

Renan (Ashlee) Sapalaran  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

May 16, 2017



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.

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1     Andrea Jenkins                     -AJ  
2     Renan (Ashlee) Sapalaran       -RS  
3  
4     AJ:        So, hello.  
5  
6     RS:        Hi.  
7  
8     AJ:        My name is Andrea Jenkins, and I am the Oral Historian for the Transgender Oral History Project  
9                at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries. Today is May 16<sup>th</sup>, and I'm  
10               here in Minneapolis. I'm here today with Ashlee Sapalaran.  
11  
12    RS:        Correct.  
13  
14    AJ:        Did I say that right?  
15  
16    RS:        Yes. [Laughs].  
17  
18    AJ:        Oh my goodness. How are you, Ashlee?  
19  
20    RS:        I'm good. Feeling, feeling wonderful.  
21  
22    AJ:        Feeling wonderful. That's great. Hey, listen. Can you state your name...  
23  
24    RS:        Mhm.  
25  
26    AJ:        ... spell it so we make sure we have everything spelled correctly, state your gender today, your  
27               gender assigned at birth...  
28  
29    RS:        Mhm.  
30  
31    AJ:        ... and, uhm, your pronouns.  
32  
33    RS:        Yeah. My birth name is Renan, R.E.N.A.N.  
34  
35    AJ:        R.E.  
36  
37    RS:        N.A.N. Yeah. Last name is Sapalaran, S.A.P.A.L.A.R.A.N. When I transitioned, I'm Ashlee,  
38               A.S.H.L.E.E.  
39  
40    AJ:        Okay.  
41  
42    RS:        Yeah, and my assigned, I was born male, and now, uhm, I'm a female.  
43  
44    AJ:        Mhm.  
45  
46    RS:        And, uhm, my pronouns, I like to be called she/her. Yeah.

1  
2 AJ: Wow. Well, thank you, Ashlee. Thank you for being here today. This is really wonderful.  
3  
4 RS: Thank you.  
5  
6 AJ: Just to sit down and get to know you a little bit better. Where are you from?  
7  
8 RS: Philippines.  
9  
10 AJ: Is that right?  
11  
12 RS: Yes, Philippines.  
13  
14 AJ: Wow. And you're really recent to Minnesota and to the United States.  
15  
16 RS: Yes.  
17  
18 AJ: How did you get here?  
19  
20 RS: I moved here like September 1, 2016.  
21  
22 AJ: Uhuh.  
23  
24 RS: I came here to be with my hus— my long time fiancé.  
25  
26 AJ: Uhuh.  
27  
28 RS: Uh, we've been together for like 6 years. It's been a long distance relationship.  
29  
30 AJ: Right.  
31  
32 RS: Then after...  
33  
34 AJ: Minnesota and to the Philippines?  
35  
36 RS: Yeah. So he just...  
37  
38 AJ: That's pretty long distance.  
39  
40 RS: Pretty long distance, like miles, miles away. So he just kept coming to the Philippines or  
41 Thailand...  
42  
43 AJ: Uhuh.  
44  
45 RS: ... where I used to live as well.  
46  
47 AJ: Oh, so you used to live in Thailand.

1  
2 RS: I live in Thailand. We have condo there with my husband who bought properties there.  
3  
4 AJ: Oh wow.  
5  
6 RS: Yes. For three years and had my surgeries there.  
7  
8 AJ: Uhuh.  
9  
10 RS: You know, like my breasts, my hips...  
11  
12 AJ: Uhuh.  
13  
14 RS: And then on 2015 when Barack Obama, you know, announces that the same sex marriage  
15 should be legalized...  
16  
17 AJ: Mhm.  
18  
19 RS: ... in all 50 states...  
20  
21 AJ: Mhm.  
22  
23 RS: ... then that's the time we had hope already that me and him could live together here in  
24 America.  
25  
26 AJ: Wow.  
27  
28 RS: You know, because, like, uhm, before it's not that easy to get a visa to come to the United States  
29 so...  
30  
31 AJ: Sure.  
32  
33 RS: This way...  
34  
35 AJ: You could come.  
36  
37 RS: Yeah.  
38  
39 AJ: Wow.  
40  
41 RS: So it's like this is really a dream come true for me and my husband. It's been 6 years and finally  
42 live together.  
43  
44 AJ: How did you guys meet?  
45  
46 RS: Uhm, dating site.  
47

1 AJ: Uhuh.  
2  
3 RS: You know, that's when I was, uhm, like 6 years ago, I've been looking for, for a serious  
4 relationship.  
5  
6 AJ: Mhm.  
7  
8 RS: Like someone who is going to treat me, so treat me really like a lady in a way that I wanted to be  
9 treated.  
10  
11 AJ: Mhm. The way you deserve.  
12  
13 RS: The way I deserve to be treated so I went to this, uh, dating site for transgender people, and I  
14 met him and started communicating. Then he went to see me in the Philippines. He went to  
15 Thailand, but then we're having hard time for me to come here...  
16  
17 AJ: Mhm.  
18  
19 RS: ... because it's not easy to get the visa.  
20  
21 AJ: Yeah.  
22  
23 RS: So that's why we waited until the year 2015, you know, that finally it's legalized in America.  
24  
25 AJ: So when you say thanks Obama, you're not being, uh, [laughs] facetious like some other people.  
26  
27 RS: No, no. I was just... I'm really, really thankful, you know, that finally they had legalized it here.  
28  
29 AJ: Right.  
30  
31 RS: It's good to see America moving forward.  
32  
33 AJ: You know, I'm happy that, that you're able to, to be here with the one you love.  
34  
35 RS: Yeah.  
36  
37 AJ: So you guys met online.  
38  
39 RS: Mhm.  
40  
41 AJ: He would come visit.  
42  
43 RS: Yeah.  
44  
45 AJ: You bought a house in Thailand.  
46  
47 RS: And in the Philippines. We have...

1  
2 AJ: You have two?  
3  
4 RS: We have two houses. We have houses in Philippines and a condo in Thailand because during  
5 that time, Andrea, we hoped really like, you know, we've been together 3 years and...  
6  
7 AJ: Yeah.  
8  
9 RS: ... oh what's the next plan?  
10  
11 AJ: So maybe he might move.  
12  
13 RS: Yeah.  
14  
15 AJ: He was maybe gonna move...  
16  
17 RS: Move there. The plan is like 6 months here and then go to the Philippines, you know, that's the  
18 plan. That's why we bought properties.  
19  
20 AJ: So you will still do that?  
21  
22 RS: In the future maybe, but right now I have to stay here for...  
23  
24 AJ: Yeah, for two years.  
25  
26 RS: ... for two years for the green card, you know.  
27  
28 AJ: Wow. That is fascinating. So tell me a little bit about growing up in the Philippines. Actually, let  
29 me ask you this. What is the earliest thing you remember in life? What's your first memory?  
30  
31 RS: When I was still young, my mom would always go to the office...  
32  
33 AJ: Mhm.  
34  
35 RS: ... you know, in the morning she would dress...  
36  
37 AJ: Your mother was an accountant.  
38  
39 RS: Yeah, she's an accountant. And every morning she would dress, put makeup, wear her heels, her  
40 skirt, and, you know...  
41  
42 AJ: Very beautiful.  
43  
44 RS: Very beautiful. You know, and smell so good. I was like, oh I want to be like my mom.  
45  
46 AJ: Oh wow.  
47

1 RS: You know, I was like 4 years old, 5 years old, I dress, you know. And then my auntie was taking  
2 care of me. She called me and was like, "Oh my god. You look just like your mom."  
3  
4 AJ: Like a little, like a girl.  
5  
6 RS: Like a girl.  
7  
8 AJ: Uhuh.  
9  
10 RS: And my, what you call it, she talked to my mom about it, and my mom said. "No, no he's my  
11 son. You know, he want to, he want to be a woman because he's my son."  
12  
13 AJ: Right.  
14  
15 RS: And my father was like, he's policeman so he's kind of strong, you know, and strict when it  
16 comes to, when it comes, we have rules in the house, you know, it's very discipline, discipline  
17 oriented person. But then he said that, "Just let, let him be who he wants to be when he grows  
18 up."  
19  
20 AJ: Really?  
21  
22 RS: He was really supportive about it.  
23  
24 AJ: Your father?  
25  
26 RS: My father.  
27  
28 AJ: When you're 4 years old.  
29  
30 RS: My mom is the one that I had like the trauma.  
31  
32 AJ: To convince? Uhuh.  
33  
34 RS: Yeah, we had a big fight...  
35  
36 AJ: Really?  
37  
38 RS: ... when I was coming out already.  
39  
40 AJ: Wow. Uhm, so you were 4 years old. You were watching your mother.  
41  
42 RS: Yeah.  
43  
44 AJ: Wearing her clothes sometimes. Uhm, did you have brothers and sisters?  
45  
46 RS: I do have a, I have my brother, I have two brothers and one sister as well.  
47



1 AJ: Mhm. And what do they think? Did they ever see you wearing your mother's clothing?  
2  
3 RS: Actually, yeah, they see me, it was like my brother, "Why are you wearing...?" It was just  
4 surprise.  
5  
6 AJ: Uhuh.  
7  
8 RS: You know, but what I love about my brother...  
9  
10 AJ: Are they younger or older?  
11  
12 RS: Younger. I'm the eldest.  
13  
14 AJ: Oh, you're the oldest.  
15  
16 RS: Yeah. My brother is three years younger than me but we were really, what, what I love about it  
17 is we're really close to each other.  
18  
19 AJ: Sure.  
20  
21 RS: You know, and then, my brothers are always the ones that protects me.  
22  
23 AJ: Oh.  
24  
25 RS: And what I love about my brother because my, my father really taught him that, "Whatever  
26 your, your, uhm, Ashlee wants to be when you grow up, you should always maintain the  
27 respect, you know..."  
28  
29 AJ: Wow.  
30  
31 RS: "... to her."  
32  
33 AJ: Wow.  
34  
35 RS: Or to him.  
36  
37 AJ: As an older...  
38  
39 RS: As an older sibling. That's why when me and my younger brother next to me, we fight.  
40  
41 AJ: Mhm.  
42  
43 RS: He will not really say that. Oh, "You're gay, you know, you belong on this." We had that. I'm  
44 really, really thankful. We only had something like, they get a little bit, uhm, intimidated when I,  
45 after my, my, my, uh, my surgery when I went back from Thailand. Like, it's like old woman  
46 already, they kind of feel like. They adjust for a while.  
47

1 AJ: Yeah.  
2  
3 RS: But after that the bond gets more closer.  
4  
5 AJ: Oh, good.  
6  
7 RS: Yeah.  
8  
9 AJ: So, uhm, so you had an intact family. Your mom and dad married.  
10  
11 RS: Yeah.  
12  
13 AJ: Brothers and sisters. What about school? Where did you go to school?  
14  
15 RS: Oh, uhm, the problem is the school.  
16  
17 AJ: Yeah.  
18  
19 RS: The schools in the Philippines are Catholic.  
20  
21 AJ: Mhm.  
22  
23 RS: You know, so it's like, when we were in high school we would put makup and, uh, our principle  
24 is a nun.  
25  
26 AJ: A nun?  
27  
28 RS: A nun.  
29  
30 AJ: Oh wow.  
31  
32 RS: Very, very strict.  
33  
34 AJ: Uhuh.  
35  
36 RS: You know, it was, would really get angry and, you know, you cannot do that one because you  
37 were born as a man.  
38  
39 AJ: Right.  
40  
41 RS: You know. God only created man and woman. That's really, you know, in my mind, it's the way  
42 that people say in the Philippines. You're always a he. You cannot. You will never be...  
43  
44 AJ: Even if you have surgery. Even if you...  
45  
46 RS: They will still call, there's...  
47

1 AJ: I mean, you look like a beautiful woman.  
2  
3 RS: Yeah, here in America, I really felt treated like a woman.  
4  
5 AJ: Uhuh.  
6  
7 RS: No, I never had experience when someone call me him or he, so far in the last eight months I  
8 never had experience. When I go...  
9  
10 AJ: Nobody would. They'd be crazy. People would think they're crazy if they said that.  
11  
12 RS: Yeah, when I went to the restroom no one has pulled me out.  
13  
14 AJ: Right.  
15  
16 RS: Except, when I was in the Philippines like me and my, we transitioned already, whether it was  
17 surgeries, we were at the restroom and we were forced to take, to be out of toilet.  
18  
19 AJ: How did they know?  
20  
21 RS: Culturally, they're very aware about it.  
22  
23 AJ: Really?  
24  
25 RS: Like here in the States, it's like... we're really forced to get out of the women's restroom.  
26  
27 AJ: Did they call the police?  
28  
29 RS: They called the security guard. We talk with the security guard, it's like why would we go to the  
30 man's, I mean, the man will harass us.  
31  
32 AJ: Yes.  
33  
34 RS: And how are we going to be in the men's restroom. I hope you would respect, you know, our, I  
35 talked to the security guard, "I respect you being a man. I hope you respect us for being..." but  
36 he said they would reply to us it's a policy in the company. I said, "No, let me talk to the  
37 manager."  
38  
39 AJ: Yeah.  
40  
41 RS: You know, we talked to the manager. The manager apologized to us, but they said that what can  
42 he do but he only, he's following the rules only of the...  
43  
44 AJ: Wow.  
45  
46 RS: And we don't have any laws in the Philippines, sad to say.  
47

1 AJ: To protect?  
2  
3 RS: To protect, like discrimination, we don't have that.  
4  
5 AJ: Are there people that are advocating for...  
6  
7 RS: Yeah, actually...  
8  
9 AJ: ... for your rights?  
10  
11 RS: That's the one that, uh, their advocating right now. We're passing the... there's a bill to be  
12 signed by the senators and the mayors of the Philippines.  
13  
14 AJ: Mhm.  
15  
16 RS: So I hope, I hope...  
17  
18 AJ: Things get better.  
19  
20 RS: ... things get better...  
21  
22 AJ: Yeah.  
23  
24 RS: ... because we need to move forward, you know.  
25  
26 AJ: Mhm.  
27  
28 RS: We're moving, we're moving backwards.  
29  
30 AJ: Yeah. I think so with this new administration we have here in the United States...  
31  
32 RS: [Laughs].  
33  
34 AJ: Uhm, were you involved in activism or...?  
35  
36 RS: No, I wasn't involved in there. I was, I was busy working in the Philippines before.  
37  
38 AJ: Yeah. What work did you do?  
39  
40 RS: I work as a customer service representative.  
41  
42 AJ: Oh really?  
43  
44 RS: Yeah.  
45  
46 AJ: For like a car rental agency?  
47

1 RS: Yeah, I worked for State Farm before.  
2  
3 AJ: Oh really? Okay.  
4  
5 RS: T-Mobile. Stuff like that.  
6  
7 AJ: Okay. Yeah.  
8  
9 RS: We have an online pharmacy as well. Like, you know, we ordered medicines, cigarettes, and  
10 other stuff. You know.  
11  
12 AJ: Oh wow.  
13  
14 RS: They went to, they go to Philippines for the inbound, for the call center but it's a lot cheaper,  
15 the wage.  
16  
17 AJ: Cheaper. Yeah, the wages.  
18  
19 RS: Yeah, and like here.  
20  
21 AJ: So they come to the Philippines.  
22  
23 RS: They come to the Philippines, and we speak English as our second language. We were colonized  
24 once with Americans so that's why they...  
25  
26 AJ: The Philippines?  
27  
28 RS: Yes.  
29  
30 AJ: Really? Not French?  
31  
32 RS: No. French is, uh, Thailand.  
33  
34 AJ: Thailand.  
35  
36 RS: No, no, no, uhm, Cambodia and Laos. We were colonized Spain, Japan, and last is the, uh,  
37 United States.  
38  
39 AJ: Wow.  
40  
41 RS: That's why we speak English.  
42  
43 AJ: Mhm. [Laughs].  
44  
45 RS: You know.  
46

1 AJ: Yeah. Uhm, wow, I didn't know this political history. When did the United States leave? Do you  
2 know?  
3  
4 RS: It's in the '90s because until now we still have the American base in America.  
5  
6 AJ: Mhm.  
7  
8 RS: And we were almost become a colony, of, uh, we will become a state of America, uh, one of the  
9 territories. Yeah, because we were close to Guam...  
10  
11 AJ: Right.  
12  
13 RS: ... Hawaii, is like six hours flight.  
14  
15 AJ: Okay. So it's not very far.  
16  
17 RS: It's not very far. You know.  
18  
19 AJ: Uhm, so I imagine in your hometown, like, did you live by the beach? Did you...  
20  
21 RS: Yes. Yeah, we...  
22  
23 AJ: Did you go to the beach?  
24  
25 RS: Every, a lot, you know, that's why we're really, really tan. [Laughs]. Yeah, so it's like our house is  
26 near...  
27  
28 AJ: Do you get darker than you are now?  
29  
30 RS: Yeah. More darker. And I didn't know that when I got here in America, that is really beautiful on  
31 you in your eyes here in the states.  
32  
33 AJ: Yeah.  
34  
35 RS: In the Philippines we like to get white.  
36  
37 AJ: Really?  
38  
39 RS: We have, we have some, we take capsules, whitening capsules, bleaching soap...  
40  
41 AJ: Really?  
42  
43 RS: ... bleaching for us to get white.  
44  
45 AJ: Oh, brown skin.  
46

- 1 RS: Brown skin is really sexy. You know, it's like when I was at the, when I was at Walgreens one  
2 day, they touch my skin, "How do you get that brown?" "It's natural because I'm Asian." "Oh my  
3 god. I spent thousands of dollars at a tanning session." I said, "Oh really? In our country we  
4 spend thousands for us to get white."  
5
- 6 AJ: Right.  
7
- 8 RS: Injections just to be white.  
9
- 10 AJ: Really?  
11
- 12 RS: You know, and we have operations on our nose to get same like America.  
13
- 14 AJ: Uhuh.  
15
- 16 RS: How ironic is it? [Laughs].  
17
- 18 AJ: Yeah, that's very ironic. It's very ironic. Uhm, so, you, you had a hard time in school, but you  
19 graduated.  
20
- 21 RS: I graduated with management.  
22
- 23 AJ: Okay, did you go to college?  
24
- 25 RS: Yes.  
26
- 27 AJ: Okay.  
28
- 29 RS: Yeah, I have bachelor's, four years degree of, uh, tourism, tourism management.  
30
- 31 AJ: Oh wow.  
32
- 33 RS: Yeah.  
34
- 35 AJ: Oh my goodness.  
36
- 37 RS: I work as, uh, a tourist guide when I was in Thailand for quite a while.  
38
- 39 AJ: Mhm.  
40
- 41 RS: Yeah. Before I move here.  
42
- 43 AJ: Did you like that?  
44
- 45 RS: I like because you, uh, you meet different types of people.  
46
- 47 AJ: Mhm.

1  
2 RS: You know, and, you guide them, you show them around. Show them the beautiful place, you  
3 know.  
4  
5 AJ: So was life better as a transgender person, was it better in Thailand or in the Philippines?  
6  
7 RS: Thailand.  
8  
9 AJ: Yeah.  
10  
11 RS: Thailand. Thailand is my second, Thailand for me is my home.  
12  
13 AJ: Uhuh.  
14  
15 RS: As a transgender, they're really open.  
16  
17 AJ: Really?  
18  
19 RS: Because it's a way of life. Their beliefs is like whatever gender you have, whatever gender you  
20 really want to be, as long as you do good to others, they believe much in karma.  
21  
22 AJ: Right.  
23  
24 RS: It will go back into you. If you do good to people, you'll receive something good in the end.  
25  
26 AJ: Mhm.  
27  
28 RS: You know, it's really accepting, and, uhm, you'll see many transgender working there as like, as  
29 a, uhm, they work in the hotels, the flight attendants...  
30  
31 AJ: Mhm.  
32  
33 RS: You know, it's not the same in the Philippines. Like your options are very limited.  
34  
35 AJ: Yeah. Just in the salons.  
36  
37 RS: Like in the salon, you know. Others work in the...  
38  
39 AJ: Sex work.  
40  
41 RS: Sex worker.  
42  
43 AJ: Mhm.  
44  
45 RS: The streets.  
46  
47 AJ: Sex worker is kind of a big deal in Thailand.



1  
2 RS: In Thailand too, but in Thailand they have this, they have a, they have a... a bar...  
3  
4 AJ: Mhm.  
5  
6 RS: ... for transgender. In the Philippines we don't have.  
7  
8 AJ: Oh really?  
9  
10 RS: There's a, there's a, they call it ladyboys.  
11  
12 AJ: Ladyboys.  
13  
14 RS: They have ladyboys. In Thailand they have a ladyboy bar in Thailand.  
15  
16 AJ: Okay.  
17  
18 RS: In the Philippines, no. The church will be very angry with that.  
19  
20 AJ: Really?  
21  
22 RS: Yeah, the church plays a big part, politically in the Philippines. Like in Thailand they're more  
23 accepting.  
24  
25 AJ: Hm. Wow. Uhm, so when did you first realize that you were not the gender you were assigned  
26 at birth?  
27  
28 RS: When I was like 4, 5 years old, 6 years old at that time.  
29  
30 AJ: So the same time you, that's your earliest memory.  
31  
32 RS: Yeah, that's the earliest memory that, you know, my mom when we go dancing, we do dancing  
33 at the school, at a field demonstration, you know, United Nations celebration, I'm gonna be  
34 paired with a girl.  
35  
36 AJ: Mhm.  
37  
38 RS: I don't like it because I want to be the girl.  
39  
40 AJ: Really? [Laughs].  
41  
42 RS: Yeah, we do the practice, and I would wear the heels of my partner. You know I would wear  
43 heels and put lipstick.  
44  
45 AJ: Oh wow.  
46

1 RS: And my mom caught me, "Oh my god. That's why all my lipsticks got broken already because  
2 you'd been using it." I said, "No, no I didn't not." I cry.  
3  
4 AJ: Right. [Laughs].  
5  
6 RS: And my sister's barbie dolls, I took it.  
7  
8 AJ: Uhuh.  
9  
10 RS: And I comb it.  
11  
12 AJ: Oh wow.  
13  
14 RS: I hid it inside my room.  
15  
16 AJ: Oh my goodness.  
17  
18 RS: Oh my god this is really cute.  
19  
20 AJ: So you're a very, uh, you know, you knew what you were. And then you transitioned.  
21  
22 RS: 17.  
23  
24 AJ: At 17.  
25  
26 RS: When I was in college, you know, I started taking hormones.  
27  
28 AJ: Mhm.  
29  
30 RS: And I worked on going to the doctor, a psychiatrist, a psycho— a psychiatrist to have the letter  
31 and... And like here you need to have the blood test.  
32  
33 AJ: Yeah.  
34  
35 RS: You need to have the, uhm, prescription.  
36  
37 AJ: Mhm.  
38  
39 RS: Letter from your doctor to buy hormones.  
40  
41 AJ: Right.  
42  
43 RS: You can buy over the counter.  
44  
45 AJ: Oh wow.  
46  
47 RS: Yes.

1  
2 AJ: Really?  
3  
4 RS: Yeah, so it's like at 17 we started taking hormones to inject.  
5  
6 AJ: Mhm.  
7  
8 RS: That's how young in the Philippines, you know.  
9  
10 AJ: Transgender.  
11  
12 RS: Yeah, you know, we don't need to go to the doctor to get— Unlike here, when I move here I  
13 need to go to Smiley's...  
14  
15 AJ: Right.  
16  
17 RS: I didn't get, I didn't get letter anymore. They just look at me and say, "Oh, you don't need a  
18 letter. We'll just have some tests, you know, that's it."  
19  
20 AJ: Sure.  
21  
22 RS: And then they prescribe me the medicine.  
23  
24 AJ: Mhm.  
25  
26 RS: So...  
27  
28 AJ: Is it more expensive here or in the Philippines?  
29  
30 RS: It is more expensive here but we have good insurance.  
31  
32 AJ: Oh, okay.  
33  
34 RS: I'm thankful for insurance. We only pay like, I only pay like \$3 on one for the..  
35  
36 AJ: \$3?  
37  
38 RS: Yeah, for the hormones.  
39  
40 AJ: Yeah, wow. That's good. [Laughs].  
41  
42 RS: [Laughs]. I thought it was...  
43  
44 AJ: So your husband's insurance covers your hormones?  
45  
46 RS: Yeah.  
47

1 AJ: Yeah, wow.  
2  
3 RS: My husband's insurance.  
4  
5 AJ: That's great.  
6  
7 RS: Yeah.  
8  
9 AJ: Uhm, what has been some of the positive things for you since you decided to transition and to  
10 really express your true gender identity?  
11  
12 RS: I become more confident.  
13  
14 AJ: Mhm.  
15  
16 RS: And really happy inside me.  
17  
18 AJ: Yeah.  
19  
20 RS: Because when I was still a young boy, you know, I could really feel that, you know, I really  
21 prayed that, I really tried my best to still be a man, but then when I was growing up I felt like all,  
22 this is not really me.  
23  
24 AJ: Right.  
25  
26 RS: You know, so, after I transition I become more strong.  
27  
28 AJ: Mhm.  
29  
30 RS: You know, to face the world. Being transgender, it's not easy. You'll have the discrimination. You  
31 get being bullied, you know, being judged.  
32  
33 AJ: Mhm.  
34  
35 RS: I think that's really typical if you're a transgender. There are really incidents that you cannot  
36 avoid. You'll be discriminated sometimes.  
37  
38 AJ: Sure.  
39  
40 RS: You know, but because of that, my experiences, it made me a lot more stronger, become more  
41 proud of being me.  
42  
43 AJ: Mhm.  
44  
45 RS: It's like I'm not afraid anymore. I mean, you could throw anything about me.  
46  
47 AJ: Wow.

1  
2 RS: You know, you could throw anything at me, and I have myself. I have my family who have my  
3 back and my husband.  
4  
5 AJ: Mhm.  
6  
7 RS: I've noticed that I've become more, uh, I'm not scared to express what I feel, you know.  
8  
9 AJ: Wow. That's, that's huge.  
10  
11 RS: Yeah, that's really huge. Especially living in a Catholic country.  
12  
13 AJ: Uhuh.  
14  
15 RS: You know.  
16  
17 AJ: Yeah, cause they try to make you more subdued.  
18  
19 RS: Yes.  
20  
21 AJ: Not speak up.  
22  
23 RS: Yeah, and not speak up, you know, no laws protecting us...  
24  
25 AJ: Mhm.  
26  
27 RS: You know, and they're forcing you... or they will, that they want you to be, and you know to  
28 yourself..  
29  
30 AJ: Who you are.  
31  
32 RS: I know myself, who I am. You don't need to, you don't need to preach me.  
33  
34 AJ: Right.  
35  
36 RS: You know. You can condemn me. You know, you can condemn us all you want, you know.  
37  
38 AJ: Mhm.  
39  
40 RS: But, we're just being ourself.  
41  
42 AJ: Yeah.  
43  
44 RS: There is nothing wrong if you are transgender...  
45  
46 AJ: No.  
47

1 RS: ... gay, lesbian, you know.  
2  
3 AJ: No, it's beautiful.  
4  
5 RS: It's beautiful.  
6  
7 AJ: Mhm.  
8  
9 RS: You know, being different is really beautiful.  
10  
11 AJ: Yeah. What have been some of the challenges that you have faced since you've come out? I  
12 mean, I know you talked about some harassment in the Philippines. They call you he...  
13  
14 RS: Yeah.  
15  
16 AJ: ... sir, but have there been other challenges?  
17  
18 RS: The other challenges is finding a really, a job that you want, you know? Like in the Philippines I  
19 want to work at the hotel. They will interview me, but they would say that, "Oh, you're really  
20 qualified for the job, but we only accept men and women."  
21  
22 AJ: Really?  
23  
24 RS: They would really say that to you. That really hurts.  
25  
26 AJ: Yes.  
27  
28 RS: Because I talked to them, I would send, my response would be like, "Does it make me less of a  
29 person that I am a transgender?"  
30  
31 AJ: Mhm.  
32  
33 RS: Or, you know, and they would say that, "It's really our policy." You know, that's really the  
34 challenges. That's why, uh, we will accept you but you need to cut your hair and dress like a man  
35 and stop the hormones that you are taking. We only accept man and woman in this company.  
36  
37 AJ: Wow.  
38  
39 RS: That's really, that's really the challenge for all the transgender in the Philippines. That's why  
40 after I tried my best to work there but I couldn't really find a good job so I moved to Thailand.  
41  
42 AJ: Mhm.  
43  
44 RS: And they really like me there. They're very, very happy with, because they like when you can  
45 speak English...  
46  
47 AJ: Yeah.

1  
2 RS: ... they don't really speak English that much there...  
3  
4 AJ: Uhuh.  
5  
6 RS: ... unlike the Philippines so when I applied for being a guide, a tourist guide, and it's really my  
7 dream job to do that, and I got accepted.  
8  
9 AJ: Cause tourists come from all over the world.  
10  
11 RS: All over the world.  
12  
13 AJ: Mhm.  
14  
15 RS: It's very accepting. More tourists compared to Philippines.  
16  
17 AJ: Okay.  
18  
19 RS: You know, so. That's why I felt like home, like my second home. I am, I can be who I want to be  
20 in this country. And I had my surgeries there. And it's like, they're very, very open.  
21  
22 AJ: Wow.  
23  
24 RS: In our country, when you live there and you have a tattoo, they would think that, they look, they  
25 see you as, they look down on you.  
26  
27 AJ: Really?  
28  
29 RS: Yeah.  
30  
31 AJ: Tell me about your medical interventions, if you don't mind talking about it. Uhm...  
32  
33 RS: Yeah, I had my like 7 years ago I started hormones.  
34  
35 AJ: Mhm.  
36  
37 RS: Then after like 3 year, 4 years after I went to Thailand had my breast surgery.  
38  
39 AJ: Mhm.  
40  
41 RS: And then after I had my hip surgery, my hips done as well.  
42  
43 AJ: When you say your hips, what does that mean?  
44  
45 RS: It's like they inject silicone.  
46  
47 AJ: Oh, okay.

1  
2 RS: I had like three sessions there.  
3  
4 AJ: Mhm.  
5  
6 RS: Yeah.  
7  
8 AJ: Did it make you feel more curvy?  
9  
10 RS: Yeah, it does.  
11  
12 AJ: [Laughs].  
13  
14 RS: You know, cause I was thinking at that time for a long time that I need to move to the next part.  
15 You know, and it's a lot cheaper and safer there in Thailand, you know.  
16  
17 AJ: Yeah, wow, so are you happy with your body now?  
18  
19 RS: I am really happy.  
20  
21 AJ: Do you think you need, try for more surgeries or?  
22  
23 RS: I think so to, uhm, actually I talked to my husband about it, and he said, "It's okay. You have the  
24 privilege if you wanna have done here in America or, you know, if you want to go back to  
25 Thailand, you can go back." But we've got to wait for the green card because once, I cannot,  
26 once I get out of the country...  
27  
28 AJ: You may not come back.  
29  
30 RS: I cannot come back anymore.  
31  
32 AJ: Yeah. Uhm, so if you had more surgery, would it be like vaginoplasty?  
33  
34 RS: Yeah, that's really my, my next, my next operation that I wanted to do.  
35  
36 AJ: Mhm.  
37  
38 RS: Yeah.  
39  
40 AJ: Are you afraid?  
41  
42 RS: A little bit. I am, I am praying about it. Yeah, from time to time, you know, to guide me, and, you  
43 know, spiritually, you know. And then but, you know, I'm ready emotionally.  
44  
45 AJ: Yeah. So you, you grew up in a Catholic country.  
46  
47 RS: Yeah.



1  
2 AJ: You went to Catholic schools. Are you, do you, are you a practicing Catholic person or do you  
3 see yourself as a religious person?  
4  
5 RS: No, not that much, but I still pray.  
6  
7 AJ: Mhm.  
8  
9 RS: You know, some of my Catholic beliefs are still there. You know, but not really religiously. Like  
10 here we go to the church but the Unity Church.  
11  
12 AJ: Oh, okay.  
13  
14 RS: Where they're more accepting.  
15  
16 AJ: I like Unity Church.  
17  
18 RS: I like, it's really, uhm, open.  
19  
20 AJ: Uhuh.  
21  
22 RS: You know, they're very accepting.  
23  
24 AJ: Which one do you go to? In Bloomington or?  
25  
26 RS: Uh.  
27  
28 AJ: Golden Valley?  
29  
30 RS: Golden Valley. We go there. There's a place where we always go.  
31  
32 AJ: Mhm. There's good people there?  
33  
34 RS: Good, very welcoming. Very welcoming. Every Saturday we go. I go there with my husband.  
35  
36 AJ: Are you, so for service or to pray or?  
37  
38 RS: To pray and for service as well.  
39  
40 AJ: Uhuh. On Saturday?  
41  
42 RS: Oh Sunday, Sunday.  
43  
44 AJ: Oh, okay. Uhm, are you involved with the church other than just going?  
45  
46 RS: No.  
47

1 AJ: Do you volunteer there?  
2  
3 RS: No, no.  
4  
5 AJ: [Laughs]. I'm just asking. It's not, you know, I'm not saying that you should or that you have to  
6 but, you know, sometimes I know that, uhm, you know, when you're new to a place sometimes  
7 volunteering is a good way to meet people.  
8  
9 RS: Yeah, actually, uhm, I'm still learning to drive. That's a problem.  
10  
11 AJ: Oh, okay.  
12  
13 RS: I really love to, in our country we don't drive that much.  
14  
15 AJ: Right.  
16  
17 RS: We have, we have the train, bicycles, jeepney, jeepneies are our number one, our primary  
18 mode, mode...  
19  
20 AJ: What is it?  
21  
22 RS: Jeepney.  
23  
24 AJ: Jee— oh, a taxi.  
25  
26 RS: Yeah but bigger.  
27  
28 AJ: Uhuh.  
29  
30 RS: That's our mode of transportation in the Philippines.  
31  
32 AJ: Jeepney.  
33  
34 RS: Yeah, we don't really drive. Tricycle. We have the tricycle. That's our mode of transportation.  
35  
36 AJ: Right. When someone's driving in and you're sitting.  
37  
38 RS: Yeah, in Asia that's how we are or the train.  
39  
40 AJ: Uhuh.  
41  
42 RS: You know? So when I move here it's like another big adjustment.  
43  
44 AJ: Yeah. Everybody is driving.  
45  
46 RS: Everybody is driving in America. 16 or 17 years old, you drive a car.  
47

1 AJ: Right.  
2  
3 RS: In our country, you know, only if you drive.  
4  
5 AJ: Right.  
6  
7 RS: Only if you can be allowed, if you can be given the chance to loan a car.  
8  
9 AJ: Yeah.  
10  
11 RS: It's not the same in our country.  
12  
13 AJ: Mhm.  
14  
15 RS: You can loan a car, you can get credit card. We pay in cash there mostly.  
16  
17 AJ: Right. Yeah.  
18  
19 RS: So it's really a big adjustment.  
20  
21 AJ: So it's a big deal to get a car in the Philippines.  
22  
23 RS: It's, it's a big deal.  
24  
25 AJ: Yeah.  
26  
27 RS: You know, even student loan.  
28  
29 AJ: Mhm.  
30  
31 RS: You know, you'll be the one to go to the banks and ask. Here they will want to call you asking for  
32 a student loan.  
33  
34 AJ: Right. [Laughs].  
35  
36 RS: It's very different.  
37  
38 AJ: Yeah.  
39  
40 RS: So, but then I started to, I help my friends at the Thai celebration, Thai temples, you know...  
41  
42 AJ: Oh wow.  
43  
44 RS: ... because she can give me a ride, and we get to bond.  
45  
46 AJ: Yeah.  
47

1 RS: And Thai culture has been very close to me.  
2  
3 AJ: You, you lived in Thailand.  
4  
5 RS: I can speak Thai as well.  
6  
7 AJ: Uhuh. And Sakura. I interviewed her. She's from Thailand.  
8  
9 RS: She's from Thailand. Yeah, but she grew up here in the states.  
10  
11 AJ: Uhuh.  
12  
13 RS: So we got the bond, the click, the connection, you know so we went to the temple last week.  
14 We've been helping each other to decorate.  
15  
16 AJ: Mhm.  
17  
18 RS: You know. And like this coming Saturday we're going to do some, uhm, Thai culture  
19 presentation, modeling at the Mall of America.  
20  
21 AJ: Oh really?  
22  
23 RS: Yeah. I'll be wearing some Thai costumes with the headdress and gowns.  
24  
25 AJ: Oh my goodness! I wish I could get a picture of that.  
26  
27 RS: Yeah, like last week we had a presentation as well at the Excel Energy with the, uh, for the  
28 Festival of Nations. Yes, I was there for like 3 days, and we were wearing the costumes so it's  
29 good, you know.  
30  
31 AJ: Uhuh. Yeah you guys looked really beautiful at the May Day parade.  
32  
33 RS: At the May Day parade. We went to the May Day parade, yeah.  
34  
35 AJ: Yeah.  
36  
37 RS: So it's really good that, you know, I get to go out, involved, you know.  
38  
39 AJ: Meet a lot of people.  
40  
41 RS: Meet a lot of people.  
42  
43 AJ: So what's life like, you're married to an American? Is he white?  
44  
45 RS: Yeah, he's white.  
46

1 AJ: He's white. So, how is his family, do they accept you? Do they respect you? Do they treat you  
2 well?  
3  
4 RS: Yeah, his mom and dad already died...  
5  
6 AJ: Okay.  
7  
8 RS: ... 6 years, uh, 7 years ago.  
9  
10 AJ: Okay.  
11  
12 RS: And, then, uhm, his brother is in California.  
13  
14 AJ: So you don't see him?  
15  
16 RS: We don't see him very much but we went to see his, uhm, his nephews...  
17  
18 AJ: Mhm.  
19  
20 RS: ... and the family at Phoenix. We went to Phoenix on my birthday.  
21  
22 AJ: Uhuh.  
23  
24 RS: We celebrated my birthday. We went to Los Vegas for my birthday.  
25  
26 AJ: Oh nice.  
27  
28 RS: And then after two days we went to Phoenix to meet the family.  
29  
30 AJ: Sure.  
31  
32 RS: And they're very nice. They're very accepting. They didn't even know that I'm a transgender...  
33  
34 AJ: They don't know, right?  
35  
36 RS: ... until I told them.  
37  
38 AJ: Oh, you did tell them?  
39  
40 RS: Yeah. Because he's an honest person, so I didn't want to...  
41  
42 AJ: Absolutely, I'm not trying to...  
43  
44 RS: And they're family.  
45  
46 AJ: Yeah.  
47

1 RS: You know, and even if we haven't met yet before. We only contact, uh, through my husband but  
2 I treat them as my family. So when I met them, we had dinner. We went to their house. We had  
3 barbecue.  
4  
5 AJ: Yeah.  
6  
7 RS: It's like my late celebration of my birthday.  
8  
9 AJ: Uhuh.  
10  
11 RS: We had cake so it was really fun, and I told them that I'm transgender. And they were shocked,  
12 "Oh, really?" They don't even know.  
13  
14 AJ: They don't even know what to say.  
15  
16 RS: They don't know what to say, but, and they gave me a hug, and, you know, it doesn't matter as  
17 long as they see my husband really happy.  
18  
19 AJ: Yeah.  
20  
21 RS: You know, I took care of him.  
22  
23 AJ: Mhm.  
24  
25 RS: And they said that, and actually, uh, they've been wanting us to move to Phoenix.  
26  
27 AJ: Oh really?  
28  
29 RS: Yep, it's really warm.  
30  
31 AJ: It's warm there, like the Philippines.  
32  
33 RS: Like the Philippines. And there's a lot...  
34  
35 AJ: There's no water. There's no ocean or anything.  
36  
37 RS: There's no ocean but, uhm, but there's a lot of Philippine communities as well.  
38  
39 AJ: Oh really?  
40  
41 RS: Yeah, there's Philippine restaurants unlike here. There's no Philippine restaurant.  
42  
43 AJ: There are none?  
44  
45 RS: There are none. [Laughs]. But I've met some few, uh.  
46  
47 AJ: But there are Thai restaurants.

1  
2 RS: Thai, Vietnamese, and Laos.  
3  
4 AJ: And Laos.  
5  
6 RS: Laos, it's a big Laos community here.  
7  
8 AJ: Mhm. Hmong.  
9  
10 RS: Hmong. Yeah, Hmong. Laos, yeah. So they've been inviting, "When are you moving?" I said like, I  
11 said to my husband, "I would like to move here," but, uhm, I don't know what you call this, uhm,  
12 my only problem is with the medical insurance. My husband's job is really good here.  
13  
14 AJ: Yeah.  
15  
16 RS: So, it's like we don't pay much, and like, you know...  
17  
18 AJ: You get a lot of benefits.  
19  
20 RS: I get lots of benefits, you know, so. That's one thing, and I kind of, we might go to July on  
21 Colorado and after we go to Arizona, I want to see how it is in summer.  
22  
23 AJ: Yeah.  
24  
25 RS: Cause they're telling me it's really hot...  
26  
27 AJ: It's really hot.  
28  
29 RS: ... and no humidity.  
30  
31 AJ: Yeah.  
32  
33 RS: And I was like, I don't want to experience that one, for if, maybe I'll get back, I'm still a snow  
34 bird.  
35  
36 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs].  
37  
38 RS: [Laughs]. And plus I'm meeting some friends here.  
39  
40 AJ: Yeah.  
41  
42 RS: Like Sakura. We hang out with the Philippine people already so it's like.  
43  
44 AJ: You're starting to make your own here.  
45  
46 RS: Yeah. We will just stay around in an apartment right now. We will not move. We will not buy a  
47 house yet here.

1  
2 AJ: Right.  
3  
4 RS: Let's see first, let's go to July and when we get there, we can move there.  
5  
6 AJ: Yeah.  
7  
8 RS: Cause houses are a lot of...  
9  
10 AJ: They're more, they're a little cheaper now.  
11  
12 RS: Yeah, here. You know, but then the insurance, the medical insurance is really a big deal for me  
13 here, and my husband's job, you know.  
14  
15 AJ: And there's a really strong transgender community here that...  
16  
17 RS: Yeah. And they're more democrat, liberal here.  
18  
19 AJ: Yeah, it's very conservative in Phoenix.  
20  
21 RS: Very conservative in Phoenix, you know, so it's like I have to think about it.  
22  
23 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs]. How did you come out to them? What did you say?  
24  
25 RS: With?  
26  
27 AJ: To your family? To your...  
28  
29 RS: Actually we were talking, actually my husband already told them.  
30  
31 AJ: Okay.  
32  
33 RS: You know, but then I talked to them... I was sharing my story. They were really amazing, you  
34 know, how my husband and I met, you know...  
35  
36 AJ: Mhm.  
37  
38 RS: ... 6 years.  
39  
40 AJ: That's a long time.  
41  
42 RS: that was a long time. I almost give up before.  
43  
44 AJ: Mhm.  
45  
46 RS: You know, there's no hope for us to get married, you know.  
47



1 AJ: Right.  
2  
3 RS: And then they were telling me. They were asking me the question, his nephew, "Why didn't you  
4 get married in Philippines?"  
5  
6 AJ: Mhm.  
7  
8 RS: So I answered that. We live in a Catholic country. Same sex marriage will not really be  
9 acknowledged. They were like [give dumbfounded look]. It puzzled them.  
10  
11 AJ: Yeah, cause they're like, you're not...  
12  
13 RS: I'm like, "I'm a transgender." "Oh, yeah, yeah," you know, "You are." And the wife said, "You're  
14 a transgender?" "Yeah, I'm a transgender. That's why we cannot get married in our country."  
15  
16 AJ: Mhm.  
17  
18 RS: We cannot apply for a spousal visa in the Philippines, you know. He needs to petition here in  
19 America. I can't get a visa there. And they were like, "Oh, okay." And I explained to them.  
20  
21 AJ: Mhm. So like your family now, your mom, your dad, I know you said you have struggles with  
22 your mom.  
23  
24 RS: Yeah.  
25  
26 AJ: Where is it now?  
27  
28 RS: Oh, they're very happy, actually, uhm, like, uhm, before I had my surgery, she bought me  
29 makeup.  
30  
31 AJ: Yeah.  
32  
33 RS: You know, she called me she, daughter.  
34  
35 AJ: Wow. Okay. That's good. That makes you smile.  
36  
37 RS: That makes me smile. And it takes, it will really take some time for the parents to accept. I  
38 understand because, but I made a promise to them that I'm going to finish my, my degree that I  
39 am going to work and save money, buy a house. I made a promise to them that, you know, I will  
40 really, I made a promise.  
41  
42 AJ: You're gonna live a good life.  
43  
44 RS: I'm gonna live a good life. I'm gonna take care of myself.  
45  
46 AJ: Contribute to society.  
47

1 RS: Uh, and not to do drugs because drugs are really a big problem in our country.  
2  
3 AJ: Right.  
4  
5 RS: Yeah. That's why, that's the promise I made to them that I will not do, I will not do drugs and I  
6 will finish my school.  
7  
8 AJ: Sure.  
9  
10 RS: And I'm really happy right now that I am, I am a, have my dreams come true.  
11  
12 AJ: Did they come to the wedding?  
13  
14 RS: No, they cannot because you need to apply for a visa.  
15  
16 AJ: Okay.  
17  
18 RS: You know. It's not the same as a passport where you can go where ever you want. You just show  
19 your passport.  
20  
21 AJ: Right.  
22  
23 RS: It's different when you live in a third world country, you know.  
24  
25 AJ: Mhm.  
26  
27 RS: So you need to apply for a... maybe after two years I can petition them to come here for a visit.  
28  
29 AJ: Sure.  
30  
31 RS: Yeah.  
32  
33 AJ: Uhm, did you have a big wedding?  
34  
35 RS: Just simple, but I had a gown, I wear my gown.  
36  
37 AJ: Uhuh.  
38  
39 RS: And, uh, we had, uh, we only had two, uhm, because we're still adjusting, we're new here. I just,  
40 I just arrived after 15 days, we have to get married because you only have like 90 days upon  
41 arrival to be married.  
42  
43 AJ: Oh, okay.  
44  
45 RS: Or else...  
46  
47 AJ: No time to plan.

1  
2 RS: No time to plan. I only have like 90 days or else you get sent back home.  
3  
4 AJ: Mhm.  
5  
6 RS: So we really rushed the wedding like that. You know, but I still wear my gown.  
7  
8 AJ: I wish I could get a picture. Send me a picture of you and your husband.  
9  
10 RS: Yeah. I'm going to. I'm going to send that to you. Yeah. It's really my, it really made me cry cause  
11 in my country I cannot have, I cannot, it's not acknowledged.  
12  
13 AJ: Right.  
14  
15 RS: You cannot have this. But here I can have my gender marker changed.  
16  
17 AJ: Mhm.  
18  
19 RS: I can have my name changed?  
20  
21 AJ: Have you done all of those things yet?  
22  
23 RS: We're still waiting for the green card.  
24  
25 AJ: Okay.  
26  
27 RS: Once it's all settled.  
28  
29 AJ: Then you can make those changes.  
30  
31 RS: Yeah, it's really like a dream come true because in my country, I cannot do that.  
32  
33 AJ: Mhm.  
34  
35 RS: You know. So it's like, oh, really, I still feel lucky that I'm in America.  
36  
37 AJ: I remember talking to Jena, and she was saying she moved to, uhm, San Francisco. She was able  
38 to get a driver's license.  
39  
40 RS: Yes.  
41  
42 AJ: And, uhm, you know, she...  
43  
44 RS: And her gender marker changed.  
45  
46 AJ: Right. You know, she was a model.  
47

1 RS: Yeah.  
2  
3 AJ: Right. Uhm, very famous model.  
4  
5 RS: Yeah.  
6  
7 AJ: Uh, but, she couldn't work until she got all of that kind of taken care of.  
8  
9 RS: Yeah. It really takes some time, especially when you move here this way. Uhm, the lawyer told  
10 us that, uh, we just have to wait because it's really taking some time because of the government  
11 right now. You know, but we called immigration, and they would say that it's being processed so  
12 we just have to wait.  
13  
14 AJ: Yeah. Good. I hope everything works out.  
15  
16 RS: I hope so too.  
17  
18 AJ: Yeah. Uhm, when's the first time you ever met another transgender person?  
19  
20 RS: In the Philippines or here?  
21  
22 AJ: Any. Anywhere. First time you ever met.  
23  
24 RS: Oh, I was, we were at the salon and my mom was having her hair and nails done. Then I saw  
25 transgender, uh, taking care of her. And I was just looking at her, and she's really feminine  
26 because, you know, she's taking hormones.  
27  
28 AJ: Right.  
29  
30 RS: And I was like, oh my god, that really inspires me.  
31  
32 AJ: Yeah.  
33  
34 RS: It opened my eyes. When I grow up I wanna be like her.  
35  
36 AJ: Uhuh.  
37  
38 RS: I wanna grow my hair long.  
39  
40 AJ: Right.  
41  
42 RS: And have her and have the breasts. After, after she takes, I mean after she's done, you know,  
43 when my mom, her boyfriend came.  
44  
45 AJ: Mhm.  
46  
47 RS: She has a Philippine boyfriend.

1  
2 AJ: Oh wow.  
3  
4 RS: It was, I wanna have it like that.  
5  
6 AJ: [Laughs].  
7  
8 RS: I wanna have, I wanna be like her.  
9  
10 AJ: Sure.  
11  
12 RS: And she looks really happy.  
13  
14 AJ: Did you meet her? Did you have the chance to meet her?  
15  
16 RS: I don't know.  
17  
18 AJ: Just saw her.  
19  
20 RS: I just saw her, but every time we go to that salon she's there, and I look at her. It's like she's my  
21 idol.  
22  
23 AJ: Right.  
24  
25 RS: I wanna be like this lady. She's really, really feminine. And the way she takes care of herself, and  
26 the way she takes care of people, you know. She's like my role model at that time.  
27  
28 AJ: Wow.  
29  
30 RS: She inspires me. Oh when I grew up, when I am 17 after, you know, when I be at college, I want  
31 to start the hormones.  
32  
33 AJ: Wow. Did you, so what is the first transgender person you met here in the United States then?  
34  
35 RS: The first transgender I think it, we were at the mall. I was at Target...  
36  
37 AJ: Mhm.  
38  
39 RS: ... you know, and I knew she was a transgender. I can sense.  
40  
41 AJ: You can tell.  
42  
43 RS: Yes, I can tell. And she just goes into the makeup section, and she says, she asks me, "Where's  
44 the, do you know like, where, about lipsticks," something like that.  
45  
46 AJ: Right.  
47

1 RS: And then I talked to her. And I saw, and I look at her. She's really confident.  
2  
3 AJ: Mhm.  
4  
5 RS: She's African American.  
6  
7 AJ: Oh really?  
8  
9 RS: Yeah, but she's really beautiful, you know, she has really curvy body...  
10  
11 AJ: Yeah.  
12  
13 RS: ... and big ass.  
14  
15 AJ: Oh my goodness.  
16  
17 RS: She's so sexy, you know. And she was talking to me, you know, I was like, oh, okay.  
18  
19 AJ: What's her name? Do you know?  
20  
21 RS: No, I didn't. We were just talking about makeup.  
22  
23 AJ: Just talking about makeup.  
24  
25 RS: Yeah, she was just really friendly to me like, "Hi, how are you doing? Do you know where the  
26 section on the map where lipstick?"  
27  
28 AJ: Mhm.  
29  
30 RS: "Oh, I think it's in the next isle." You know I talked to her and then after.  
31  
32 AJ: Mhm.  
33  
34 RS: We were talking already. I said, "Oh, you have really sexy body."  
35  
36 AJ: Oh, wow.  
37  
38 RS: She said, "Actually I'm feeling fat because of winter."  
39  
40 AJ: Oh, okay.  
41  
42 RS: "I get more comfortable eating inside the house." And that's how the conversation started.  
43  
44 AJ: Right.  
45  
46 RS: Then after I went to the, uh, Minnesota Transgender Coalition Support Group. That's where I  
47 made Rox, Sakura, Shimmer, and other.

1  
2 AJ: Uhuh.  
3  
4 RS: That's the time I get involved here.  
5  
6 AJ: Shimmer. S.H.I.M.M.E.R.?  
7  
8 RS: Yeah, yeah, Shimmer.  
9  
10 AJ: Rox. R.O.X. [Laughs].  
11  
12 RS: Yeah. Rox and Sakura. S.A.K.U.R.A.  
13  
14 AJ: Yeah, yeah.  
15  
16 RS: They're really, uhm, they're really friendly.  
17  
18 AJ: Mhm.  
19  
20 RS: You know, they told to me, "Oh, you're new here," you know, uhm, like we went to the Laverne  
21 Cox...  
22  
23 AJ: Yeah?  
24  
25 RS: Yeah. They invited me, I mean, they told me about it. So it's good to get involved.  
26  
27 AJ: Yeah. Do you think you will ever volunteer or work with any transgender organizations to make  
28 life better for trans people?  
29  
30 RS: Yeah, I would love to. I really, I would love to get involved with that.  
31  
32 AJ: Uhuh. Have you ever done it before?  
33  
34 RS: No, I haven't.  
35  
36 AJ: In the Philippines, in Thailand?  
37  
38 RS: I haven't done that in the Philippines or Thailand because it's more different there. It's more  
39 strong here.  
40  
41 AJ: Mhm.  
42  
43 RS: You know, you're more politically, uhm...  
44  
45 AJ: Engaged.  
46  
47 RS: ... engaged here.

1  
2 AJ: Yeah.  
3  
4 RS: You know, because you have your laws here. You're very lucky. American people are really  
5 lucky, you're really lucky here actually when it comes to that. You're very fortunate that, you  
6 know, you live in a, you live in this country.  
7  
8 AJ: Well, a lot of people think we don't have enough rights in this country.  
9  
10 RS: Yeah, but...  
11  
12 AJ: And they're fighting for more rights.  
13  
14 RS: Yeah. But actually you have the right, you have, you have it here, you know, you just have to  
15 fight more. You know, but I really wanted to participate to that.  
16  
17 AJ: Mhm. Yeah, well there's lots of opportunities. Uhm, so in, in the Philippines, it's kind of like,  
18 based on what you're telling me like people don't see different between gay or transgender or  
19 lesbian. Are there lesbians?  
20  
21 RS: Yeah, actually they call us all gay.  
22  
23 AJ: Right, everybody is gay.  
24  
25 RS: Everybody is gay. But here it's different.  
26  
27 AJ: Even the women are gay.  
28  
29 RS: Yeah, even though she's, she's a lesbian you'll always hear gay. We transgender is still gay.  
30  
31 AJ: Still gay.  
32  
33 RS: And when we have the pageant, they call it Mrs. Gay.  
34  
35 AJ: Oh really?  
36  
37 RS: Pageant for transgender is gay.  
38  
39 AJ: Is gay. [Laughs].  
40  
41 RS: But in Thailand it's different.  
42  
43 AJ: Right.  
44  
45 RS: Miss Stephanie, Miss, uhm, Miss Universe, Miss Super Universe, Miss Beautiful Trans. That's  
46 how it is there. But in the Philippines all gay.  
47



1 AJ: Oh wow. [Laughs].  
2  
3 RS: And the pronouns, it's like, it's not that important compared to here. It really matters here. Like  
4 the she, when you call a transgender she, like in the Philippines, you're still a he. They call you  
5 mister.  
6  
7 AJ: Mm.  
8  
9 RS: It's really sad sometimes. It hurts, you know.  
10  
11 AJ: Yeah. Uhm, I remember talking to Jena again, and she would tell me that, you know, they would  
12 have, uhm, in her city, in her town, they would have all these pageants for transgender people  
13 all the time, and they would sometimes even be on television.  
14  
15 RS: Yes.  
16  
17 AJ: Is it like that in your community?  
18  
19 RS: Yes. Same.  
20  
21 AJ: Okay.  
22  
23 RS: But, what you call it, is there Miss Gay, you know, it's not good.  
24  
25 AJ: Cause you're not gay.  
26  
27 RS: We're not gay, you know, we're transgender. We're woman, you know?  
28  
29 AJ: Uhuh.  
30  
31 RS: It's really, they have to be more open I hope.  
32  
33 AJ: Mhm.  
34  
35 RS: You know.  
36  
37 AJ: Do you think that, uhm, there's more, so some people, some transgender people feel like I'm  
38 not gay, I'm not lesbian. I'm transgender. So they don't feel like they need to work with the  
39 transgender, I mean, with the gay communities or lesbian communities or bisexual  
40 communities.  
41  
42 RS: Mhm.  
43  
44 AJ: What do you think about that? Do you think it's more power to all be together or if everybody  
45 just goes their separate ways?  
46  
47 RS: I think...

1  
2 AJ: Cause the issues are different for transgender.  
3  
4 RS: Issues, yeah, are very different for trans and gay people as well, yeah. But I think it's better  
5 because we work as one?  
6  
7 AJ: Mhm.  
8  
9 RS: You know? But if you're a transgender you would really feel in others labeled as all as one...  
10  
11 AJ: Mhm.  
12  
13 RS: ... but gay people have their own issues. The transgender have their own issues. The lesbians  
14 they have their own issues. But for me we have to be united because we are fighting for the  
15 same, you know, for equality, for acceptance...  
16  
17 AJ: Mhm.  
18  
19 RS: ... you know. For me it's better that we unite all as one.  
20  
21 AJ: Mhm.  
22  
23 RS: And help each other, you know, whatever gender he, she prefers.  
24  
25 AJ: Right. Are there many, in the Philippines where you grew up, were there many women who  
26 become men?  
27  
28 RS: Oh yes. There are women who become men, but not that much compared to the men who  
29 become female.  
30  
31 AJ: Mhm.  
32  
33 RS: Yeah, it's a lot in here, I think, I've seen like, they transition here more like the, from female to  
34 male.  
35  
36 AJ: Uhuh.  
37  
38 RS: And they really look like a male.  
39  
40 AJ: I know.  
41  
42 RS: My god.  
43  
44 AJ: Yes.  
45  
46 RS: I was like that was so quick for them. After like a year, they fully transition.  
47

1 AJ: Right. The hair, the muscles...  
2  
3 RS: Like with us like trans it takes some time. I mean it's like 4 years, 5 years...  
4  
5 AJ: Yeah.  
6  
7 RS: ... for me to feel like really confident.  
8  
9 AJ: Uhuh.  
10  
11 RS: Cause I'm really feminine now. It's really weird sometimes.  
12  
13 AJ: Wow.  
14  
15 RS: You know, there's a lot...  
16  
17 AJ: Did you do electrolysis? Did you have...  
18  
19 RS: I, yeah, I had, I had laser but, uh, with the hormones I have no more hair. It's like my hair doesn't  
20 grow anymore.  
21  
22 AJ: Yeah. Right.  
23  
24 RS: You know, the Adam's apple, you know, and your body becomes, your skin becomes more soft.  
25 No muscles at all, you know.  
26  
27 AJ: Sure.  
28  
29 RS: I like that.  
30  
31 AJ: Yeah.  
32  
33 RS: That really helps a lot.  
34  
35 AJ: Hm. So what do you think the agenda should be for the transgender community here and then  
36 around the world internationally?  
37  
38 RS: For me, my agenda is that just respect, just the respect for us. I mean like, yeah, some people  
39 see us as different. Some people think that we're weird. You know, it's like, but for me it's like  
40 just respect each other and respect one another.  
41  
42 AJ: Sure.  
43  
44 RS: And whatever we believe, I mean, this is who we are, you know, and respecting who you are as  
45 well.  
46  
47 AJ: Mhm.

1  
2 RS: You know, that's really my agenda is like we have our own rights as well, you know. We're still  
3 human, you know, we have the same, we have, we get angry, we get angry as well, you love, we  
4 love as well.  
5  
6 AJ: Mhm.  
7  
8 RS: So just respecting us as we respect you.  
9  
10 AJ: Yeah.  
11  
12 RS: You know.  
13  
14 AJ: Where do you think the transgender community will be maybe in 50 years from now? Do you  
15 think we will have that respect or do you think...  
16  
17 RS: I think so too.  
18  
19 AJ: Or do you think there will still be, eh.  
20  
21 RS: There will always be some people who are conservative. People who are homophobic or really  
22 find us strange or weird when we change, that we transition.  
23  
24 AJ: Mhm.  
25  
26 RS: You know, the others will think it's a sickness, you know, that, but for me as long as we fight for  
27 what we believe for, you know, and we, uh, what you call it, we will not stop. We will become  
28 more stronger.  
29  
30 AJ: Mhm.  
31  
32 RS: We will have the resistance.  
33  
34 AJ: Resistance.  
35  
36 RS: The resistance.  
37  
38 AJ: Yes.  
39  
40 RS: You know, it will change everything.  
41  
42 AJ: Uhuh.  
43  
44 RS: You know, actually, it's more changing compared, it's more accepting compared before.  
45  
46 AJ: Yeah, it is. It's better.  
47

1 RS: It's getting better, you know, so it's like at least, we're, uhm, I can see that in 50 years from now,  
2 we'll be moving more forward.  
3  
4 AJ: Mhm.  
5  
6 RS: You know.  
7  
8 AJ: Wow.  
9  
10 RS: More open.  
11  
12 AJ: More open.  
13  
14 RS: I hope. I'm really hoping for that. And I want to fight for that.  
15  
16 AJ: Yes. Yes. We need everybody.  
17  
18 RS: We need everybody. That's why, whether you're gay, lesbian, cisgender, right? We all fight the  
19 same.  
20  
21 AJ: Mhm.  
22  
23 RS: So we have to join.  
24  
25 AJ: So what do you think about concept, Ashlee, the idea of what some people call passable  
26 privilege? I'm mean, you're very strikingly beautiful woman.  
27  
28 RS: Mhm.  
29  
30 AJ: Uhm, when you walk down the street here in the United States, most people they just think  
31 you're a beautiful woman. They don't think you're transgender.  
32  
33 RS: Yeah.  
34  
35 AJ: And, and some people, some transgender people feel like that's a privilege. Like Janet Mock.  
36 She's very beautiful. Uh, Jena Rosetto. She's very beautiful. Laverne Cox.  
37  
38 RS: Laverne Cox.  
39  
40 AJ: She's very, very beautiful.  
41  
42 RS: Yeah.  
43  
44 AJ: Uhm, and, you know, some women aren't, some transgender women are not that lucky, right?  
45 Like...  
46  
47 RS: Mhm.

1  
2 AJ: They sometimes look like they're still a guy, and...  
3  
4 RS: Yeah.  
5  
6 AJ: And everybody can tell that they're transgender. How do you feel about that? Do you think it's a  
7 real thing or is it...?  
8  
9 RS: It's really a big, it's, I'm very privileged, you know, we have like, I'm passable. They call it  
10 passable here?  
11  
12 AJ: Mhm. Yeah, yeah.  
13  
14 RS: You know, it's like, they won't' even know. Like when I was riding a taxi, an uber, "Oh, Happy  
15 Mother's Day." I was like, "Okay."  
16  
17 AJ: Right. [Laughs].  
18  
19 RS: Or, "Do you have kids?" That's his first question. I was like, I'm privileged when it comes to that.  
20  
21 AJ: Sure.  
22  
23 RS: I feel really bad and sad for other transgender people like they want to dress, wear sexy, I mean,  
24 like something, we all have, like we want to date. We wanna wear skirts or enjoy the summer.  
25  
26 AJ: Right.  
27  
28 RS: Or enjoy the sun, have the sun on our skin. And others get bullied or, you know, they get  
29 discriminated against. I feel sad about that.  
30  
31 AJ: Mhm.  
32  
33 RS: You know, it's like for me and other people, when I see people who is different or, you know,  
34 when he dress different for me it's like it doesn't matter. That's what he wants to be. That's how  
35 he defines himself.  
36  
37 AJ: Sure.  
38  
39 RS: You know. So I feel sad when, when I hear stories like when they share stories like they've been  
40 bullied or they're being laughed a lot outside, you know.  
41  
42 AJ: Mhm.  
43  
44 RS: I feel really sad about it. It's like, if only I could... What can I do to comfort you?  
45  
46 AJ: [Laughs]. Right.  
47

1 RS: Cause, you know, I've been in that situation as well, and it feels really terrible. You feel down.  
2  
3 AJ: Right.  
4  
5 RS: You know, you get, you get scared about it so it's like... with me I feel privileged, but I feel sad  
6 for some.  
7  
8 AJ: Mhm. Mhm.  
9  
10 RS: You know? But I think more hormones, the more you take hormones and when you take your  
11 surgeries and stuff like that it really changes.  
12  
13 AJ: Some people more hormones is not gonna change very much, but...  
14  
15 RS: Yes, some, some.  
16  
17 AJ: Yeah.  
18  
19 RS: Some really don't, they're still like man.  
20  
21 AJ: You, you transitioned when you were 17, which is different from someone who waits until  
22 maybe they're 50.  
23  
24 RS: Yeah.  
25  
26 AJ: You know? Before, I mean, they wait, they're afraid. They don't want to be harassed, you know?  
27 There's reasons why people wait. But so let me just ask you this last question, Ashlee. Is there  
28 anything that you feel compelled to say that I did not ask you? I want to give you that  
29 opportunity. About your life. About the transgender community. About whatever it is that you  
30 wanna say.  
31  
32 RS: I just wanna, I'm just really privileged, you know, that I have this interview with you. I get to  
33 share.  
34  
35 AJ: Yeah, thank you.  
36  
37 RS: You know, and, uhm, I just want to share that, like I feel really blessed to be in the United States.  
38  
39 AJ: Mhm.  
40  
41 RS: You know, other, some trans people, I mean, some American transgender, they would think  
42 that, you know, that, they feel like they have to, it's like the government is trying to, to stop  
43 them. You know, it's like, but for me it's like, you're still lucky to be here.  
44  
45 AJ: Yeah.  
46  
47 RS: That's one thing I would truly want to say. You know like...

1  
2 AJ: Cause they don't know about the other.  
3  
4 RS: They don't know what's happening outside of United States.  
5  
6 AJ: Right.  
7  
8 RS: And for me it's like being here to have, to be married. My marriage will be legally accepted. I can  
9 change my gender marker. I have my name change. I can work here. Like my hair is long. I can  
10 dress however I want. It's such a privilege for me.  
11  
12 AJ: Yeah.  
13  
14 RS: And I'm really, really thankful for that.  
15  
16 AJ: Wow.  
17  
18 RS: Whatever they fight for here in America, you know, is like, especially with the gender issue, I'm  
19 really, I'm really into it. For me it's like this one thing that I want, I'm concerned, it's just a  
20 bathroom.  
21  
22 AJ: Mhm.  
23  
24 RS: It's just a bathroom, you know? Like, it's not a big deal actually.  
25  
26 AJ: Uhuh.  
27  
28 RS: You know, it's like you can go wherever you want.  
29  
30 AJ: Right.  
31  
32 RS: That's really one thing that I hope the government can, will not move backwards, you know, and  
33 want to help the transgender community about that.  
34  
35 AJ: Mhm.  
36  
37 RS: It's just a bathroom.  
38  
39 AJ: That's it. And every human being has to go.  
40  
41 RS: Every human being has to go.  
42  
43 AJ: [Laughs].  
44  
45 RS: I'm really, uhm, what you call it, being a transgender is like you get more confident when you  
46 are yourself.  
47



1 AJ: Mhm.  
2  
3 RS: You know? So it's like you can go whatever bathroom you want.  
4  
5 AJ: Right. [Laughs].  
6  
7 RS: Why do you make it a big issue?  
8  
9 AJ: Why make it a big deal, right? Well, listen, I really appreciate this opportunity to, to learn more  
10 about you, and thank you so much for sharing your, your story, and, uhm, and your life. And,  
11 you're right, we are blessed, uhm, in this community. We still have a lot more to do.  
12  
13 RS: Yeah.  
14  
15 AJ: Uhm, it's much better.  
16  
17 RS: it's much better here than Uganda or Brazil, you know, some transgender get...  
18  
19 AJ: Murdered.  
20  
21 RS: ... get murdered.  
22  
23 AJ: Yeah.  
24  
25 RS: You know? That's really sad, and, uh, what do you call this, uhm, you still feel, you have the  
26 power here. The voice out.  
27  
28 AJ: Yeah.  
29  
30 RS: You know?  
31  
32 AJ: To speak out.  
33  
34 RS: To speak out and fight for resistance.  
35  
36 AJ: Yes. Alright, well thank you, Ashlee.  
37  
38 RS: Thank you so much as well, Andrea.  
39  
40 AJ: Alright, bye bye.  
41  
42 RS: Bye bye.