest residential zone and at least 300 feet away from the nearest school and
25 church...
26
27 AJ: [Laughs].
28
29 TY: ... you can have an exemption from this law, from this ordinance, from this zoning code. So I
30 went to this office, the one stop office downtown kitty-corner from city hall...
31
32 AJ: Sure.
33
34 TY: And I talked to this guy. I was like, "Hi, I want to open a dyke bar and here's the exemption I
35 need and I need to know if there's any areas in Minneapolis that meet all of these exemption
36 requirements.
37
38 AJ: Uhuh.
39
40 TY: And the only area in Minneapolis, in South Minneapolis. I wanted it to be, you know, where I
41 knew everybody...
42
43 AJ: Sure. Yeah.
44
45 TY: ... where I lived that met these requirements. Cause you could also get out of that in special
46 areas downtown...
47

1 AJ: Mhm.
2
3 TY: ... but there was no way financially I would ever be able to afford to open a club downtown.
4
5 AJ: Yeah.
6
7 TY: Like you can have a nightclub downtown but no other places in Minneapolis.
8
9 AJ: Right.
10
11 TY: Was this little weird semi-industrial neighborhood in the Seward neighborhood that was big
12 enough. It used to be an old rail hub.
13
14 AJ: Mhm.
15
16 TY: And there's lots of, but it's more than seven acres so, and it's the only area that meets those
17 exemption requirements.
18
19 AJ: That's the only place. [Laughs].
20
21 TY: By the way, since Pie they've taken take exemption away.
22
23 AJ: I'm sure. [Laughs].
24
25 TY: And, uhm, because they, the liquor inspector when I told him, when I came to get my liquor,
26 license application because you have to make an appointment...
27
28 AJ: Uhuh. Right.
29
30 TY: ... and I was there with like the future developers of Crave. There's like three, three lawyers...
31
32 AJ: Okay. Yeah.
33
34 TY: ... in suits and I'm down there with my like Spiderman notebook and my dickie's cutoffs and
35 talking to the liquor inspector.
36
37 AJ: And a plaid flannel shirt.
38
39 TY: Yeah.
40
41 AJ: [Laughs].
42
43 TY: And, uh, road my bike down there and, he, uh, yeah, he wasn't even away of that exemption. So
44 I just sort of recited it back to him. And, and he liked me. And he liked me Spiderman notebook...
45
46 AJ: Sure.
47

1 TY: ... so it was just this personal connection. He decided that he dealt with those guys in the suits
2 all day long, and that this was actually interesting.
3
4 AJ: Right.
5
6 TY: So he decided to help me. Phil Shlishman.
7
8 AJ: Phil Shlishman.
9
10 TY: Yep. I love Phil. Yeah, and I actually, uh, developed friendships with a lot of interesting people.
11 So what happened was I was riding my bike around that area. And I was thinking that I could just
12 convert, like rent a warehouse and convert it. And then I realized that if I did that you actually
13 should just tear, you, you have to get all kinds of environmental reports and bring that, if, if it's
14 never been a restaurant or a bar...
15
16 AJ: Right.
17
18 TY: ... you have to basically redo the entire building.
19
20 AJ: The entire thing.
21
22 TY: Yes. So there was one building that was completely abandoned and derelict. There was four foot
23 weeds in the parking lot. There was a sign that was kind of askew in the window behind a tree
24 that had a phone number on it.
25
26 AJ: Uhuh.
27
28 TY: And I called and I got, it was owned by a software company out in St. Louis park.
29
30 AJ: Uhuh.
31
32 TY: And I just left a, a message. I wasn't even sure I had the right number.
33
34 AJ: Sure.
35
36 TY: And, uh, it's an amazing story but I, uh, uhm, sorry I'll stop.
37
38 AJ: No, don't stop.
39
40 TY: But, uhm, I had an appointment with a real live commercial real estate broker the next day.
41
42 AJ: Mhm.
43
44 TY: And we met at Muddy Water or Vera's I think over there somewhere.
45
46 AJ: Lyndale.
47

1 TY: Lyndale. Mhm. And, uh, and I'm, and he's telling me how, you know, to get the right place I
2 might have to look for two or three years and, and that would give me time to ferment my
3 business plan which I hadn't even started yet. And I was like, "You're not understanding the
4 like..."
5
6 AJ: [Laughs].
7
8 TY: "... the cosmic energy I've got going on in here. You're not understanding the project. You're
9 not..." And I was just trying to get rid of him because, and somebody called me because I got a
10 cell phone just for this specific project...
11
12 AJ: Uhuh.
13
14 TY: ... at, while I was meeting with him and so as soon, I checked, but I, went to voicemail and
15 checked it and it was the guy that owned the building calling to say come take a look at it. It's for
16 sale, contract for deed which is the only option that would have allowed me to do this.
17
18 AJ: Mhm.
19
20 TY: So contract for deed. Do you know, do you want me to explain it? I don't know.
21
22 AJ: Yeah, please explain it.
23
24 TY: So contract for deed. There's a, an individual or a company privately owned, that owns a
25 building.
26
27 AJ: Mhm.
28
29 TY: And the deal is you give them a down payment on the building. So he's selling me the building
30 for \$750,000.
31
32 AJ: Mhm.
33
34 TY: Meanwhile I acquired a business partner who I can't really talk about but [laughs] who wanted
35 to invest and, uhm, so together we gave him a \$100,000 as a downpayment. And then you have
36 two years from the date of the contract signing to get a business up and running. He, he
37 basically finances you but there's no money that changes hands. He just gives you the key to the
38 building and tells you you're going to make interest payments as if you have a mortgage.
39
40 AJ: Right.
41
42 TY: So I, as if I had a mortgage for \$650,000 and you pay the property taxes and insurance.
43
44 AJ: Mhm.
45
46 TY: So they're monthly payments almost six grand.
47

1 AJ: it's a mortgage basically.
2
3 TY: Well, a lot more than this mortgage. I also mortgaged my house.
4
5 AJ: A commercial building.
6
7 TY: Yes, a commercial building. Yes.
8
9 AJ: [Laughs].
10
11 TY: So this house I bought for \$55,000 and we had a home equity line on it for \$65 and so basically I
12 made my mortgage payments at my house and the interest payments on the building with my
13 home equity line at this time.
14
15 AJ: Okay.
16
17 TY: And this is again before I ever applied for a liquor license or wrote a business plan. And I just, I
18 just knew it was gonna happen.
19
20 AJ: Mhm.
21
22 TY: I was on, I was nuts. I had lost my mind. And I was on this path and I would not be deterred.
23
24 AJ: Yes.
25
26 TY: And so I bought that building, and it was in terrible condition. I didn't even know. It was moldy.
27 The roof leaked.
28
29 AJ: Mhm.
30
31 TY: I just, you know, it was an old American legion but it is the only building in that area that was...
32
33 AJ: That qualified for that exemption.
34
35 TY: ... that qualified for that exemption.
36
37 AJ: Mhm.
38
39 TY: And it was available to me under this shady, weird contract for deed thing.
40
41 AJ: [Laughs].
42
43 TY: And so I just bought it. And we started clearing it. Cleared the weeds the first day. We started
44 throwing things away. There were all these cool little things that I found at Pie. And then I had to
45 go get a liquor license application and start that process cause you need a building to even apply
46 for a liquor license.
47

- 1 AJ: Right. Yes.
2
- 3 TY: And around that, and I had to go write a business plan which I had never done before.
4
- 5 AJ: Cause you need a business plan to apply for a liquor license.
6
- 7 TY: Cause, cause, a loan, right, and you need a business, yes. That's true too.
8
- 9 AJ: [Laughs].
10
- 11 TY: So you need a business plan and somehow this magical document you just go to banks and
12 they'll give you money based on your business plan.
13
- 14 AJ: [Laughs].
15
- 16 TY: Uhm.
17
- 18 AJ: Oh my goodness. This is hilarious.
19
- 20 TY: It's very, it's an amazing, and, and so I originally went to Women Venture to try to get help with
21 my business plan. That was horrible, horrible experience. [Laughs]. Uh, you know, they, they
22 made me go to an initial meeting where they basically were just marketing the fact that Opera
23 had talked to them, and, uhm, and that I could go on these spa weekends where I could network
24 with other would be entrepreneurs and...
25
- 26 AJ: [Laughs].
27
- 28 TY: And I was like, "Who is here to help me write a business plan? Where can, where..." and they
29 gave me like an individual consultation. Like my mom sent me three books and I was like looking
30 on the internet and I was trying to write one.
31
- 32 AJ: Mhm.
33
- 34 TY: And had consultations which cost me another \$80 at Women Venture.
35
- 36 AJ: Wow.
37
- 38 TY: And they were like, "Yeah, that looks good." And I was like, "Never coming..." so I just left.
39
- 40 AJ: [Laughs].
41
- 42 TY: Left Women Venture. And that was like one of those thing where I realized that, that there are
43 all these like people who I thought were gonna be our allies.
44
- 45 AJ: Mhm.
46
- 47 TY: And want us there including lesbians...

1
2 AJ: Sure.
3
4 TY: ... that weren't and that didn't, didn't, weren't on the program but then I found, oddly enough,
5 just some like, at first it was a lot of just straight white guys that, that are the gatekeepers of
6 capitalism.
7
8 AJ: Right.
9
10 TY: They know everybody. They have access to either city hall or, you know, they know contractors
11 or they know bankers or you know...
12
13 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
14
15 TY: There's isn't, and I didn't know that I was going to have access to them. But because of people
16 like Phil. So in the same building as Women Venture, at least at that time, there's an SBA
17 satellite office...
18
19 AJ: I remember that.
20
21 TY: ... with this guy Tom. It, like I, I literally walked down the stairs from Women Venture and saw
22 them.
23
24 AJ: Uhuh.
25
26 TY: And I poked my head in and Tom, this old guy sitting there watching The Price is Right...
27
28 AJ: [Laughs].
29
30 TY: ... on a portable TV. And there was like coffee and a bunch of computers. And I went and talked
31 to them, and they've got free software on free computers and free help like to help you like the
32 only software they have on their computers is business plan software where it just prompts you
33 to fill in a section. And then the only thing that they ask for donations for paper. But there's like
34 free coffee and then lawyers and bankers and accountants drop by on Tuesday and Thursdays to
35 talk to you about the process of getting loans.
36
37 AJ: So you just bring them a ream of paper and they help you?
38
39 TY: Yeah or you just go in and you drop like a dollar and they just sit there, and like Tom is a retired
40 business professional. I think he used to be on the city counsel in St. Paul too. And he just liked
41 doing this kind of thing. He was really stoic but he took my plan home and wrote all over it like
42 he was grading it. He sat there and talked to me, never was disrespectful about the fact that it
43 said that I was opening a lesbian bar. Just sat there just very stoic. Just very stoically told me
44 about the strengths and weaknesses of my plan and that these numbers, you know, so I would
45 just make up numbers about repairs and initial inventory and markets. Like I had done market
46 research. Like I had demographics like whatever. I, I didn't make it up.
47

- 1 AJ: Right.
2
- 3 TY: So I did that with him and then the liquor license application process in Minneapolis is
4 ridiculous. The application itself is like thirty pages long and it's, it's just, you know, you have to
5 write a safety plan that you have to go take to the police prescient and discuss with the police
6 officer and get him to sign off. And you have to get the fire marshal to sign off on an evacuation
7 plan and you have to present where all the money is coming from to do the build out and, and
8 what you're going to spend it on and all of these, you know...
9
- 10 AJ: What are your hours going to be? What kind of food are you going to serve?
11
- 12 TY: So both documents took me about two months. So I bought the building in August of 2006.
13
- 14 AJ: Mhm.
15
- 16 TY: It was April of 2006 that I said I was going to open dyke bar. I bought the building in August.
17
- 18 AJ: Mhm.
19
- 20 TY: And I was technically, I had two business partners. My ex-wife, my now ex-wife who moved out
21 the month after I bought the building in September. So my house was like empty and sad and I
22 would just go to Pie everyday and do this thing...
23
- 24 AJ: Uhuh.
25
- 26 TY: ... and then like come home and cry and just go back to Pie.
27
- 28 AJ: [Laughs].
29
- 30 TY: Like I couldn't even clean anything. I stopped shopping or feeding myself. I lived off of other
31 people's tater tots and stuff. Uhm, and, uh...
32
- 33 AJ: Which I just gotta say by the way the tator tots at Pie were amazing.
34
- 35 TY: [Laughs]. MSG is delicious.
36
- 37 AJ: Yes.
38
- 39 TY: [Laughs]. Deep fry it, throw some seasoned salt, everybody loves it. Uhm, but, and then we
40 made, you know, Benny and I canvased the neighborhood, went to National Night Out, talked to
41 the neighborhood group. We were just these friendly, earnest lesbians trying to open our little
42 business. And, you know, we got the surrounding businesses to sort of sign off and give our...
43
- 44 AJ: Call your city counsel member.
45
- 46 TY: Yep. I came to meet with you. And, uh, there was another city counsel person that, uh, was
47 against our liquor license application, and that was just bizzare to me.

1
2 AJ: Because...
3
4 TY: I mean we were openly gay. And, uh, thank god they weren't in charge of our ward where Pie
5 was. Uhm, but that was very odd to me. Like I, it's likely, allegedly that he actually even stole my
6 liquor license application...
7
8 AJ: Hm.
9
10 TY: ... from Phil's office cause it ended up in his aid's desk. That's where Phil found it.
11
12 AJ: Okay.
13
14 TY: Cause Phil called me one day like after spending two months filling out my liquor license
15 application and getting it all notarized blah, blah, blah. And actually turning it in and having Phil
16 say to me, "Wow, you're one of... I've done this job for fifteen years. You're one of three people
17 in my entire history of being a liquor inspector that had filled this out themselves." And I was
18 like, "Who does it otherwise?" He was like, "Laywer." I was like, "You could have told me that
19 two months ago Phil."
20
21 AJ: [Laughs].
22
23 TY: But, uhm, I think because the openly gay councilmen is in charge of the ward that also has a very
24 large, old, political lesbian population...
25
26 AJ: Mhm.
27
28 TY: ... that a lot of those ladies, a lot of those women knew this councilperson for a really long time
29 and probably helped get him elected. And I think there was some old school lesbian mafia like
30 email chain or phone tree or something because he eventually backed off and when it came
31 time for our vote downtown at city hall, uh, he abstained and just left the room. And I was like,
32 "Yeah!" I don't know, maybe it was you. Maybe you did it. Yay! Thanks Andrea.
33
34 AJ: [Laughs].
35
36 TY: So I know that those, uh, and it was, it was just miracle after miracle. It's like, it's like god and
37 the universe wanted me to open this place. It's like I tapped into this universal source of
38 serendipitous miracles that allowed you to move forward with something that was impossible.
39
40 AJ: Mhm.
41
42 TY: Like money would just appear or somebody would appear and tell me how to do something
43 because I didn't know what I was doing.
44
45 AJ: Mhm.
46

1 TY: And so we got these contractors that, these commercial contractors that ended up loving us,
2 and I'm still facebook friends and we, you know...
3
4 AJ: Oh wow.
5
6 TY: Uhm, who knew all, you know, this guy that just knows everybody downtown and city hall,
7 knows all the inspectors. and has all these contractors. And they just loved us, you know,
8 wanted to help us so they let us do all the things they thought we were capable of doing to save
9 money. Like Benny and I painted, like took down and painted the entire ceiling...
10
11 AJ: Mhm.
12
13 TY: ... the entire bathrooms we painted all the doorways. We scrapped the floors. We polished the
14 floors.
15
16 AJ: Wow.
17
18 TY: And things that we couldn't afford we just didn't do.
19
20 AJ: Mhm.
21
22 TY: Uhm, [laughs] and we got our little, I got my business plan done, and Benny and I put on button
23 up shirts...
24
25 AJ: [Laughs].
26
27 TY: ... and just started letting like I had researched these, uh, two percent loans through the city and
28 there were a number of like a list of banks that participated in those.
29
30 AJ: Right.
31
32 TY: So I just started going to those banks with my little business plan...
33
34 AJ: Mhm.
35
36 TY: ... and meeting with bankers and just, you know, cold calling on banks.
37
38 AJ: Right.
39
40 TY: And, which is terrifying and, uh, I don't know how else it's done because nobody's told me how
41 it is. So that's what we did. We just drove around to these different banks with my stupid
42 business plan and started talking to people.
43
44 AJ: Uhuh.
45
46 TY: And, uh, one of the banks on the list was called Private Bank. And we just laughed about that
47 cause it sounds dirty but, uhm, it's downtown in a high-rise on like the 42nd story of a building on

1 9th St. And, uhm, we paid for parking even, and we get in the elevator and Benny, Benny starts
2 saying, "I don't think we should be here. I think, I think we should just leave." And I'm like, "We
3 paid for parking. We might as well go up there." And, and, you know, cause it's very fancy and
4 like whoever heard of a bank, like Private Bank that nobody knows about that's on the 40th floor
5 of this building downtown. There was a woman riding up an elevator with us. Very elegant,
6 beautiful woman. And, uh, listening to us like our little comedy routine about, "We should we
7 leave. We shouldn't, we're not supposed to be here. They're gonna kick us out. We're gonna get
8 arrested. And, uhm, but she's listening to this and kind of snickering, and it turns out she's the
9 secretary for the vice president of the Private Bank.

10
11 AJ: Wow.

12
13 TY: So when we get off of the elevator the secretary that's sitting there looks at us like, "What are
14 you doing here?" Like we expected her too but then the woman we were riding up in the
15 elevator with comes out, gives us her little, her business card and says, "I've talked to my boss,
16 and she'll be right with you."

17
18 AJ: Uhuh. Wow. [Laughs].

19
20 TY: And, and we end up going to a conference room with the biggest table I've ever seen.

21
22 AJ: Uhuh.

23
24 TY: Like it's like fifty feet long. And, and we're sitting there talking to this women who is the vice
25 president of the Private Bank, and she just, she's so sweet and lovely and she's like, "I don't
26 think that Private Bank can help you but I have a number of somebody who can." And she made
27 a call on our behalf to Wells Fargo and talked to the SBA guy, John Twang. And we ended up
28 getting, with the CPED loans, two of them...

29
30 AJ: Mhm.

31
32 TY: ... uhm, \$280,000 loan for buildout...

33
34 AJ: Wow.

35
36 TY: ... which didn't really cover it fully but...

37
38 AJ: Fully but... [Laughs].

39
40 TY: Uhm, so that happened and, uh, so that loan closed in the end of October or maybe the
41 beginning of November. And then the buildout just happened. They, we had to get a new fire
42 suppression system with a \$20,000 like new water main.

43
44 AJ: Yeah.

45
46 TY: We had to get like the American Legion didn't have to be up to code on anything because
47 fraternal organizations don't have to basically...

1
2 AJ: And it was old.
3
4 TY: It was old.
5
6 AJ: Yeah.
7
8 TY: So the whole front bar had to ripped out and replaced because it was just made of like
9 chipboard and part of the old horseshoe bar became the, uhm, DJ booth.
10
11 AJ: Hey, I remember this mural. Didn't like this woman, Katrina...
12
13 TY: Oh Katrina.
14
15 AJ: ... do a little mural in that place? [Laughs].
16
17 TY: She was part of it but actually she had to tell me that I remembered it wrong. I had this romantic
18 memory of seeing you for the first time at Pride, our first Pride that we were open. I hired
19 graffiti muralists to do a lot of graffiti mural on the side of the wall.
20
21 AJ: I was at that party.
22
23 TY: Yeah, it was a good party.
24
25 TY's Partner: [Ty's Partner walks in]. But I came the next day after. Or like two days later.
26
27 TY: Two days later. But I always had a crush on her. And we met then.
28
29 TY's Partner: We did meet then.
30
31 TY: And you had two art shows.
32
33 TY's Partner: Yeah, I had two art shows there. The mayor got stolen off the wall.
34
35 TY: Yes.
36
37 TY's Partner: And Ty offered to pay me for it, and I asked for a bar tab instead.
38
39 AJ: [Laughs].
40
41 TY: And I thought you were too cool for me so I didn't talk to you that much.
42
43 AJ: And now you guys are married.
44
45 TY: Now we're married. Yay!
46
47 AJ: How long have you been married?

1
2 TY: Since March.
3
4 TY's Partner: Yeah.
5
6 TY: So around, no that's more.
7
8 TY's Partner: Five months?
9
10 TY: I don't know. What month is it? August?
11
12 TY's Partner: Four months, yeah.
13
14 TY: Okay.
15
16 AJ: So March of 2015?
17
18 TY: Yes.
19
20 AJ: Congratulations.
21
22 TY: Thank you. I know I did the thing that made me mad. I got gay married.
23
24 AJ: You did that thing that made you open the bar in the first place. [Laughs].
25
26 TY: I know.
27
28 TY's Partner: Uhm, and then I have to sneak out at some point too. I don't want to...
29
30 TY: Okay. Go that way.
31
32 TY's Partner: Oh yeah. For sure. I can go that way. I'm going to Rachelle's house...
33
34 TY: Oh you are?
35
36 TY's Partner: ... and bring some veggies from the garden...
37
38 TY: Okay.
39
40 TY's Partner: ... and just hang out and make some food over there.
41
42 TY: Okay. Sorry.
43
44 TY's Partner: [Laughs]. Thanks for my interlude.
45
46 AJ: [Laughs]. Wow. So what's marriage like? This thing that you didn't want to do.
47

1 TY: I know, well it's not that I didn't want to do it. It's just that I didn't want it to be the political
2 focus of our movement.
3
4 AJ: Yes.
5
6 TY: I still think it has sentimental, emotional value and actually I think that it has value to urban
7 communities when our little tribes start to become, I don't know, stable. And, you know, there's
8 resources, like people stay in our stair room all the time and, I don't know. So but married life is
9 fantastic, and Katrina and I got together right after... I mean we had known each other since Pie
10 but, uhm, I started transitioning a few months before we started dating.
11
12 AJ: Mhm.
13
14 TY: And so she's only known me in the transitional which is probably good. I was a lot less mentally
15 stable...
16
17 AJ: Mhm.
18
19 TY: ... before testosterone. And it's caused a lot of, I don't know, there, there are side effects to
20 testosterone that are harder to deal with and were harder when I first started taking it.
21
22 AJ: Mhm.
23
24 TY: You know, all of a sudden you have a sex drive.
25
26 AJ: Wow.
27
28 TY: And I, you know, I was a forty-one year old woman who had a hysterectomy.
29
30 AJ: Uhuh.
31
32 TY: So that didn't exist.
33
34 AJ: [Laughs].
35
36 TY: I didn't have one of those.
37
38 AJ: Yeah.
39
40 TY: All of a sudden I'm going through puberty.
41
42 AJ: Wow.
43
44 TY: And that was ridiculous. Uh.
45
46 AJ: So you just kind of wanted to...
47

1 TY: Do it all the time.
2
3 AJ: ... screw around all the time?
4
5 TY: All the time which is nice...
6
7 AJ: Yeah.
8
9 TY: ... except when it annoys my wife.
10
11 AJ: [Laughs].
12
13 TY: And, uh, yeah, so but I'm glad that we didn't get together while we were at Pie cause that was
14 kind of a sad or chaotic time in my life and I didn't really have anytime for much but, uh, being
15 married and, you know, I just feel happy and like I'm working through... It's not like transitioning
16 just fixes all of your problems or all of your emotional conflict but, uh, it does give a focus of, a
17 veneer of stability.
18
19 AJ: Mhm.
20
21 TY: At least it did for me. And, uh, I don't know if that's just because I don't experience daily micro
22 aggressions. I don't know. That's a fancy, that's a fashionable word.
23
24 AJ: Are you saying people harassed you on...?
25
26 TY: Not even harass me but just, uhm, cause nobody, it's very rare that I get harassed...
27
28 AJ: Sure.
29
30 TY: ... like even as a lesbian, like occasionally. I'd always get in fights at Pride. Uhm, but, uh, yeah,
31 that hasn't, and I think as you get older, if you get out of childbearing age, people stop messing
32 with you cause you're just not as fun to mess with anymore.
33
34 AJ: [Laughs].
35
36 TY: I don't know.
37
38 AJ: I guess.
39
40 TY: You're not a threat or I don't know what it is.
41
42 AJ: Huh. Wow.
43
44 TY: But I love being married to Katrina and, god, we have a really blissful, peaceful life.
45
46 AJ: Sweet. What are you, what are you up to these days? What do you do for work now that you've
47 got your Harvard degree?

1
2 TY: I know. That was fancy. I, I was just really sad after Pie closed and then really depressed. Bye
3 Katrina. Uhm, so I had to get out of town...
4
5 AJ: Bye Katrina.
6
7 TY's Partner: Bye.
8
9 TY: She's so cute. Uhm, I had to get out of town so I went to Harvard. I applied to Harvard. It was
10 like my last dream...
11
12 AJ: Uhuh.
13
14 TY: ... cause it was devastating when Pie closed. It was horrible. Uhm, but after a year of working for
15 a liquor store and working... I enjoy working. I worked at a housing program, transitional housing
16 program for homeless youth. Uh, it was just too hard. I couldn't really go out of my house or
17 socialize so I applied to Harvard Divinity School cause I had already got a degree in, uhm, after
18 twenty years of dropping out and going back to college and having over two hundred credits.
19 Sort of make it yourself degree. I took a lot of ancient Greek. So that helped me. So basically
20 those two things helped me get into Harvard that I owned Pie...
21
22 AJ: Uhuh.
23
24 TY: ... and told a little bit of the story...
25
26 AJ: Sure.
27
28 TY: ... and that I studied ancient Greek and I had an interest in the rise of the religious right and the
29 origins of Christianity as a sort of social justice model.
30
31 AJ: Wow. That's fascinating.
32
33 TY: So and when I got to Harvard around all the Harvard people which I had never experienced that
34 kind of like old money and conservative. Like everybody was so welcoming and nice and
35 everybody was so well versed in talking about diversity, and I think the only reason they let me
36 in is because they've never seen one of me on an application. Like here's this old punk rock dyke
37 who opened this bar but knows ancient Greek and I don't know...
38
39 AJ: Right.
40
41 TY: ... what this is about but we, they, they seem interesting. Let's let them in cause they court
42 diversity at Harvard Divinity School. Their, they want this, you know, but it's almost like they talk
43 about diversity as people talk about how they know about organics or recycling. Like it's just a
44 common neoliberal attribute thing that you should know about.
45
46 AJ: Right.
47

- 1 TY: And so I became sort of this queerpedia figure at, at divinity school, and I was like way older
2 than any other, there were a few gay men...
3
- 4 AJ: Mhm.
5
- 6 TY: ... and a couple of lesbians.
7
- 8 AJ: Mhm.
9
- 10 TY: Uhm, there was a lot of gay men. Uhm.
11
- 12 AJ: [Laughs].
13
- 14 TY: And they're all pretty and young and just, uh, too nice, and I just completely unraveled, and
15 that's when I started transitioning.
16
- 17 AJ: Mhm.
18
- 19 TY: Uhm, after a semester at Harvard I couldn't, I couldn't go back without starting that, without
20 that kind of armor.
21
- 22 AJ: Wow.
23
- 24 TY: But, I'm sorry I went off on a tangent again.
25
- 26 AJ: No, it's fine but I just...
27
- 28 TY: When I got back. That's what you were asking.
29
- 30 AJ: Yeah, yeah.
31
- 32 TY: I didn't know what to do because I have this ridiculous work history where I drove trucks and
33 owned a bar and whatever. And then I went to Harvard.
34
- 35 AJ: [Laughs].
36
- 37 TY: So how do you make a resume that says that. And what job do you apply for, you know. I think
38 I'm qualified to do some kind of organizing or work for a non-profit but I wasn't sure I wanted to
39 do that even though I applied for hundreds of jobs. And I never really got interviewed. Uhm, and
40 when I got back, my friends from Pie who all got hired at Hell's Kitchen cause we had a friend
41 who was the general manager there and they had already done Soul Friday there, which is
42 another whole story. Uhm, uh, just offered me a job working security. And then I just stayed,
43 started barbacking and then I became a bartender. And bartending at Hell's Kitchen is, I make
44 enough money to pay my mortgage and I only have to work four days a week and the other
45 three days I work on the house and trying to write and this whole story I've been telling.
46
- 47 AJ: So you're a bartender now?

1
2 TY: I'm a bartender.
3
4 AJ: Cool. Okay.
5
6 TY: And I don't, I don't know what else to do. Like I haven't discovered the next step. I can't really
7 think of... Pie wore me out.
8
9 AJ: Yeah. I can imagine. It was a beautiful space though.
10
11 TY: Yeah. Yeah, it was amazing, it was amazing. I, I mean, it's kind of that watershed experience
12 that, you know, Benny and I are forever changed.
13
14 AJ: Mhm.
15
16 TY: And there's, you know, there's, there's nothing the same about... I already, I'm just I'm a
17 different person after that experience. I learned so much. I met so many people. I did this thing
18 that people still know about. Uhm, people still contact me being like, you're here doing this
19 interview because of Pie. Had I not done that.
20
21 AJ: No I'm doing this interview cause you're an amazing person.
22
23 TY: Yes, but I would have been so much less amazing had I not done that.
24
25 AJ: [Laughs].
26
27 TY: I just would have been a neighborhood queer.
28
29 AJ: That's part of your, it's a part of your history and...
30
31 TY: It is.
32
33 AJ: ... I'm fascinated by it.
34
35 TY: And I am too. I just, I want to tell that story so bad because of the place it came from because I
36 still think the trajectory that we're on politically speaking and activism. Like I can't find
37 inspiration enough to focus my energy. Like if I root to have a job in some sort of activism or
38 working in some community organization, I guess, you know, I'm kind of old school. It takes
39 some sort of emotion to sort of activate that desire for me or something. I don't know if I'm still
40 just tired, maybe a little scared because it took so much out of me to open and run Pie and then
41 losing that, losing a family that was created from that or just, you know, the loss of our home.
42 Uhm, that, uh, I can't really think of where to focus my energies. Like...
43
44 AJ: So how long did Pie last?
45

1 TY: Well, I only had it for two years. And then that's when the banking crisis happened, the housing
2 crisis. Uh, so banks weren't lending money to anyone so the deal with the contract for deed is,
3 you have to find a bank at the end of two years.
4
5 AJ: Mhm.
6
7 TY: You give them your financials or this business that you've created.
8
9 AJ: Sure.
10
11 TY: And if it's solvent enough they should be able to loan you enough money to pay off the owner of
12 the building and then you have a traditional mortgage through the bank. And no banks were
13 loaning money, especially not to sort of a floundering dyke bar.
14
15 AJ: Right.
16
17 TY: And so I had, so we lost the building.
18
19 AJ: Yeah. Yeah, sad ending to an amazing vision. What do you see for the trans community fifty
20 years from now, Ty?
21
22 TY: I'm kinda hoping we're running the world. I think the world would be a much better place if it's
23 run by people with that kind of experience and empathy and depth but, uhm, it would be really
24 nice if the people in charge had, weren't so dominant in the first place. But I, I think at some
25 point in the next few years that... I think it's the only place where there's any amount of
26 transgression, like true subversive transgression. Like, uhm, gender and sexuality are the, are
27 the last realms that challenge, that, there's, there's a challenge the dominate paradigms
28 assumptions about the world.
29
30 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
31
32 TY: Like sexuality and gender are so fundamental to everybody's, to everybody's individual
33 understanding of the world...
34
35 AJ: Mhm.
36
37 TY: ... that I think that there is, is still true transgressive power. It's just... I'm hoping in the next few
38 years that somehow organically a trans movement is, becomes more prominent...
39
40 AJ: Mhm.
41
42 TY: ... in queer politics than gays and lesbians cause I think that a lot of gays and lesbians have, have
43 what they wanted.
44
45 AJ: Hm.
46

- 1 TY: They have a lot of mainstream entitlements. But what happens when, uhm, mainstream
2 entitlements get afforded to the more privileged members of the movement is that they start to
3 remarginalize the people that started the movement in the first place, the people who had
4 nothing left to lose even though they're different individuals. The fringes of the movement get
5 remarginalized, uhm, by, by the dominant members that have benefited from that movement. I
6 mean it happens I think in social justice movements a lot. So I'm hoping that the gays, the
7 affluent gays and lesbians really piss off somebody...
- 8
- 9 AJ: Mhm.
- 10
- 11 TY: ... in the transgender movement...
- 12
- 13 AJ: Uhuh.
- 14
- 15 TY: ... in the transgender community enough to generate enough energy to build some sort of
16 coalition because the transgender community isn't, isn't a thing. I mean it is and it isn't. I mean, I
17 don't, you know you can say whoever, who can be included...
- 18
- 19 AJ: Sure.
- 20
- 21 TY: ... but there's no, there's no broad movement. Like there's no, you know, coalition. And, and the
22 issues are so much different...
- 23
- 24 AJ: Yeah.
- 25
- 26 TY: ... for you and I.
- 27
- 28 AJ: Absolutely.
- 29
- 30 TY: And, uhm... I mean the problem is is that the dominate paradigm is still heteronormative and
31 cisgendered and white and, and affluent and able bodied and, uhm, as we just sort of expand
32 the boundaries. Incremental politics, you know, as we just expand the boundaries of who, who,
33 who at least can scrap up the crumbs of entitlement...
- 34
- 35 AJ: Mhm.
- 36
- 37 TY: ... that fall off the dominate table.
- 38
- 39 AJ: Right.
- 40
- 41 TY: Who's allowed at the party, you know.
- 42
- 43 AJ: Mhm.
- 44
- 45 TY: It just... it creates a larger, I don't even want to say class, but middle layer of entitlement,
46 entitled population, that protects the, the real people in charge.
- 47

1 AJ: Mhm.
2
3 TY: Uhm, and then the fringe and the people who are left behind. Uhm, I think it's going to become
4 worse and worse. I think that, I think it's being. I feel like, I'm really encouraged by the Black
5 Lives Matter, like the amount of information that comes out on people's facebook feeds...
6
7 AJ: Sure.
8
9 TY: ... and everything that being disseminated. I'm not even sure if the violence has increased or it
10 it's always been there and it's more, it's reported more but, uhm...
11
12 AJ: I think it's both and.
13
14 TY: Yeah. But, uhm, I think life in the fringe is gonna get harder, and I think that something, I think
15 that, I hope that some sort of coalition is built based on some intersection, intersecting
16 oppressions that with some base of common, uhm, purpose and empathy and, and love and a
17 sense of community can come out of this situation. But I don't think. Like how many more years
18 is Pride gonna last? It's just gonna turn, I mean, it's gonna get more and more into like... People
19 are gonna forget that it was ever about any sort of liberation. It's just gonna be, you know, a gay
20 holiday. Woo. Like the forth of July. Uhm, so I don't know. Trans community in fifty years. I, it's,
21 are we all gonna be assimilated appropriately as well? I, who's, who's, and where does,
22 somebody's gonna, I don't know, do you ever think a revolution is possible? Do you ever think
23 culturally... Are you encouraged by the cultural shifts that allow more people at the entitled
24 table?
25
26 AJ: [Laughs]. I'm, I'm eternally optimistic.
27
28 TY: Yeah.
29
30 AJ: And, and more so by people like you who are willing to, to share boundaries and be full-faced
31 determined and, and that make things happen. I really want to thank you for this honor...
32
33 TY: Thank you.
34
35 AJ: ... of being able to sit and share and listen to you.
36
37 TY: Well, thank you. I know I can be a little long winded.
38
39 AJ: It's been, it's been a pleasure.
40
41 TY: Well it's been amazing. Thank you. I feel very honored...
42
43 AJ: [Laughs].
44
45 TY: ... that you would take your time to talk to me...
46
47 AJ: Wow.

1
2 TY: ... cause I always love seeing you.
3
4 AJ: Well thank you.
5
6 TY: Thank you.
7
8 AJ: Bye.
9
10 TY: Bye.