

CeCe McDonald  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

November 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 at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. Today is November 27, 2015, the day  
3 after Thanksgiving but it's Thanksgiving weekend still. It's Friday, they call it Black Friday. I don't  
4 know why they call it Black Friday but I might ask CeCe to tell us a little bit about that. I'm here  
5 with CeCe McDonald, and CeCe can you just introduce yourself – your name, whatever name  
6 you choose to go by or whatever name that . . . yeah, your name, your preferred pronouns, your  
7 gender identity today, and your gender assigned at birth.
- 8 CM: I'm Chrishaun Reed Mai'lurv McDonald, aka CeCe McDonald, aka Honey Bear Royal. I am 27, I'm  
9 from Chicago but reside in Minneapolis, I am a . . . what was the other things you wanted to  
10 know?
- 11 AJ: What's your preferred gender pronouns . . . ?
- 12 CM: Oh yes, I go by she, her, and hers, female pronouns. Today my gender identity is woman.
- 13 AJ: I love it.
- 14 CM: I am a barista and activist and a social instigator.
- 15 AJ: I love it, I love it. What was your gender assigned at birth?
- 16 CM: I was born male at birth and I identify . . . I've went through so many different identities.
- 17 AJ: Wow. Really? Like how many?
- 18 CM: I started off as a gay boy, then I turned into a femme queen, and then I started transitioning  
19 when I was 13 and that's when I started to identify as more trans or identifying more with  
20 female identities. And then, now I identify as a female.
- 21 AJ: You started transitioning at age 13?
- 22 CM: Yes, in Chicago.
- 23 AJ: Is that right?
- 24 CM: South side of Chicago.
- 25 AJ: South side of Chicago – I grew up in Chicago too. You know that, we've talked about this. Man,  
26 I really had a hard time coming out in Chicago. There was a lot of reasons, I mean my family, but  
27 also just it felt really unsafe to be an out trans person in Chicago. Can you tell me what's your  
28 earliest memory? What's the earliest thing you remember in your life? It doesn't have to be  
29 trans – it can be if that's what it is, but I just want to know what's the earliest thing you  
30 remember.
- 31 CM: I remember when I first came out to all my friends. We were in school, I went to Clara Barton  
32 Elementary and so we were in the auditorium and all of my friends . . . I don't know why I chose  
33 this moment to tell everybody, but like me and all my friends, we hung with each other so we all  
34 were sitting in a row, like all together. When I got there . . . I don't know how I did it, but I just  
35 was like, "I'm going to tell you something and I want you to pass it down after I tell you." So it  
36 was like a game of telephone. And so after the assembly, they all just came up to me and were

- 1           like, “Oh, my gosh.” Of course there was like, “I knew.” “Of course you knew bitch.” I’m like  
2           thin is . . . I was so thin.
- 3   AJ:     What did you tell them?
- 4   CM:     I’m like, “I’m gay.” And so they were like, “Right,” this was before I knew of any other identities.  
5           I felt like gay was the closest thing that I could identify as but also I didn’t know the difference  
6           between sexual orientation and gender identity.
- 7   AJ:     Right. So you were using gay for identifying your gender . . .
- 8   CM:     Yeah, I didn’t even have the queer option like a lot of people have nowadays. I used that as a  
9           way . . . because I knew saying gay was just another way of saying I’m different, I’m not straight,  
10          regardless. Because, again, I didn’t have examples of sexual orientation and gender identity and  
11          so when I seen other people . . .
- 12   AJ:     Gay people.
- 13   CM:     Right. I would assume that they were gay even if they didn’t identify as gay, they could have  
14          been trans, they could have been . . . you know what I’m saying. I didn’t understand the . . .
- 15   AJ:     Sissies.
- 16   CM:     Right, yes.
- 17   AJ:     That’s what we used to call . . . that’s what everybody calls . . .
- 18   CM:     That’s what I had to go off of, like if you were a trans woman the men would call you a punk so I  
19          didn’t know . . . I’m like, “Oh, OK.” But then we referred to gay men as punks too. I didn’t have  
20          those identity options but that’s how I decided to come out as. So they were just like, “Oh my  
21          gosh, we still love you.” So a lot of the people that I went to elementary school with, we all  
22          went to the same high school – we still talk to this day, everybody is their own world and doing  
23          what they’re doing but they’re still supportive of me. I think they also knew that it was just a  
24          beyond gay thing, but all my friends . . . they took the lead from me, so whatever I said they  
25          used that as their way of understanding because they didn’t have any . . . you know, sidebar, I  
26          just want to say even though the world is fucked up and we haven’t progressed a lot, from  
27          where I came and I know each generation of trans people can say their generation was different,  
28          I definitely can say that it was hard for me too transitioning in Chicago, of course there was only  
29          one place you could get hormones – the Howard Brown.
- 30   AJ:     Yes, the Howard Brown Center.
- 31   CM:     And so . . .
- 32   AJ:     And that’s way up on the north side.
- 33   CM:     Yeah, yeah.
- 34   AJ:     Which is a long way from the south side if people don’t know Chicago, it’s quite a hike. Not just  
35          different geography, but different people, right?

- 1 CM: Yeah.
- 2 AJ: A whole cultural change.
- 3 CM: Yeah, it's a big, big change. I just . . . you know, they supported me, even now they still support  
4 me. But, just thinking about how the generation now, I would have never thought in a million  
5 years that we would be able to see trans kids as little as five and four. You know what I'm  
6 saying? To understand who they are and to have people love them and
- 7 AJ: Supporting . . .
- 8 CM: . . . you know what I'm saying? And support them and help them . . .
- 9 AJ: Medical help.
- 10 CM: Yeah. You know what I'm saying? I feel like if I had that type of support in my life because there  
11 is a little bit of resentment with me in my family, because this is like, "How dare you not even  
12 know?" Right. Like I'm giving you all the signs. Even when I was younger I would always say  
13 that I was a girl and I would get in trouble for that, but to see where our generation is now and  
14 that they do have assets, things that . . . I mean, you all have broke those barriers down so that  
15 people can have room for different identities and sexual orientations. This generation now can  
16 have these options that I didn't have, which is in connection with the story that I'm saying. I had  
17 to say that I was gay even though I felt like it was something way beyond that. You know what  
18 I'm saying? Yeah, it was hard, it was hard for me. I didn't get the support from my family  
19 growing up in a heavy, heavy Christian household. It was just like the constant, you have  
20 demons in you and they want to do the laying of the hands and . . . yeah, you know. Pray your  
21 circles and stuff like that.
- 22 AJ: Are you still involved with church today?
- 23 CM: No, no, no. I've denounced religion, I'm more of a spiritual person. I feel like the universe is too  
24 . . . and we only live in one universe out of like a billion universes, right? So we can't expect that  
25 we are the only life form or that there is nothing outside of this Bible-conformity mentality that  
26 a lot of people have – like the earth is flat idea, right? People still have that mindset, aren't we  
27 beyond that?
- 28 AJ: All right, CeCe is taking us on another plane now!
- 29 CM: We have to go beyond that type of thinking and so I feel like the earth and everything in it and  
30 around it and outside of it has a purpose and it has a meaning and we're all connected to it in  
31 some way, which is why the earth is upset now because people have been treating her like shit –  
32 or them or he or however the earth identifies. But, I just feel that I have to move beyond  
33 religion because it traumatized me a lot as a kid. I can just remember times where I would be in  
34 the bathroom balling, praying, "Please Jesus, change me, make me straight or make me a girl,  
35 erase my memory." Anything to just make me normal. It traumatized me as a kid, that's when I  
36 started to become suicidal and really rebellious, just really mentally . . . and dealing with my  
37 family, mentally it fucked me up a lot.
- 38 AJ: Do you have a lot of brothers and sisters?

- 1 CM: I'm the oldest of seven and I felt like I had a lot more pressure on me to be the oldest. I was the  
2 leader and I had to lead by example and I couldn't because I wasn't normal.
- 3 AJ: You weren't the first-born son.
- 4 CM: Right, exactly. I was the first-born daughter. If I could relish in that and still be able to have  
5 been that example for my siblings then yeah – but no, my mom was very forceful of me to be  
6 conforming, and, "wear these clothes", and at some point in my life I got my privilege to buy my  
7 own clothes revoked, when I got older, because I was starting to buy women's clothes and  
8 underwear. My mom would be like . . . and I knew she was slick and she would keep it for  
9 herself, like, "Oh, this is cute." I'd be seeing her wear it and I'd be like, "For real though, that's  
10 stuff I bought for me." It was really hard for me and I'm glad that I actually made the choice to  
11 come here after some weird invitation, a weird situation that led me to come here.
- 12 AJ: To Minneapolis?
- 13 CM: Yes. And so I've been living here . . . in August it's going to be exactly 10 years so I feel really . . .
- 14 AJ: Wow.
- 15 CM: Yeah, I moved here right after I turned 18. It was August 7<sup>th</sup>, I will never forget the day. I had  
16 just met, at this point I was just coming to get my stuff from my mom's house – I probably  
17 hadn't seen them in four or five months and they were surprised to see me, one, but not only  
18 just to see me but that I was coming to get my stuff to move to another state. And they didn't  
19 believe that I was leaving, and I left.
- 20 AJ: Did you know anyone here?
- 21 CM: No, I didn't.
- 22 AJ: How did you decide to come to Minneapolis?
- 23 CM: I was staying at Dorothy Day shelter, downtown St. Paul – that's intense.
- 24 AJ: It is, but that's a reality for trans women of color. Housing insecurity is a real thing.
- 25 CM: And it was even harder then because the rules at Dorothy Day is men sleep in one part and  
26 women sleep in another part. They didn't want to house me with the men, but they also didn't  
27 want to house me with the women.
- 28 AJ: So where do you go? Where do we go?
- 29 CM: So I ended up sleeping with the men anyway. And, it's just . . . the environment is just really  
30 unnerving. It was just a different experience. I was happy, I just felt happy. I didn't care about  
31 what was around me, I was like, "I'm in a new state, I'm away from everybody that I know." And  
32 then I just kept thinking about transitioning, transitioning and . . . it took me awhile to actually  
33 find the resources because I was still young. While I was at Dorothy Day they wanted me to be  
34 in a youth shelter or something. My first boyfriend since moving here, I met him at the shelter.  
35 And, yeah . . .
- 36 AJ: How long did you guys stay together?

- 1 CM: For, like, six months. And then things started to change, of course. And so, yeah.
- 2 AJ: So you came out in grade school you said?
- 3 CM: Yes.
- 4 AJ: That's one of your earliest memories. So that's when you had the realization to tell these other  
5 people, but when did you realize that you were not the gender you were assigned at birth?
- 6 CM: Probably . . . my earliest memory I want to say is like kindergarten. Yeah.
- 7 AJ: And that's pretty consistent . . . with a lot of trans people anyway.
- 8 CM: And that's only because . . . if I had earlier memories, I probably would have . . . you know, felt it  
9 then, but I can just remember kindergarten and I would see the girls with their pretty barrettes  
10 and things and be like, "That's me, where are my barrettes?" And having this crush on this boy  
11 named Keith. I would remember just feeling so cute, because all of our bodies looked the same,  
12 right? There wasn't any difference to our bodies so I would wear my cute little sweaters, or see  
13 other girls with their cute little sweaters and be really, really dainty and just very . . . I can't  
14 believe I wasn't just oozing femme at four years old, just being the innocent little me that I am.  
15 Yeah, I remember. A lot of my friends, a lot of the friends that I was talking about, that I came  
16 out to, we had all went to the same school starting in kindergarten and so when I told them,  
17 they were like, "Yeah, I knew since kindergarten, I just always knew." And it was just like yeah . .  
18 . yeah. I don't see why anybody else would be in denial.
- 19 AJ: Right. I know so many trans women, like yourself, that are just born women. People just have  
20 no problem saying, "girl" because they feel your spirit as such, and you are that person – you  
21 are. You're just my sister whenever I see you, it's like, "CeCe, that's my baby." You could be my  
22 daughter, my daughter is actually the exact same age.
- 23 CM: Really?
- 24 AJ: Yes, we might have to talk about that more one of these days. What challenges have you faced,  
25 CeCe, since coming out and expressing your true gender identity?
- 26 CM: I don't know, I feel like since . . . especially since transitioning and going through the different  
27 identities, I just have noticed how much of my acceptance got little by little, as I transitioned.  
28 My acceptance was taken away from me and because I couldn't conform through the identity of  
29 a cis appearing, whatever, orientation.
- 30 AJ: Cis gender.
- 31 CM: Right. I couldn't get a regular job. Growing up in the 1990s and the early 2000s were weird, you  
32 know what I'm saying? Like for a lot of the younger generations who don't know, being gay and  
33 being lesbian was still highly unaccepted at the time. There was still a lot of gay bashings and  
34 hate crimes were way higher, because it wasn't just violence towards trans women at the time,  
35 but also violence towards cis gay and lesbian people.
- 36 AJ: Right.

- 1 CM: Just look at the New Jersey 4 and so many cases where . . .
- 2 AJ: Matthew Shepard and . . .
- 3 CM: Yeah, oh my gosh.
- 4 AJ: Brandon Teena, even though Brandon Teena was trans identified, but still.
- 5 CM: Still. It was like . . . so it was hard to know that I was definitely going to be criticized and  
6 ridiculed and violently or verbally attacked and more. I was, one, already uberly femme but also  
7 once I give up my male identity . . .
- 8 AJ: I love that, “uberly”.
- 9 CM: Once I give up my male identity that is going to be a shit show for me, because having a male  
10 identity with a feminine persona was already just enough to get you jumped . . . which I  
11 experienced a lot. There were times where I was . . . like I’ve got jumped by seven people at  
12 once. You know what I’m saying?
- 13 AJ: For what? Why?
- 14 CM: It was that time and not giving time justification for what happened to me but it was . . . but  
15 now . . .
- 16 AJ: That’s just what guys did to trans women in our communities, right?
- 17 CM: Or just a really . . . a femme queen. But now when you see the times now it is so mediocre to  
18 me to be gay or lesbian because it’s just like . . . it’s like you’re the new norm, you’re a part of  
19 the normal, you’re a part of conforming society now. Trans people have still been left out in the  
20 dust and so I have dealt with the bullshit all my transitioning because even as a gay boy at a time  
21 in 1995 or 1996, when it was just like . . . and then you know, the highly demonizing and  
22 criminalizing of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Everybody was just like . . . that was one thing that I  
23 always got from my family or from anybody, “I don’t want you to get AIDS.” Like you were born  
24 with it if you were gay.
- 25 AJ: What impact do think the AIDS epidemic has had on the trans community?
- 26 CM: Oh my gosh. I think more so . . .
- 27 AJ: Like you were just saying, I mean, in terms of relationships, people assume that if you’re Black  
28 and you’re trans that you have AIDS.
- 29 CM: Yes, yes. Why?
- 30 AJ: I’ve had so many people ask me, “What clinic do you go to?” Or, “What . . .” And I’m like,  
31 “Umm, sorry, I’m not positive, why do you think that?” Yeah. What do you think the impact of  
32 HIV and AIDS has had on the trans community?
- 33 CM: I just feel like we have been stigmatized with it for so much, especially when you see . . . again,  
34 in the early 1990s, early 2000s, where a lot of the media, like entertainment, that was on TV  
35 portrayed gays and trans people always having HIV or AIDS. There was never any cases of cis



- 1 hetero people in the media, other than Magic Johnson, but . . . but when you think of shows  
2 that were on TV or anything, it was always a case of somebody that was gay or trans, but they  
3 usually would use the stereotypes of very feminine men as trans people. You know what I'm  
4 saying? Or drag queens, or transvestites or people who still identify as male but they would use  
5 disgusting language if it was like a trans people, they would still use male pronouns or things like  
6 that. Jerry Springer was terrible. It's terrible now but watch Jerry Springer early 1990s . . .
- 7 AJ: For all the exploitation that you could even imagine, he went for it hard.
- 8 CM: And so the culture the . . .
- 9 AJ: "Coming up next, Uncle Bob who wears a dress . . ." Yeah, it was so bad.
- 10 CM: It was so disgusting. And I would see that and I think that all of that culture, that social  
11 systematic oppression of feminine and trans identities were just belittled in the most ways. We  
12 carried that, we carried that for so long, and I think that that's why the real history of the  
13 revolution of the LGBT – the TLGB movement . . .
- 14 AJ: Right, that's what it should be.
- 15 CM: . . . was this identity, you know, even if a person did have HIV or AIDS that they were going to  
16 be ridiculed heavily in the media or by others, even your friends and family – other people in  
17 your community. Because it was just always demonized and the stigmas of it weren't . . . now  
18 we live in a world where also it's not normal. It should never be normal or anything like that,  
19 but it's definitely something in society that's not as heavily demonized, it's not the death  
20 sentence that it used to be, that's the line that they use for it. But it's definitely still an ailment  
21 that millions and millions of people are affected by. It's just that the stereotypes that were  
22 connected to it now show that the number one leading person to contract HIV is cis Black  
23 women.
- 24 AJ: Yes.
- 25 CM: So, once those statistics came out, it was just like, "OK, we're sorry, those that we offended, but  
26 still . . ." That's what I'm saying, "But still." So, it's definitely something that definitely carried  
27 over from generation to generation and now it's just a topic that people talk about and that we  
28 are more about awareness and prevention than we are about demonizing and ridiculing. I've  
29 heard stories from older people that have HIV that talk about how even some doctors would  
30 treat them nasty or . . . you know what I'm saying?
- 31 AJ: Oh yes, don't want to touch them . . . right.
- 32 CM: Yeah, you know what I'm saying? We don't live in that world . . . kind of.
- 33 AJ: As deeply.
- 34 CM: Right, as deeply, I wouldn't anymore. But yeah.
- 35 AJ: But, you know, there's a reason why we transition and do this, what have been some of the  
36 positive aspects of expressing your true gender identity?

- 1 CM: Oh, I've had so many people come up to me and just . . . well, not even people just come up to  
2 me – let me rephrase that because these are people that I've known for years in my life. But  
3 having these conversations with these people and just being able to pick up on my trans-dar,  
4 not my gay-dar but my trans-dar, and just recognizing people's unhappiness and being like . . .  
5 we can always talk about something or even just having those conversations with people. Me  
6 being comfortable being in my skin and just realizing that I am the person that I am and that I  
7 can't change that and wanting to give people the room to have that same . . . you know, "I want  
8 you to feel comfortable enough with me that you can be whoever you want to be, even  
9 yourself." Ain't that what Dreg said, "I just want you to come around me and not feel like you  
10 have to be anybody other than yourself." And a lot of people have done that and through that  
11 they just thanked me because now they are living through who they are, their authentic true  
12 selves.
- 13 AJ: So you being your authentic true self has helped other people express their authentic true self.
- 14 CM: Yeah.
- 15 AJ: Wow, that's what's up.
- 16 CM: Yes, and two of those people . . . it's so weird. One was my best friend in Chicago. Once I  
17 moved here, this other person that was my best friend – come to find out that they are brother  
18 and sister and never knew that.
- 19 AJ: Did they come out as gay or trans or lesbian?
- 20 CM: Well, my first friend, Shanae, came out as lesbian but as a . . . she was really femme and now is  
21 very masculine. And Raven, you know Raven right?
- 22 AJ: Really dark skinned?
- 23 CM: No, no, no. She came to the . . . she came to my release day party with me, with the long hair.
- 24 AJ: Oh yeah, I know Raven.
- 25 CM: She transitioned after I made her come to grips with it.
- 26 AJ: Her reality.
- 27 CM: Yeah, she was just so unhappy but now is just this vibrant, beautiful, beautiful person. I found  
28 out that they had the same dad and never knew. These were two separate worlds and just so  
29 happened to have went on Facebook and seen Raven's sister and Shanae corresponding with  
30 each other and I'm like, "Wait, how do you all know each other?" And they're like, "Ah, we have  
31 the same dad." Just like, "This is so crazy, it's such a small world."
- 32 AJ: That is a very small world. I love that. What's your relationship like with your family today?
- 33 CM: I'm very, very, very close with my mom. I think she just felt a lot of pressure from my family to  
34 try to raise me right and, again, like my granddad was crazy as batshit and my grandma, she just  
35 wanted to try to hold everything together and it was just clear that everything was falling apart

- 1 in my family anyways, but just me . . . I was just like the ice breaker, I guess. I mean now after  
2 I've moved away, when I moved here I didn't talk to my mom for like four years.
- 3 AJ: Wow. And you were very young.
- 4 CM: Yeah, I didn't talk to my mom for four years.
- 5 AJ: You were 16 when you moved here, you said?
- 6 CM: No, I was 18.
- 7 AJ: 18, OK.
- 8 CM: No, it wasn't four years, it was like . . . wait. It was probably two years because at that point I  
9 had already started my hormones. I hadn't talked to them . . . my mom was really confused and  
10 she told me over the phone – like she asked me, “Why can't you just be a gay man?” She didn't  
11 understand, like a lot of people don't who live in a cis heterosexual normative world and don't  
12 know that it's deeper than just me putting on a dress and a wig – you know, that's not what  
13 being a woman is about. Or, I hate when they your lifestyle – no, this isn't a lifestyle, like I'm not  
14 the rich and famous. You know what I'm saying? That's a lifestyle – this is my life and this is  
15 how I'm living it, this isn't like some type of façade or, as they say, like a fad.
- 16 AJ: Or a performance.
- 17 CM: Or they'll say something like, “It's just a phase and you'll get over it.” It's like no, it's not a  
18 phase.” A period is a phase, a menstrual cycle is a phase, the moon cycle is a phase. This isn't  
19 like a show . . .
- 20 AJ: Well when you think about those two things that you just named, they keep happening and they  
21 keep getting more intense and more intense . . . this identity, it never goes away is what I'm  
22 saying.
- 23 CM: Exactly, right. Like even the moon gets to change its face every now and then, the moon is very  
24 fluid. The moon has different shadows and every now and . . . every 40 years it gets a glow or  
25 whatever.
- 26 AJ: Gets bigger or . . . I love that about the moon.
- 27 CM: I swear, the moon gets to be fluid but I know who I am and this is who I am, so I'm not a phase,  
28 I'm not a trend, I'm not a lifestyle, I'm a human. I think it took my mom that type of  
29 understanding to know that . . . now she refers to me as her daughter and uses the right  
30 pronouns. She understands now. I think, again, a lot of that was the pressure that she felt as a  
31 parent growing up in this family that was just cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs and wanting me to . . . and  
32 also being trans in Chicago wasn't the safest thing to do. You know what I'm saying? You could  
33 be found dead and I just felt like my mom just did not want that to happen to me and she  
34 wanted me to be as male as possible and it was just not happening for me. I broke it down for  
35 her and I used her as an example. I said, “How would you feel if grandma and granddad made  
36 you dress this type of way for all your life and you knew that's now how you were or how you  
37 felt or how you identify, but you were forced to keep doing this thing. You wouldn't feel like

- 1           you want to leave?" Referring to me and me leaving. Just giving it to her with not so technical  
2           and scientific, but just heart-to-heart with my mom. At the end of that conversation I think she  
3           just had a better understanding of who I was as a person and I've told her so many things that I  
4           wanted to tell her as a teenager, as her child, as her daughter when I was still living with her and  
5           just being able to have that conversation with her, but as an adult it's different. I'm an adult  
6           now and we're playing a different card game at this point, we're dealing a whole different hand.  
7           It was a different type of mutual respect, you know what I'm saying? And her just hearing me  
8           out – still as her child but as an adult now. And so she couldn't help but to listen to me and . . .
- 9    AJ:     And hear.
- 10   CM:    Yeah, you know what I'm saying?
- 11   AJ:     I've seen beautiful photos of you guys all over Facebook. She's really proud of you.
- 12   CM:    Yeah. Also I think that awareness just opened my mom's eyes to more of the social issues that  
13           are happening in the world. Growing up in this middle class of white conforming Black family,  
14           which I hate the most . . . why do a lot of Black families try to be like the Cosby's so bad, I don't  
15           want to be like the fucking Cosby's. Why? Why do I need to be like that to be loved and  
16           accepted in this country? I want to be me. Literally I was considered . . . you know me and my  
17           mom considers me to be like the most ghetto person out of my whole family.
- 18   AJ:     Is that right?
- 19   CM:    Yes.
- 20   AJ:     Oh my goodness, you poor girl.
- 21   CM:    And like . . . even bring my mom out of that, let's move beyond this idea about I'm a ghetto  
22           woman. I'm a Black woman that has sass, that has fears, that's not biting her tongue, that's  
23           doesn't walk on eggshells – if that's what ghetto is, then OK, I'll be it. But, I just want my mom  
24           to get out of that thinking. She's been like educating herself about social issues and trans issues  
25           and she reads posts that I put up about violence and police brutality and things like that. I think  
26           my mom is really starting to come around to seeing the world in a different perspective.
- 27   AJ:     But based on your relationship and your interaction and your activism and your outspokenness,  
28           so man, yeah, it wasn't safe being trans in Chicago but it's not safe being trans in Minneapolis or  
29           Ohio or New York City.
- 30   CM:    Anywhere, California and Philadelphia.
- 31   AJ:     And you, CeCe, became . . . the spokesmodel for surviving this violence that so many of our  
32           sisters and brothers – trans identified, gender non-conforming people face in 2015. I went to  
33           the Trans Day of Remembrance thing the other day and they read 85 names, there was probably  
34           many, many more throughout the entire world, but 85 names in the United States and Brazil. In  
35           2011, I believe, you were attacked . . . racist, transphobic, homophobic, white supremacist mob  
36           rolled up on you and your friends. Can you talk about what happened and what was the  
37           subsequent aftermath of that?

1 CM: Yeah. June 2011, some friends and I were verbally and physically attacked by a group of neo-  
2 Nazis that turned into a big fight and after the fight was over, I was trying to get some medical  
3 help and one of the pursuants from the other side decided to continue to try to attack me and I  
4 ended up stabbing him and he died from the stab wound. I ended up having to go to jail and  
5 that's when I found out they were going to charge me with, first degree murder . . . I mean,  
6 second degree murder. I decided to take it to trial after the first plea deal which was eight years  
7 and I felt like I didn't deserve to be in jail for defending myself. I decided to fight and after nine  
8 months in jail and after just seeing where the case was going, looking at the jury of my "peers"  
9 which were nothing but white women and two people of color, I decided to take a plea deal for  
10 41 months with nine months served in prison, which was . . . what was that? Thirty-six . . .  
11 thirty-two months . . . am I counting this right? Well, 41 months minus nine months. And then I  
12 did 19 months, they added an extra month because I refused the . . . they wanted me to do a  
13 drug rehabilitation program, which had nothing to do with my case or with my life or anything,  
14 but it's another way to keep people incarcerated because of those programs and if you deny the  
15 programs they can give you more time. So I ended up getting an extra month only and I did 19  
16 months in prison and then I did 13 months on parole.

17 AJ: So you're off for now?

18 CM: Yes, yes. I'm so happy.

19 AJ: That's great news.

20 CM: It will also be my first year . . . my first year off parole, my second year out of prison. So, yeah,  
21 I'm really excited and glad that I'm out.

22 AJ: What struck me during this whole time, particularly in June 2011, at the same time George  
23 Zimmerman was on trial for murdering Trayvon Martin and used a self-defense defense, was  
24 acquitted. He was the pursuer, he was the one that was following this young man around the  
25 neighborhood, started a fight with him and all of this stuff. And you . . . I wonder, do you think  
26 about was it race that was a factor in your self-defense case or was it your trans identity or was  
27 it a combination of all of those things? I don't know, what do you think about those things?

28 CM: I just feel like when you're working with the prison industrial complex and the criminal justice  
29 system, that being Black and being trans is always going to be a factor. We know that trans  
30 women are disproportionately affected by the prison industrial complex, we know that Black  
31 people, in general, are disproportionately affected by the prison industrial complex, and so the  
32 odds were never in my favor, this wasn't an Everdeen moment for me – especially after doing  
33 research and reading books like *The New Jim Crow* and *Are Prisons Obsolete*?

34 AJ: *Normal Life* by Dean Spade, have you read that?

35 CM: No.

36 AJ: You should read that.

37 CM: But I know Dean, so I know it's an amazing book. Just knowing how the system is set up,  
38 knowing the history of the system – its evolution from slavery to what it is now and the fact that

- 1           it's also part of a capitalistic regime that is all about the dollar bill, it wasn't hard for me as a  
2           Black person, as a Black trans woman to be affected by the system because when you look at  
3           the cases of people who take plea deals, who don't have the money to hire lawyers – good  
4           lawyers, who don't . . . people don't understand that if every person decided to take their cases  
5           to trial that the system would collapse because . . . you know what I'm saying?
- 6   AJ:     Right, it would be overwhelmed.
- 7   CM:     So once I read that . . .
- 8   AJ:     It's already overwhelmed.
- 9   CM:     Yeah. I'm reading that and I'm like, "How can I convince everyone in here to take a trial?" But  
10          it's hard when people are trying to give you 50 years and you can actually get convicted of those  
11          50 years. You know what I'm saying? So there isn't room for people . . . it was very easy for  
12          Michael Freeman and the prosecutors to just see my case as a self-defense case, even though  
13          there is no stand your ground laws in Minnesota – there were cases of people here in this state  
14          that claimed self-defense. As a matter of fact, there was a case right when I was out on bail of a  
15          person who shot and killed somebody and claimed self-defense because they robbed another  
16          person and they decided to chase after them.
- 17   AJ:     Right, I remember that.
- 18   CM:     Yes, right. So it's like . . .
- 19   AJ:     They didn't get robbed but . . .
- 20   CM:     No, they didn't get robbed but somebody else got robbed and they decided to be . . .
- 21   AJ:     Superman.
- 22   CM:     Right, exactly.
- 23   AJ:     Captain America.
- 24   CM:     And also, the person that was shot, I believe, was a person of color and the person that shot  
25          them was a white man and it was just like, "Oh, you're just an upstanding citizen and you're  
26          doing your job." And my job as a Black trans woman is to survive in a world where people are  
27          constantly trying to kill me and I was criminalized for that. So it was easy for them, it was easy  
28          for Michael Freeman to say, "It was clear evidence of self-defense." You know what I'm saying?  
29          Even from the bullshit-ass testimonials that a lot of those assholes gave that were around the  
30          bar, a lot of people gave solid . . .
- 31   AJ:     Credible witness . . .
- 32   CM:     Yes, that said that no, they started it, that it happened this way – and it was just no. And  
33          Michael Freeman even said that for the documentary, the Free CeCe Documentary they  
34          interview him, and he's still consistent with his choice of pushing forward with prosecuting me,  
35          even though it was a very clear case of self-defense. And so the bullshit-ass reason that they

1 even gave me was that I had a weapon and that I should have known that I could cause bodily  
2 harm, which is why they were able to even charge me to begin with.

3 AJ: And your weapon was a pair of scissors, right?

4 CM: But not even that, also the person that I warned numerous times that I had a weapon, also  
5 knew. So it's not like I was concealing the weapon, it's not like I was intentionally trying to hurt  
6 this person, but I was definitely making it clear that I have a weapon and I'm going to use it if I  
7 have to. It's unfair to think that so many people, so many Black women like myself – both cis  
8 and trans, who get caught up in situations where they have to defend themselves. Not all  
9 women, more so women of color because we're constantly . . . if it was a white woman in her  
10 mansion and she said that she was doing self-defense, one she's got the money for the lawyers  
11 and two, they're not going to see it . . . they're going to say, "Oh, the innocent white woman."  
12 Right? And us women of color, we're superwomen and we're supposed to apprehend  
13 somebody that is attacking us and not also harm this person back or not use any means to  
14 protect yourself if they're trying to hurt you. And so many women of color get caught up in  
15 these situations of self-defense where we end up getting locked up for defending ourselves and  
16 it's easy – it's easy to give that privilege to certain people and take it away from others and  
17 that's just how the system is. So I was doomed to begin with as a Black person, as a Black  
18 woman, as a trans woman, as a Black trans woman. The odds were always . . . I mean, even the  
19 stuff that they needed to help my case was not deemed important to my case. Like the fact that  
20 this man had a life-sized swastika tattoo, not like a little miniature swastika – a life-sized  
21 swastika tattooed on his chest, or the fact that the language that he was using showed that  
22 there was going to be violent intent. I don't think if a person is saying, "Go home you nigger,"  
23 that they're coming over to shake my hand or give me a pat on the back, right? You know what  
24 I'm saying? Or the fact that this person had numerous and previous domestic assault charges.

25 AJ: So he's a violent person . . .

26 CM: In general. That the toxicology report, that he had different substances in him – not using it as a  
27 justification but just to put that out there that he was on altering drugs. Because I wrote a bad  
28 check years and years ago when I first moved here, it has been like five years previous to this  
29 case . . .

30 AJ: CeCe, you don't know how many white kids write bad checks all the time.

31 CM: And because I wrote that bad check they said that any testimony, anything that I said in this  
32 court room, could be dismissed because it's incredulous to who I am because I'm an  
33 untrustworthy person because I wrote a bad check. So, when you think about how those  
34 systems work and you can't help but to think . . . that's why I don't understand why people  
35 haven't got it at this point, why people are still confused as to why these systems don't work, as  
36 to why people . . . the number of people in prisons are growing because these systems are set  
37 up to keep us right where they need us.

38 AJ: I would argue that the systems are working just the way they were intended to.

39 CM: Exactly, exactly – right, exactly. Not in the ways that blind society is like, "Oh, the system is  
40 keeping us safe." No, bitch, it's not keeping you safe.

- 1 AJ: Now hold up now, how are you just going to drop casually, “Oh, yeah, they interviewed Michael  
2 Freeman for the documentary, *Free CeCe*.” You’ve got a movie coming out man – Spring 2016,  
3 produced by none other than Laverne Cox. She’s in it, Laverne – that’s your homie, like you and  
4 Laverne for life. Straight homies. Laverne came to see you on the day you got let out of the  
5 penitentiary. She visited you while you were there, shooting footage – right?
- 6 CM: Yes.
- 7 AJ: What’s it like being friends with Laverne? What’s it like getting this new movie coming out?  
8 Like your whole . . . this star is getting ready to blow up all over again? I mean, you’ve been on  
9 the cover of *Rolling Stone* already, *Democracy Now*, *Melissa Harris-Perry*. I do my research, I  
10 know what’s up. You’re out there but man, when this movie comes out, CeCe, it’s about to blow  
11 up live. Talk about it, tell us about Laverne, tell us about making this movie – what’s it like?
- 12 CM: Laverne, I love Laverne. Laverne is a sweetheart, she is . . . I know she is extremely busy now so  
13 I haven’t really been able to . . . well, we talk, we text.
- 14 AJ: She’s got a new show coming out, right?
- 15 CM: Yeah. So, you know, she’s just been the possibility model that she said she was set out to be  
16 and I’m so proud of her for that. Especially, you know, with not having positive imagery of trans  
17 women in society, it’s good to start seeing trans women not just seen in the negative  
18 stereotypes that we’ve always been portrayed for so long. But also just . . . also recognizing that  
19 with this visibility it has heightened the risk of non-visible trans women, you know what I’m  
20 saying? The trans women that are being murdered, actually the numbers of trans women that  
21 have been murdered has doubled since last year – and probably tripled depending on . . . all the  
22 information that we haven’t gathered and the misgendering of trans women and you know how  
23 the media does it . . .
- 24 AJ: Sure.
- 25 CM: It’s so beautiful to see trans women in the media and having positive imagery for trans women  
26 and just seeing that we can be successful, that we do have dreams and aspirations like regular  
27 humans.
- 28 AJ: Right, exactly. Because we are human.
- 29 CM: Regular humans, right – that’s something that shouldn’t even be shocking or special because it’s  
30 something that all humans should have room to do and it’s just like when you’re a marginalized  
31 person those things seem to just get heightened for some reason. It’s really beautiful to see a  
32 hard working trans woman in the entertainment field and not be compromised as a trans  
33 woman and wearing that label proudly. She’s fantastic.
- 34 AJ: So you guys made this movie though, what’s it like?
- 35 CM: It’s been a work in progress. We are in post-production now and . . . I don’t know, it’s so much.  
36 It’s so much in the movie, we started filming while I was still in prison so we talked about a lot of  
37 my case and . . . I don’t know, I hope that people love it and enjoy it, it’s so much of myself in  
38 the movie and people just get to see a trans woman and her struggles and her everyday life as a



- 1 regular human so people won't think that we are vampires and we sleep in coffins or hang  
2 upside down in caves, to see me do things as a regular person – like get my car fixed and go  
3 grocery shopping and have conversations with people and also see me speaking at certain  
4 events. Angela Davis is in the film.
- 5 AJ: Oh wow, one of my sheros.
- 6 CM: I got to interview Angela Davis.
- 7 AJ: You interviewed Angela Davis?
- 8 CM: Yes.
- 9 AJ: Oh my goodness, so jelly. And I know that Angela Davis speaks on this all the time, that trans  
10 women of color are the step that we need to take to get full feminism for all women. Right?  
11 That's her thing.
- 12 CM: Angela . . . she's so amazing. I'm really excited.
- 13 AJ: She's a true revolutionary.
- 14 CM: Oh my gosh, this was someone that I was getting inspired by while I was locked up and knowing  
15 her struggle and knowing that we had a similar struggle in dealing with the system. Oh my gosh,  
16 such a strong resilient, beautiful, spirited woman of color that is just so influential to so many  
17 people.
- 18 AJ: And she's queer identified.
- 19 CM: Yes. So I just love it, I just love it – I love it so much.
- 20 AJ: Well congratulations on the movie, good luck on the movie. I hope it does really, really well –  
21 you deserve it. I know there's a lot of pain in the movie because it's a very difficult story to hear  
22 but I thank you for sharing it, you're such an inspiration to so many people – including me. I see  
23 you a lot of days, like you don't have all the make-up on and I'm just like, "You know what? I  
24 can do that? CeCe is making this possible for me to just be like . . . I don't want to do that  
25 today."
- 26 CM: Oh, thank you.
- 27 AJ: Yeah, that's deep, deep inspiration. Deep love, deep respect, mad respect for everything that  
28 you're about, CeCe – really, I am. Tell me about romance, man – relationships. How do you  
29 identify sexually? What's your orientation?
- 30 CM: I identify as trans hetero because . . . and I say that, I shouldn't have to say it, but I did that for  
31 cis normative people who would just automatically assume that I'm gay because I'm trans, and I  
32 have to explain to them that no, if I was gay I would be a lesbian and I'm not a lesbian. So I  
33 came up with the term trans hetero so that they can understand because sometimes you have  
34 to break it down for dummies – you know, like the book.
- 35 AJ: Yes, *Computers for Dummies*, *Trans for dummies*.

- 1 CM: Sexual orientation for dummies.
- 2 AJ: There you go.
- 3 CM: It's another way for me to explain gender identity and sexual orientation to cis people. But  
4 again, I shouldn't have to put trans in front of hetero to say that I'm a woman that loves men.  
5 But, I am also somewhat bisexual so it depends on how I'm feeling.
- 6 AJ: So the trans hetero though, that gives you a little space.
- 7 CM: Yes.
- 8 AJ: Because that's clearer than just hetero, right? That's trans hetero.
- 9 CN: Yeah.
- 10 AJ: So there is space in there for different sexual identities. Are you in a relationship right now?
- 11 CM: I am. I've been with this person for five years.
- 12 AJ: Oh wow. A guy?
- 13 CM: Yes.
- 14 AJ: Cool.
- 15 CM: He's a weirdo but I love him to pieces. He is very straight and is dealing with a lot of internalized  
16 bullshit and so I'm like . . . it's hard breaking down these barriers and teaching him about sexual  
17 orientation and gender identity and explaining to him . . . I think for a lot of straight men they  
18 deal with the brute of society's gender binary shaming. Again, if I'm still looked at as a man in  
19 society and a man decides to date me, then he automatically becomes gay – even if he doesn't  
20 identify that way. And a lot of men that I date aren't gay because it goes against homosexuality,  
21 I'm not . . . that's a man identified person loving a man identified person. That's what gay is.  
22 I'm a woman – I'm just trans, and I love men and men love me, and they see me as a woman  
23 and therefore that's . . . but, you know, society will never understand that because again,  
24 they're still living through gender binaries and their understanding is - this is what a woman is,  
25 this is what a man is, and then word association after that. Right? So yeah, I've been with him  
26 for five years and just helping him go through understanding who I am. We have our ups and  
27 downs, we're in kind of like an open relationship thingy – well at least I am, I don't know about  
28 him. He's still like my best friend and sometimes, you know, we get on each other's nerves. But  
29 he's one of my biggest supporters and has been. He's somebody I can just depend on and talk  
30 to, he knows so much about me and vice versa and I just appreciate him and love him.
- 31 AJ: Oh, that's so sweet.
- 32 CM: He's one of my best friends.
- 33 AJ: I'm so happy for you. CeCe, to the extent that you feel comfortable answering this question,  
34 what medical interventions have you had to support your transition or during your transition?

- 1 CM: I have only done hormones. I've actually got my first laser hair removal treatment done, that  
2 was interesting. But it definitely . . .
- 3 AJ: Does it work?
- 4 CM: Yes, like if you could feel my skin compared to what it was. So I'm doing that and I'm also like . .  
5 . I've come to the point in my life where I'm just . . . I know that I want things done and it costs  
6 money, which I don't have a lot of – hopefully this documentary can help me because . . . but  
7 also, I feel like with trans women who want to transition there is a lot of shaming, sometimes  
8 from people in your community for . . . like, for instance, I wanted to get my nose done and  
9 instantly somebody made it into like a race thing – like, "You should love your nose." I'm like, "I  
10 know I'm Black and I love my Black nose," but that doesn't have anything . . . I think there's this  
11 connection between what being Black is and what being Black cultured looks like. You know  
12 what I'm saying? I know I'm Black, there's nothing that can ever change that and I love my  
13 Blackness, but just because I want to get my nose done or change my cheekbones or . . . any  
14 type of work done that I'm instantly discredited as a Black person because you have to have  
15 natural hair and you have to have this, and you have to wear dashiki, change your name to Alla  
16 or Abba. You know what I'm saying? No, I know who I am, I know the fucked up cultural  
17 ramifications that Black people have dealt with, why my last name is Irish – I know why and I  
18 understand these things, I understand why I go through the shit that I go through, but just  
19 because I want to change my nose or have a more feminine appearing face or this or that, that  
20 I'm against my Blackness. I love my Blackness. And so I have to come to grips with that because  
21 for a long time a lot of people have actually made me feel bad about wanting to get work done  
22 and now I can decide for myself now and not feel bad about it because I let somebody get into  
23 my head and tell me I shouldn't. But I eventually want to look like Beyonce – by the time I turn  
24 30.
- 25 AJ: All right, you've got three years – get on it. You're working on it though, you've got the whole  
26 eyes and lips thing going.
- 27 CM: That's one venture that I'm actually looking to get into. I want to start trans wellness centers,  
28 which is something like what Cancer Centers of America do for cancer patients, I want trans  
29 wellness centers to do for . . .
- 30 AJ: My most popular interview yet, you guys.
- 31 CM: What I want to do for trans wellness centers is kind of like what Cancer Centers of America does  
32 for cancer patients and those facilities are an all-in-one place you can get your treatments done  
33 there, eat healthy, exercise – I want the same thing for trans women. There aren't any specific  
34 places that trans women can go to and feel comfortable in, talk about all type of transitioning  
35 issues in one place, and also get a good workout, get a smoothie . . .
- 36 AJ: Go to the sauna.
- 37 CM: Yeah, and chill.
- 38 AJ: Yeah, you can't go in the locker rooms anymore.

- 1 CM: And also have resources for things like name change, gender-marker changing, just a whole  
2 trans wellness center where you can come in and come out feeling as complete as you need to.
- 3 AJ: Wow, I love that idea, man. I want to be in on that.
- 4 CM: Yeah, I would love it.
- 5 AJ: I don't know, you've talked a little bit about this but has there been times when someone has  
6 either been really helpful or really insensitive to you in the medical system, in the criminal  
7 justice system, in the educational institutions? What is your experience like in these sort of  
8 institutions?
- 9 CM: It's definitely changed as I got older, especially in the medical field. I think that there is still a lot  
10 that could be done and a lot of training that needs to be put on medical facilities. But I go to a  
11 really very good clinic as of now that respects me and respects my identity.
- 12 AJ: Can you say which one?
- 13 CM: Yeah, Smiley's Clinic in . . .
- 14 AJ: Oh, Smiley's Clinic. OK.
- 15 CM: Yeah, and they are very helpful, they are really respectful. I don't feel ashamed or scared to  
16 come in there. I feel that it's a good place if you're going through transitioning and you want  
17 things done properly and being in a comfortable environment. Also, with schooling . . . I got  
18 ridiculed a lot, not just by other students but teachers and . . .
- 19 AJ: Teachers and administrators.
- 20 CM: Yeah, and so . . . I was rambunctious, I was very feisty, I didn't have an issue fighting with people  
21 if I needed to. If you pressed my buttons then – yeah. I was always very, you know, on point  
22 and I really didn't go to school . . . I got kicked out because I had to choose whether or not I  
23 wanted to go to an alternative . . . well, I got kicked out of school because I almost hit a boy with  
24 a chair. He said some really gross shit to me and my granddad had just passed away so all these  
25 feelings and emotions were happening, and yes, I almost hit him with a chair. I kind of got in  
26 trouble for that and so I just . . . and I guess that was just me, also, losing faith in myself and just  
27 not giving a fuck anymore about life in general. I just kind of backed away and I had to choose if  
28 I wanted to go to an alternative school or a boot camp and I was like, "Neither." I ran away from  
29 home. I just . . . it was more so because I felt there was no room for me to self-identify and also  
30 nobody to identify with or talk about.
- 31 AJ: So school wasn't a safe place?
- 32 CM: No. Chicago – no.
- 33 AJ: It was not.
- 34 CM: Chicago high schools . . . it's way worse now but when I was growing up it was just like . . . you  
35 know, which was weird because I was always an honor student, honors classes, honor roll,

- 1 honor whatever, principal's scholar. That was one thing my mom would tell you, "That little  
2 bitch is real smart." You know what I'm saying?
- 3 AJ: You amaze me with your brilliance every time I hear you speak.
- 4 CM: And so I was really into books, I always . . . I still am. I love to learn, I don't care what it is, I love  
5 to learn. And I just didn't get the full experience that I needed. Book learning turned into street  
6 learning and that was a different school.
- 7 AJ: And you excelled.
- 8 CM: Thigh Walk High was a way different experience so . . . yeah, I just . . . I eventually got my GED  
9 and some college.
- 10 AJ: And you were going to MCTC at the time of the . . . I don't know, the incident I guess we will call  
11 it.
- 12 CM: Yeah. So I've been trying to get back into college since the incident but I've just been so busy.
- 13 AJ: Well I think we've been on at least three different panels together that I can remember. And,  
14 each time . . . and we've been on panels with amazing people, and each time you have been the  
15 star. And not because of your story, not because of what happened to you, but because of who  
16 you are and how you articulate that and how you really break down all of these issues around  
17 systems and you make these connections between these various systems of oppression – like  
18 misogyny and the religious institutions and the criminal justice system and the prison industrial  
19 complex. I've heard you talk about corporatism many, many times. So, your brilliance is very  
20 apparent.
- 21 CM: Thank you.
- 22 AJ: If there is a relationship between the T, the L, the G and the B, what do you think that is? Is it  
23 strong? Do you think all of those letters should stay together? I know you already rearranged  
24 the letters.
- 25 CM: That's funny that you asked that because there is a petition going around by a white gay cis man  
26 calling for the removal of the T, which I don't have a problem with because L, G, and B are  
27 sexual orientations and I don't want to be classified with a sexual orientation anymore.
- 28 AJ: Too cis.
- 29 CM: Exactly. I don't mind being in my own lane. I'm a gender identity and you all can . . . I feel like  
30 trans people don't have the space to self-identify in that we tend to get grouped in with sexual  
31 orientation so people make assumptions about us. And so, people don't understand that the L,  
32 the G, and the B still reside within the T.
- 33 AJ: Right.
- 34 CM: Right. We own that, we still own that. That is a part of us, that is a part of . . .
- 35 AJ: The whole history.

- 1 CM: Like we're an identity so we should be with the T, the C, the Q, G . . . TCGQ. Right, that's Trans,  
2 Cis, Queer, and Gender Non-Conforming.
- 3 AJ: Yeah, right.
- 4 CM: See, right. Exactly.
- 5 AJ: That's a whole new way of looking at it.
- 6 CM: Right. So I'm fine with not being there and definitely there's still a big disconnection . . . and  
7 again, being gay and being lesbian and being bi is so mediocre, it's so basic. You know what I'm  
8 saying? It's so mainstream.
- 9 AJ: You're all so generic now.
- 10 CM: They still get to live the conformity because they're still cis identities. If you're a cis gay lesbian  
11 or a bi person that you still get to be a cis person, which is also a privilege, and so therefore  
12 there is this disconnection between the things we need medically, the things that we need  
13 physically, the things that we need spiritually, the things that we need emotionally, the things  
14 that we need lovingly come on a different plane. And so we have this disconnect because  
15 people can still argue and not to have this argument with lots of gay and lesbian people, but  
16 why do you want to transition or you still . . . the same shit any cis person would say. And so the  
17 contrary of people's beliefs that we are all kumbaya-ing around some bigass bonfire like a Coca-  
18 Cola commercial is not how it is honey, that is not how we are living our lives. We are still  
19 combatting with each other, which is sad. There is no recognition for the true leaders of the  
20 TLGB movement, which were trans women of color, and then the erasure of trans women and  
21 the lack of acknowledgement of that . . . even with Trans Day of Remembrance, there are a lot  
22 of people that still don't know about it that are a part of the TLGB community. There is such a  
23 big disconnect and people think we all are really friendly, hunky-dory – and we're not. There are  
24 a lot of gay, lesbian, bi people that I don't like because they're so sexist, they're so  
25 transmysoginistic, transphobic.
- 26 AJ: And racist.
- 27 CM: And racist. So I just don't deal with it. There is definitely a big disconnect within the whole  
28 community but that's just with people's own predispositions anyway, we all have this idea –  
29 unless people are willing to take the authority, the initiatives to decolonize their minds around  
30 this basic ass thinking that they have been thinking for all of their lives because now it's so  
31 normal to be gay or lesbian or bi that those motherfuckers are basic thinking too.
- 32 AJ: Right.
- 33 CM: You know what I'm saying? They're not thinking on the same plane that trans and queer and  
34 gender non-conforming identities are because we're thinking about things on a different plane.  
35 Our safety, our health, changes with medical insurance.
- 36 AJ: Names.
- 37 CM: Yeah, name change, gender markers, things like that – shit they don't have to deal with.

1 AJ: Right.

2 CM: Shit that they get to have and . . .

3 AJ: And not even think about, they don't even have to think about it.

4 CM: So they're basic as fuck.

5 AJ: It's not even in their thought process – it just is.

6 CM: So basic.

7 AJ: Caitlin Jenner.

8 CM: What do you want to say about this bitch?

9 AJ: I'll just say the word, just say the name.

10 CM: The only thing that I can say that we have in common is that we're trans. I'm not going to sit  
11 here . . .

12 AJ: So you respect her trans identity?

13 CM: Yes, I'm not going to sit here and disrespect her – then I will be part of the issue too, right? I will  
14 be another transphobic sexist person that's doing the same shit to her that all of society is . . .

15 AJ: Is doing to all of us, right?

16 CM: And so, just because I don't agree with her politics, that I think she's dumb as hell – at the most .  
17 . . or at the least I should say. I would not stand for the transphobic rhetoric that has been going  
18 around, even with other trans people. Like I shut that shit down. Even though we don't get  
19 where the fuck this crazy bitch is coming from, that does not give us the right to discredit her  
20 and her womanhood and for her transitioning and for her being her. We cannot do that  
21 because then we become the problem. So, I can't discredit her, I cannot disrespect her, I will  
22 not be one of those people. I commend her for being brave because it's bravery in coming out,  
23 it's bravery in that but me and the bitch ain't got shit in common. She's a billionaire, I'm barely  
24 a hundred-aire. So she has the means, she don't even need resources because she can make  
25 them if she needed to, which is why I'm upset because these people who have these platforms,  
26 these funds . . I'm not going to lie, people feel funny about talking about money – well money  
27 is what makes this bitch go around, that's what Michael told me. And so, as long as you have a  
28 platform where you're making millions and millions of dollars, you should be donating to causes  
29 that are helping the issues. But again, this person – Caitlin, she's a conservative and she's a  
30 Republican, she's proud of that, and we can go . . that's her right to have that belief, it's just  
31 dumb as hell. But that's what any marginalized person . . it's any marginalized person.  
32 Clarence Thomas, good example of a marginalized person as dumb as hell, just batshit crazy. No  
33 . . . no. We can't expect that because this person is trans that they're radical or that they have  
34 the beliefs that you have. And that's OK, just stay out of my way. I can respect you and give you  
35 . . you know what I'm saying? But just stay out of my way.

- 1 AJ: So, I think this will be our last question CeCe. You are so fascinating . . . oh my God. Where do  
2 you see . . . OK, let me just frame this a little bit because you have been . . . since you've been  
3 home, almost two years now, and I got this wonderful opportunity to host your coming home  
4 party, that was so much fun. But, since you've been home you've been traveling all around the  
5 country, you've been talking to a lot of groups – a lot of young people, colleges, conferences –  
6 just doing your thing and really being out there. Where do you see the trans community in 50  
7 years from now?
- 8 CM: Fifty years from now? I feel like if we keep pushing this radical idea that . . . because I see the  
9 trans community – trans women, trans women of color, are becoming more radical and moving  
10 away from the patriarchal ideas of women and what that is and living their true authentic selves  
11 . . . really paying attention to what's happening and really calling for action. I feel like we've  
12 been having trans women in the entertainment media and going back to . . . what's her name?  
13 Christine Jorgensen?
- 14 AJ: Yes, Christine Jorgensen.
- 15 CM: So it's not a new thing. It's just that people who have been lost in this history . . . you're not  
16 going to have a course in school.
- 17 AJ: Well we were in the closet for so long.
- 18 CM: That too. People don't understand the trancestory, how far we go back.
- 19 AJ: I love that word.
- 20 CM: And how we get to where we are now.
- 21 AJ: Oh my God, you just wrote me a new word . . . trancestory. Wow.
- 22 CM: So that part of our lives that we don't know. I know about Martin Luther King, I know about Ida  
23 B. Wells, I know about all the Black prominent figures.
- 24 AJ: George Washington Carver.
- 25 CM: But a lot of the queer and gay and even trans identities that I've just been learning as of recently  
26 really show me that our history is extensive, not just on the Black side but also on the TGLB side  
27 – that we've come so far.
- 28 AJ: And we've been there since the beginning.
- 29 CM: Yes. And so having that and keeping . . . we just need to keep chronolizing our lives and  
30 celebrating the lives of the people who are here now and not wait until they're dead to talk  
31 about their good works. We need to be highlighting trans women more and giving them the  
32 space to be successful lawyers and doctors and athletes – whatever. There isn't room for trans  
33 people to be in those fields. We only have one trans doctor, Marci Bowers, and then we don't  
34 have too many . . . we have one trans athlete. So it's not like we . . . and that's trans man.
- 35 AJ: Well the boxer girl – what's her name?



- 1 CM: But they're not really highlighting her. They're not showing her on the UFC on TV or anything  
2 like that. We know about her but I can't tell you one time I've seen her play.
- 3 AJ: Right.
- 4 CM: Right, you know what I'm saying? We have to kind of demand our right to be human and to  
5 have the normalcy of just being a human because people keep making a spectacle of everything  
6 that we do or think that . . . I don't want to be treated like a special person, I want to be treated  
7 like a normal person so I can have a normal life.
- 8 AJ: Which is the name of Dean's book, *Normal Life* – just saying.
- 9 CM: And so, I feel like if we keep educating the youth, we keep letting people know about our  
10 transstory, and we keep letting people know about our history, if we keep letting people  
11 know about where we've come and where we can be and keep being radical and keep being  
12 fierce, keep pushing . . . you know, resiliency and staying strong and just being planted and not  
13 wavering, we can definitely be in a place where being trans is . . . hopefully, I want trans to be  
14 mediocre – you know what I'm saying?
- 15 AJ: Yes.
- 16 CM: I want trans to be mediocre as fuck, I want trans to be basic as fuck – and all the rest of the  
17 identities so we don't have to keep movement after movement after movement. I want there  
18 to just be a time where we're just actually not having to protest, where we can just be peaceful  
19 and just enjoy life and not have to worry about if someone is going to get shot or killed because  
20 of their identity or because of their melanin, right?
- 21 AJ: Yes.
- 22 CM: And also connecting that, as a Black person, and not just thinking of the trans future but thinking  
23 of my life as a Black person and realizing that I am going to deal with the same issues as a Black  
24 person and speaking for Black Lives Matter in so many . . . ending that exclusionary part of  
25 certain people in Black Lives Matter who don't want to recognize trans and queer and gender  
26 non-conforming Black lives who are also being slain and killed in the streets, right? So we need  
27 to realize that as trans people of color that we are going to not also have to deal with the things  
28 of being trans, but deal with the things of our heritage, of our melanin and how that affects us  
29 too. So I'm thinking about it on a different aspect but hopefully in 50 years a lot of shit will be  
30 abolished and that we're living in a world that's more equal and fair and just, where the  
31 community is policing the community and not police – and not even community policing  
32 communities but communities watching out, being involved. Because people talk about  
33 community and won't even show up a pot luck or something.
- 34 AJ: Exactly.
- 35 CM: So it's important that we . . .
- 36 AJ: You can't talk about it, you've got to be about it.
- 37 CM: Exactly. Fifty years from now I'll be 77 and I want to see people just . . .

- 1 AJ: You'll be like Miss Major, you see how young . . .
- 2 CM: I'm going to be an Angela Bassett instead of . . . as long as the apocalypse doesn't happen within  
3 50 years.
- 4 AJ: Oh, OK.
- 5 CM: I'm pretty sure it will be a more beautiful time – hopefully.
- 6 AJ: Wow. Thank you for being a part of this transcestory. Thank you girl for breaking it all the way  
7 down.
- 8 CM: Thank you for having me.
- 9 AJ: Thank you for contributing your story to this whole process, to this history. I love you . . . we  
10 might have to sit down again.
- 11 CM: Yes, of course.
- 12 AJ: You've got a lot to talk about, CeCe.
- 13 CM: I'm trying to start my own blog or YouTube channel.
- 14 AJ: OK, all right. We're going to be looking out for that. Peace.
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18