

Anthony Ceballos
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

May 1, 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 Anthony Ceballos -AC
3

4 AJ: So, hello. My name is Andrea Jenkins, and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral
5 History Project at the University of Minnesota Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota
6 libraries. Today is May 1st, and it's snowing outside! Anthony, what the hell is going on?

7 AC: Snow has its time and place. That's how I feel about it.

8 AJ: This is not the time!

9 AC: This is not it. This is not it.

10 AJ: I guess this is the place, 'cause we're in Minnesota.

11 AC: Yeah. It is Minnesota. Yeah.

12 AJ: And I'm here today with Anthony Ceballos, and, Anthony, can you state your name, spell your
13 name, state your gender identity, today, your gender identity assigned at birth, and what
14 pronouns do you use.

15 AC: Yeah. My name's Anthony Ceballos, and - do you want me to spell out both?

16 AJ: Yeah. Please.

17 AC: First and last?

18 AJ: Just so we make sure we have it spelled right.

19 AC: Okay. So, Anthony - A-N-T-H-O-N-Y, and then Ceballos, C-E-B-A-L-L-O-S.

20 AJ: Okay.

21 AC: And then my gender identity is male, and that's what I was assigned at birth, and then pronouns
22 that I use are he and him.

23 AJ: Okay. Okay. Awesome. So, you know, just to kind of get us going into some of our - your
24 memory bank, can you say what your earliest memory in life is?

25 AC: My earliest memory in life. I actually remember - you know, it's so interesting, like, I feel like,
26 and I don't know if it's true for everybody, but there are just those few memories that go so far
27 back, like, before you could even imagine being able to remember. I remember being in a crib
28 and I - just little details in my bedroom. I was living on 33rd Avenue in Minnehaha, in south
29 Minneapolis, and the sheets were green, and if I remember the crib - maybe it was like a wood
30 color or something. And I remember just crying, and crying, and screaming out loudly, because
31 my mother wasn't there. You know, like, my sisters were there. They were probably nineteen,
32 so they were kind of watching the baby.

33 AJ: Right.

- 1 AC: My mother probably went out on some errands or something. And I just remember that
2 moment of sheer terror because my mother wasn't there.
- 3 AJ: Oh, my goodness. Oh, wow.
- 4 AC: You know, and that was it. Like, and I remember - just, like - yeah, just a - the terror and the fear
5 of, like, you know this - I don't know, like, where is this person at, you know? Like - and my
6 sisters being there, and just, you know, like, they - I knew there's - I mean, I know now, I was
7 actually - suppose I don't know anything then, you know? Like, but that there was safety, but it
8 wasn't what I wanted. I wanted my mother, you know, like -
- 9 AJ: Right.
- 10 AC: And so that is, like, the earliest memory I have.
- 11 AJ: Okay.
- 12 AC: And I think I remember so much so much of it, or, like, you know, we probably fill in little bits
13 here and there, you know.
- 14 AJ: Sure.
- 15 AC: We do. You know? But because I've thought about it, you know, quite a bit, especially as a
16 writer, you know -
- 17 AJ: Wow.
- 18 AC: - like, I've had the occasional prompt or something where it's like, you know, "What's your
19 earliest memory?"
- 20 AJ: Right.
- 21 AC: And I'm like, what is my earliest memory? Like, and I'm like, I remember that moment. And
22 that's it. Like, I don't remember anything else from being that little.
- 23 AJ: Okay.
- 24 AC: Just that moment. So.
- 25 AJ: Where'd you grow up?
- 26 AC: I grew up in south Minneapolis.
- 27 AJ: Okay.
- 28 AC: 612. Since I can remember. I feel like I've gradually moved west. I lived over on Minnehaha, so
29 it's kind of on the east side of Snelling Avenue.
- 30 AJ: Okay.
- 31 AC: And then I kind of moved a little bit further to South High. So I started there, moved west, and
32 then moved kind of near South High, over by the Lake Street-Midtown area.
- 33 AJ: Okay.

1 AC: And now I live on 34th and Portland, so I'm just kind of making my way west.

2 AJ: Your west - westward expansion.

3 AC: Exactly! Our westward expansion.

4 AJ: Manifest destiny.

5 AC: There you go.

6 AJ: So, what was home life like for you as a young person? You had older sisters, I think you said.

7 AC: Yeah. They were from a different marriage for my mother. So they were there, you know - they
8 would visit. You know, like, but they didn't live -

9 AJ: Sure.

10 AC: In...my childhood home.

11 AJ: Okay. So you were sort of like a single kid?

12 AC: Yeah, so I pretty much grew up as an only child, you know? Who had sisters, who had siblings,
13 but...

14 AJ: Right.

15 AC: You know, again, they were kind of in and out 'cause they lived with their father.

16 AJ: Okay.

17 AC: And so it was interesting. I had this ID of siblings, you know? This ID of two sisters, but I'm like,
18 "But then you're not really?"

19 AJ: But there wasn't - there wasn't a daily interaction.

20 AC: Yeah, no, no, no. So -

21 AJ: Had your mom remarried, or...?

22 AC: No, actually, now that you ask.

23 AJ: So it was just you and your mom.

24 AC: Yeah. So she was a single mother. My father kind of left the situation.

25 AJ: Yeah. Yeah.

26 AC: Quickly, dare I say. So she just, you know, did the single mother job.

27 AJ: Right. What was school like? What was grade school like?

28 AC: Grade school, I think, was fun, you know? I just - I have - I just have surprisingly fond memories
29 of grade school. Elementary school.

30 AJ: Oh, cool.

- 1 AC: So like, I'd say first grade. And I remember loving to go to school. Loving to just, like, be in the
2 space where I felt like I was kind of, I was learning, you know, and kind of doing these different
3 things, and you know, being around different people and stuff like that. You know, I suppose up
4 until fifth grade where, you know, you start to get close to middle school and things kind of shift
5 and stuff, you know. So I think, you know, up until fifth grade I had fond memories of it.
- 6 AJ: Yeah?
- 7 AC: And then, yeah, middle school and stuff like that. It became the typical kind of experience.
- 8 AJ: Really?
- 9 AC: Yeah.
- 10 AJ: What do you - what do you - what do you mean by typical?
- 11 AC: You know -
- 12 AJ: Were you bullied at all?
- 13 AC: Well, I guess when I say typical, you know, I'm - mean, like, I've just known a lot of people who
14 didn't have very good experiences in middle school, you know. I definitely, you know, like,
15 school was great up until then, and like, I definitely was bullied, I was picked on, you know, I
16 definitely was not the popular person in middle school in any way shape or form.
- 17 AJ: Why do you think that is?
- 18 AC: You know, I think a lot of it has to do with, you know, definitely having non, I guess, masculine
19 traits. You know, a lot of the, you know, in middle school, it was kind of the boys were the boys,
20 and the girls were the girls, you know. And I never really felt that kind of pull, you know, I was
21 very much, I don't know, kind of feminine in my behavior.
- 22 AJ: Sure.
- 23 AC: You know, like, I always was, you know. Like, in the music I listened to, and talk about, just - my -
24 the first CD I ever bought was Cher, you know?
- 25 AJ: Wow!
- 26 AC: You know, Believe, you know? Like, it was great. I loved it. And the second CD was Celine Dion,
27 the third CD was Barbra Streisand.
- 28 AJ: Do you believe in life after love?
- 29 AC: That was, like, my jam in middle school, okay, when I was twelve years old.
- 30 AJ: Oh, my god.
- 31 AC: And I spoke about that freely, you know? Like, I felt just pulled to these kind of things that
32 definitely kind of deviated from, you know, like, what all the other kind of boys were doing at
33 the time, you know, playing sports and doing all this, and there's nothing wrong with that.
- 34 AJ: Sure, yeah.

- 1 AC: But I think at that time -
- 2 AJ: It just didn't -
- 3 AC: It - yeah.
- 4 AJ: - fit you.
- 5 AC: Yeah. But, you know, it's also a time where, like, you know, at least as I experienced and I feel
6 like other people I've spoken to have kind of talked about, where like, kids can be aggressive.
7 Kids can be mean. Kids can, you know, really start to pick on somebody, you know, because of
8 difference. And that's definitely where I felt that, you know? And, you know, like, I was always
9 able to kind of keep my chin up, you know.
- 10 AJ: Yeah.
- 11 AC: Like, because I had these things. Like, it's so funny, you know, like, yeah, Cher, but like, you
12 know, like, her, you know, Madonna, stuff like that, but, you know, like, there's something
13 about having those records and those kind of CDs and stuff, you know, that I always felt good
14 about, like. So you know, I have a shitty day at school, I'm like, "Oh, you know, I know I'll have
15 that for the kind of, like - "
- 16 AJ: Go home and play some Like A Virgin or something?
- 17 AC: Exactly. Exactly! You know, like, so that always helped. You know, but it definitely was a time
18 where I feel like I really got picked on because I didn't do the typical boy things. 'Cause I didn't
19 want to, you know?
- 20 AJ: Sure.
- 21 AC: Like, you know, so I think that made a lot of my middle school experience pretty not fun. At all.
- 22 AJ: How about high school? Did things start to change a little bit, or...?
- 23 AC: It's interesting. I feel like each kind of end of a school era brought in a different version of
24 myself, you know? Like I was probably a very wide-eyed, you know, up until the end of fifth
25 grade going into middle school. And that became this tumultuous, "Ooh," you know, kind of
26 "Nyeh," crazy hectic time, and then going into high school, you know, I just kind of developed a
27 kind of, you know, the hair got long, you know, like, all the clothing got black, you know, like the
28 scowling face, you know?
- 29 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 30 AC: Very much - I had the pants with the chains on them.
- 31 AJ: Oh, you're that kid.
- 32 AC: Yeah, I was that kid! I was so totally that kid. You know, and it was so funny 'cause I talk to
33 people now that I went to high school with who I just assumed no one knew who I was in high
34 school, and they're like, "You were that angry goth kid." I'm like, "Wait. I was?" You know - like,
35 and it was so funny, 'cause I was still listening to, like, Madonna and stuff in my headphones.

- 1 AJ: Right! You were listen -
- 2 AC: And I had the scowl.
- 3 AJ: You weren't listening to, like, Def - Def Leppard or...?
- 4 AC: I - you know, I mean -
- 5 AJ: Or what's the other -
- 6 AC: I did listen to some, like, Marilyn Manson stuff. Stuff like that.
- 7 AJ: Marilyn Manson. That's who I was thinking, yeah.
- 8 AC: Yeah, you know, like - and that was - you know - so I - some music did change, you know, some,
9 like, Evanescence, and stuff like that. Some of that typical kind of, like, sad music of the time.
- 10 AJ: Yes.
- 11 AC: The kind of heavier rock and stuff like that, you know. But I was still, like, you know, jamming
12 out to, like, Madonna and stuff, you know? Like...you know, while I was, like, walking around
13 with, like, the - the very goth presence, you know? So...But I think, you know - I don't want to
14 say I became a recluse, but, you know, I definitely became a bit of a wallflower in high school.
- 15 AJ: Okay.
- 16 AC: Just kind of, like, staying away from things, you know. Using the appearance to really kind of -
- 17 AJ: Keep people away, sort of?
- 18 AC: Kind of, and also to speak for me, you know?
- 19 AJ: Okay.
- 20 AC: You know, because I definitely - you know, I was really drawn to that goth look, you know? Like,
21 and there were elements of it that still I'm kind of drawn to now, you know? But definitely back
22 then, you know, like, there was just something about it that I found so fascinating, you know?
23 And just, I don't know what it was. The grimness of it, you know? I'm a writer, I guess I'm grim.
- 24 AJ: Yeah.
- 25 AC: It's always remained the same. You know, but the - you know, appearance kind of allowing that
26 to be the kind of first interaction, you know, like...you know, and it allowed me to be more of a
27 wallflower, I think. You know, I think, anyway. But I definitely became quiet, you know.
28 Like...just very - I don't know, like, social anxiety stuff, and the awkward stuff.
- 29 AJ: Wow. It's really interesting, you know, you talk about sort of how you would use your...how you
30 - how you use your appearance to sort of speak for you. And, you know, it seems as if in - in goth
31 culture, which I've never really been a part of, so I'm totally speculating, but it just seems like
32 there is a little bit more of an easiness and a sort of gender bending aspect to goth culture. Is
33 that -
- 34 AC: I mean -

- 1 AJ: Something that attracted you, or do you want to speak more on that, or -
- 2 AC: No, definitely -
- 3 AJ: Dispel that myth that I have built up in my head?
- 4 AC: No, definitely. I mean, I think there is something - you know, I can't really speak to all of kind of
5 the goth culture, you know. I never really - you know, I guess - I mean, I don't know if I - I mean, I
6 was drawn to it, you know, but I guess in my own way.
- 7 AJ: You never went deep into it.
- 8 AC: Yeah, exactly. That's a great way to put it.
- 9 AJ: You - you individualized it, right?
- 10 AC: Yeah, you know? But I definitely - from what I would see, you know, I think there was more
11 room for - at least as far as appearance went, you know, the kind of - I mean, you know, a lot of
12 the guys would have long hair, and wore stuff that in my mind seemed to be more feminine. You
13 know, and I remember some of the people that I just found so interesting, again, you know, it's
14 so fun to go thinking about this - you know, the lead singer for the band Evanescence, you know,
15 like -
- 16 AJ: What's it called?
- 17 AC: Evanescence.
- 18 AJ: Evanescence.
- 19 AC: It's like - this was like, the big rock -
- 20 AJ: Is that a local band, or...?
- 21 AC: Oh, no, they were, like, the big rock and roll band back in, like, when I was in high school. 2004,
22 you know?
- 23 AJ: Oh, wow. Okay.
- 24 AC: So they were, like, you know, had all the hits and stuff.
- 25 AJ: Evanescence. I don't think I've ever heard of them.
- 26 AC: Yeah.
- 27 AJ: E-V-A-N...
- 28 AC: E-V-A-N...essence...E-S-C-E-N-C-E? I think that's how you spell it.
- 29 AJ: Okay. Or S-S-E-N-C-E? That's how you spell essence, so.
- 30 AC: Yeah.
- 31 AJ: Okay.
- 32 AC: But, like, they were the, like, you know, big band. You know, they had the hits and everything,

- 1 you know. But they had, you know, they were like the dark goth kind of band that was popular.
- 2 AJ: Okay.
- 3 AC: But the lead singer, she just had - she was just, you know, this kind of...you know, angsty-looking
4 goth girl, you know? She had the corsets, like, the big boots, and, like, long dark hair, and like,
5 this whole thing. And I just remember being very intrigued by that, you know? Just like, that
6 look, it was really fascinating. And I do - I think personally, for me, there's also this element of,
7 kind of - of - of femininity that I really - just, really enjoyed. There's something very graceful
8 about it, you know? Even if it was really dark and "Nyah," you know? And I think - am I
9 answering the question?
- 10 AJ: Yeah! No, absolutely.
- 11 AC: I think I kind of - getting lost in thoughts of my high school angst. Yeah, so I mean - kind of, you
12 know, the goth thing, you know, they - I - I mean, again, I couldn't speak for the whole culture,
13 you know -
- 14 AJ: Sure. No, no.
- 15 AC: But for me -
- 16 AJ: But how did it -
- 17 AC: Yeah -
- 18 AJ: - impact you, is really the question I'm trying to get at.
- 19 AC: Yeah, you know, I think, like, it was just, like, you know, there's something - first off, there was
20 that element that was, like, you know, kind of the grimness, you know, like, 'cause I think, you
21 know, you had asked about what it was like growing up, you know, like, growing up with a single
22 mother and, you know, it wasn't just some great financial situation, you know, it was kind of - it
23 was a tough situation.
- 24 AJ: Tough - yeah. Yeah.
- 25 AC: It was really tough, you know? I mean, she definitely had to struggle. You know, and I saw that. I
26 saw a lot of struggle, you know? Like - and so there's something about that -
- 27 AJ: And you identify as Native American? Your - your mother's Native American?
- 28 AC: Yes. My mother is enrolled in the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, so I'm a descendent of hers.
- 29 AJ: Okay.
- 30 AC: I've tried to be enrolled myself, but that hasn't worked out, unfortunately.
- 31 AJ: Really?
- 32 AC: Yeah, -
- 33 AJ: Why?

- 1 AC: I'm, like, three percent short.
- 2 AJ: What?
- 3 AC: Of like - so, like, there's, like, a certain percentage...of - like, blood - you - quantum that you
4 need to be enrolled.
- 5 AJ: How do they determine? Do they do a blood test, or...?
- 6 AC: They go back. I didn't do any blood test. I filled out some forms and I think they kind of look and
7 just do, like, lineage and stuff, and kind of see - go back, and so I got this information, you know.
8 And I'm sure it's medical records and stuff, you know. And I got - so I had signed up to be
9 enrolled. And then I got the response and it was, like, your application's been rejected. You
10 need, like, twenty-five percent or something, like, and I was at, like, twenty-three percent.
- 11 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 12 AC: Yeah, it was some real close margin like that, you know? So...you know, so that was what that
13 was. But -
- 14 AJ: Yeah, 'cause that's a...pretty wealthy...
- 15 AC: Yeah...
- 16 AJ: Band, isn't it? I mean...I don't know, I'm -
- 17 AC: I mean, they do -
- 18 AJ: I don't want to be insensitive, so please.
- 19 AC: Oh no, no, no. I mean, they're - they do okay, you know, like, there is, like a, you know, like, my
20 mother does get, you know, some payments - I mean, she's not rich by any means, you know.
- 21 AJ: Right. Right. Right.
- 22 AC: Like, and she never has been, you know. You know, but there is some - the members do get, you
23 know, monthly, kind of, tribal income. You know, like - and they were really helpful to me when
24 I was doing my undergrad, you know. They really funded a lot of that.
- 25 AJ: Oh, cool. That's great.
- 26 AC: 'Cause I'm not enrolled, but they are willing to help fund, you know, descendants.
- 27 AJ: Scholarships, and -
- 28 AC: Yeah, stuff like that, you know. So if you are at least a descendant, you can apply for different
29 scholarships and stuff. And so they really helped. You know, if it weren't for that, I don't know if
30 I would have been able to finish Hamline.
- 31 AJ: Yeah.
- 32 AC: Considering, you know, that was huge.
- 33 AJ: Yeah. Absolutely.

- 1 AC: So, yeah. But...you know, financial situation, all that, it was not - it was not good, you know? So I
2 saw a lot of struggle growing up. Not just with my mother, but with my family and - just a lot of
3 stuff that I -
- 4 AJ: Do you -
- 5 AC: - you know, that I grew up with that I don't, you know - that definitely would, I think, kind of age
6 a person a little bit more emotionally and mentally, you know. Something you have to grow up
7 really quick.
- 8 AJ: Sure.
- 9 AC: And, you know, like, it's -
- 10 AJ: Did you guys ever spend time on the reservation at all, or...?
- 11 AC: No, no. I was all on Minneapolis. The only times that I remember - this is real - talk about grim.
12 The only times I ever remember going up to, like, you know, Mille Lacs or anything like that was,
13 you know, funerals and stuff, you know? You know, that's the only time I'd ever really
14 remember seeing all the family together. They are - like, maybe sometimes, like, holidays they'd
15 come down, but going up to, like, Mille Lacs and stuff -
- 16 AJ: Sure.
- 17 AC: - like that -
- 18 AJ: That was rare?
- 19 AC: Yeah. You know. So it was usually only something - if something tragic had happened, you
20 know? We all had to, like, go up there. Aside from that, you know, it was all just kind of, you
21 know, down in Minneapolis. You know, my mother lived here, obviously, you know. My
22 grandmother, when she was alive, she lived in - in Minneapolis. My grandfather, when he was
23 alive, lived not too far from here, actually.
- 24 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 25 AC: Over by Green on 34th and 4th
- 26 AJ: Okay. Wow, yeah, right by Green School.
- 27 AC: Yeah, so right across the way, actually. So - so it was always down in the cities. Uncles, you
28 know, everybody lived down here.
- 29 AJ: Yeah. So when did you - well, let me ask you this. You - you know, you mentioned, like, some of
30 your challenges in middle school and - and such were related to the fact that you just always
31 been really feminine - feminine. And - and I mean, I'm just be blunt, I mean, you still exhibit a
32 number of feminine characteristics.
- 33 AC: Yup. I do.
- 34 AJ: Today.

- 1 AC: This is true.
- 2 AJ: But - but you say you identify as male. So have you thought about gender identity, or are you
3 just sort of accept your male -
- 4 AC: You know -
- 5 AJ: - assignment at birth and that's how you're moving?
- 6 AC: You know, I have thought about - I've always, you know, considered myself androgynous. You
7 know, that's something that I've always - and that, you know, I guess, gender -
- 8 AJ: So what does androgynous mean to you?
- 9 AC: Androgynous means kind of...masculine and feminine appearance. You know, is my meaning
10 and the way I see it. And it's always something that I've just been - I guess, drawn to. You know,
11 being able to kind of feel like I can, you know, express myself in one way, and then, you know,
12 maybe at some point express myself in a different way.
- 13 AJ: Sure.
- 14 AC: You know, like...you know, and I've always felt - you know, growing up there was definitely a lot
15 of, you know, the men are the men, and, you know, the women are the women, and I, again,
16 never ever felt drawn to that kind of, you know, I guess, binary? You know, like -
- 17 AJ: Sure.
- 18 AC: I was never - and I remember growing up, too, you know, just, like, you know, just, things that
19 were more feminine always, always, just - I don't know. Kind of had this pull, you know? Like, I
20 just - I never felt comfortable, necessarily, trying to express masculinity, you know? As far as,
21 like, being male, you know, I'm - I just - I, I'm just male, you know?
- 22 AJ: Yeah?
- 23 AC: I mean, I've always been okay with that, you know.
- 24 AJ: Sure.
- 25 AC: Like, 'cause I did - after I came out and stuff, I definitely went through an experimental phase,
26 you know, where I - you know, I wore tons of makeup. I called it, kind of my Ziggy Stardust
27 phase, if you will.
- 28 AJ: Ziggy Stardust!
- 29 AC: And I just went sort of, like, "Nyah!" you know? Like - and there are moments -
- 30 AJ: And you say you came out. You came out as...
- 31 AC: As gay.
- 32 AJ: As gay.
- 33 AC: Yup.

1 AJ: Okay.

2 AC: So that was in 2008. I was going to say 2018! So that was next year.

3 AJ: Oh wow. Next year.

4 AC: It was in 2008.

5 AJ: Still in the closet, Anthony. Come on out! Come on out!

6 AC: Hey! So after that, you know, it - 'cause again, too, you know, like, I grew up in something
7 that's...felt more traditional, you know, if you will. You know, like I said, the men were the men,
8 the women were the women, and you did not deviate from that, 'cause if you did, that was bad.

9 AJ: Sure.

10 AC: And I came out, and it was met with a less-than-enthusiastic response by the family.

11 AJ: Oh, wow.

12 AC: By - by - by my mother.

13 AJ: By your mother?

14 AC: Yeah. And, you know, she's way more accepting now, like, completely, you know? But it was -
15 it's like -

16 AJ: Is your mom really religious, or...?

17 AC: You know, I - you know, I mean, she believes in God, you know. I don't think she practices
18 religion very much, you know, like, but she definitely, you know, has held belief, you know,
19 like...

20 AJ: Sure.

21 AC: And I think a lot of it too is just, you know, being raised a certain way where men were men.
22 Women were women. And I think -

23 AJ: And society, and -

24 AC: Yes. And I think -

25 AJ: And the culture. Yeah.

26 AC: Exactly. And I think, you know, what - at the - in her growing up and stuff, you know, and
27 probably the 90s, what she probably, kind of, received as, you know, what being gay meant, you
28 know through, you know, mainstream media and all this stuff, you know, I mean, I just don't - I -
29 I - I don't know if, exactly, you know, what her thoughts were on "Oh, if my son is gay, what
30 does this mean for him?" You know, like, is this going to be not good for him, you know. Like, is
31 this a bad lifestyle for him, you know. "Lifestyle." All this stuff, like, what does this mean for my
32 son, you know, like - so I think there's probably some element of fear for her. Just not knowing,
33 you know, like - and just, probably - I don't know. You know. You know, again, kind of being
34 raised in that, again, you know, traditional way, and stuff. So when I came out, I think it really,

1 you know, startled her. I think she was afraid because I don't think she knew what that meant
2 for me, and I think she definitely was worried about my well-being.

3 AJ: Sure. Absolutely.

4 AC: You know, and...just - I don't know. I also sometimes think of it as, like, that was, like, her only
5 child's first real showing of - of self. Of autonomy, you know? And I think that probably startled
6 her too, you know? So - you know, again, when I came out it was definitely not met with, like I
7 said, the greatest amount of enthusiasm. But, you know, she's gotten better about that.

8 AJ: Oh, good.

9 AC: You know. You know, she's met my housemates, you know, she's met Venus and stuff. You
10 know, we met - she's -

11 AJ: And your housemate is...

12 AC: My housemate is Venus DeMars.

13 AJ: Venus DeMars. Yes.

14 AC: Yes. Yes. And Lynette Reini-Grandell. And...kind of getting back to what I was initially saying -

15 AJ: Yeah.

16 AC: - after I came out, I went through this huge experimentation phase because after I came out, I
17 went through this, like...let's call it an interim of couch surfing, you know?

18 AJ: Right?

19 AC: You know, because I couldn't stay in the childhood home, I guess, you know, because it just
20 became too...yeah, negative.

21 AJ: Right.

22 AC: You know, like, it just - I couldn't stay in that space anymore. You know, so there was this brief
23 period where I was couch surfing. Not that long, but you know, it was enough.

24 AJ: Yeah. Yeah.

25 AC: It's an odd experience to go through when you're eighteen.

26 AJ: Oh, wow.

27 AC: Yeah. And then a friend of mine, her father knew Lynette and Venus. You know, they were
28 friends, and she was like, oh, you know, my dad knows these people, they rent a room
29 sometimes in their house, you know, like, you need a place to stay, you know, maybe you should
30 meet them. And I was like, "Okay!" You know? I need a place to stay.

31 AJ: Right.

32 AC: I can't do this anymore, you know? and , you know, I met with Lynette first, and just kind of told
33 her the situation, and then she told - you know, we just - we talked, you know, and stuff. She

1 told me that her - her spouse is trans, and then I met Venus about a week or so after that. So
2 she was very receptive to what I was going through, you know.

3 AJ: Right.

4 AC: 'Cause that was a nerve-wracking thing, not only did I just make this huge declaration of, "Oh,
5 I'm gay!"

6 AJ: Yeah.

7 AC: And then it's like, "Oh, buh-bye!" You know? Like, you know, but then suddenly, it's like, oh, and
8 now I'm talking to these people and moving in here and oh my gosh, you know? Like, so there
9 was so much going on, you know? Like, and, you know, I - it was just a nerve-wracking thing to
10 talk to who, at the time, was a complete stranger about it.

11 AJ: Sure.

12 AC: But I needed a fucking place - sorry. I needed a place to stay!

13 AJ: Yeah, no, hey.

14 AC: You know?

15 AJ: Language is not a problem, so.

16 AC: Okay, I was like "Whoop!" You know, I needed a place to stay, you know, and that's kind of, like,
17 what the motivation was, you know? But she was very receptive of my story, you know?
18 Like...you know, she said, "Well, you know, like, this should work out, you know? Rent is this
19 much, blah blah blah blah blah." And then I met Venus, you know, and, you know, Venus was a
20 little bit more, kind of, you know, sheepish at first, you know? Like - "Who are you," you know?

21 AJ: Right.

22 AC: And I'm like "Uh I'm just Anthony, hi!" You know, but, then, you know, again, you know, kind of
23 that story and where they were coming from and what I was going through, you know, like
24 suddenly I was in this place where I could kind of express myself in a way I wasn't able to
25 growing up.

26 AJ: Sure.

27 AC: Like, at all. It was a total 180, you know? And so I went through this period after meeting them,
28 'cause I felt like it was a completely, again, different world, if you will, you know?

29 AJ: Yeah?

30 AC: 'Cause I could express myself, you know? And, like, here are these two people who, like, you
31 know, were just all about, you know, self expression, you know?

32 AJ: Right. And freedom of self expression, right?

33 AC: Exactly. You know, like, suddenly I wasn't stifled and, like, I went through this, you know, period
34 where I, like I said, the Ziggy Stardust period where I just, like, completely was just like, "You

1 know what? I'm just going to dress how I feel, you know?" Like, you know - so it was a lot of
2 intense makeup, and like, you know, just a very, you know, feminine clothing, but very, you
3 know, again, all I can say is Ziggy Stardust-y. You know? It was very, just, like -

4 AJ: So androgynous though.

5 AC: Exactly, exactly.

6 AJ: I mean, yeah.

7 AC: Androgynous, you know? And I just, it was a very freeing thing, you know? Like, and no one was
8 telling me "You can't do that," you know? Like, "You can't be that person," you know? Like, and
9 it was - and it was just such an important, vital, vital thing. And I'm trying to think again what the
10 question was that you had initially asked and why I'm starting to veer off.

11 AJ: Yeah.

12 AC: I don't know if I'm getting...

13 AJ: No, I mean, it's - you're still sort of in the - in the frame of the question. It's been a little while -

14 AC: Sorry!

15 AJ: - so I'm kind of trying to think of...I think it was around, you know, what was your ideas around
16 gender and because you had, you know -

17 AC: Yeah.

18 AJ: You always had this sort of feminine -

19 AC: Yeah. Yeah.

20 AJ: - persona. Do you get mis-identified now, misgendered now?

21 AC: Oh, all the time. All the time. I do, I do. And -

22 AJ: How does that make you feel?

23 AC: You know, I think when I was younger, you know, it was an odd feeling, you know, because I
24 grew up in, again, you know, what you grow up with is so much of reality and so, like, when I
25 was growing up, you know, back in the great nineties, you know, my mother, some family and
26 stuff, you know, like, anything that swayed from typical gender norms was not acceptable. It
27 was not okay. So I think when I was younger, you know, when that would happen, even when I'd
28 have the appearance, you know, it still kind of was like, "No, I - I'm male," you know?

29 AJ: Right.

30 AC: You know, it was just - it was an odd thing, you know? And now, it doesn't - I don't care, you
31 know? I'm like, you know, somebody calls me female, you know, I'm like, "All right!" you know?
32 Like, I mean, maybe I'll correct them, I don't know, you know? Like, it doesn't - it's just like I - I
33 don't know, like, is it okay to say I don't mind it now? You know, like I don't -

34 AJ: Yeah. It's fine.

1 AC: I don't - it doesn't -
2 AJ: It doesn't freak you out, or -
3 AC: No.
4 AJ: - doesn't get you upset, or...?
5 AC: No, no. And, you know, I mean, like I said, you know, there is a point which -
6 AJ: 'Cause there's a lot of guys out there - out here who, if you called them Ma'am -
7 AC: Yeah.
8 AJ: - or a woman, or -
9 AC: Yeah.
10 AJ: - girl, like, they are ready to fight, and, like -
11 AC: Oh, yeah, no. Gosh no.
12 AJ: - kill you, I mean.
13 AC: Oof! No, no, no, no. I...you know, I just, I guess it doesn't bother me at all what somebody calls
14 me in terms of gender, you know? Like, I just - I don't...you know, I am who I am, you know? And
15 -
16 AJ: What do you think about this whole, sort of, movement around gender nonconforming
17 identities, and so many young people -
18 AC: Yeah.
19 AJ: - identifying as they and them, and -
20 AC: Yeah.
21 AJ: - he and her -
22 AC: Yeah.
23 AJ: And - and - sort of the explosion of this binary idea around gender?
24 AC: I - I think that I - I - I'm really inspired to see that, because I feel like, you know...You know, when
25 I was younger, when I was eighteen and stuff, you know, kind of in high school, at high school
26 age, you know, I, you know, wish that, you know, there would have been more of that, you
27 know? When I was growing up, you know? Because, you know, there just wasn't a lot, you
28 know?
29 AJ: Sure.
30 AC: And I don't necessarily think there are a lot of, you know, safe spaces, you know, for a young kid
31 who is trying to figure themselves out, so when I see this, you know, and see these young kids
32 who are just very, you know, you know, involved, and - and, you know, really, like, you know,

- 1 creating this movement, I think it's really exciting. Was that - was it yesterday, the day before, I
2 actually was at Intermedia Arts for - they had this, like, youth panel, the Up and Out Festival and
3 stuff, and so somebody had contacted me from Intermedia Arts, and they, you know, just kind
4 of wanted me to come in and, like, talk to, like, you know, these young LGBTQIA-identifying
5 artists, you know?
- 6 AJ: Wow, awesome!
- 7 AC: And it was -
- 8 AJ: How did that go?
- 9 AC: It was absolutely amazing, you know? Like, to see these young kids who are teenagers who are
10 so in touch, and so involved, and so there for each other, you know? And so, just, like, aware of
11 themselves, and, you know, like, that space, you know, some of them, you know, like, you know,
12 they were still kind of going through, you know, like, you know, you know, talking about family
13 and stuff like that. You know, but in that space you could just see they were so, like, there's an
14 element of them that was so, so sure of themselves, you know? And that space was their space
15 and they could freely express that, and I just thought that was, like, so amazing, you know?
16 Because it just made me think again, you know, gosh, it would have been wonderful when I was
17 in high school to have had something like that, you know?
- 18 AJ: Right.
- 19 AC: Like, so, it's just awesome to see that movement and to see this energy that's happening right
20 now where young kids can express themselves, you know? And like, they can have that
21 opportunity, you know, and these safe spaces, you know, and, like, the, you know, inspiration, I
22 think of again, you know, Laura Jane Grace.
- 23 AJ: Yeah.
- 24 AC: You know, who's just, like, become so prolific.
- 25 AJ: Another trans woman.
- 26 AC: Exactly.
- 27 AJ: Yeah.
- 28 AC: You know, like, has become so prolific, and they're, you know, just kind of role models, you
29 know? I think of my housemate Venus, you know?
- 30 AJ: Yeah.
- 31 AC: Like, you know, just role models! Yourself, you know? Like -
- 32 AJ: Who - who was the first trans person you ever met?
- 33 AC: Venus.
- 34 AJ: Really.

- 1 AC: Yeah. Yeah.
- 2 AJ: So before eighteen, you had never -
- 3 AC: No.
- 4 AJ: - really met a trans person -
- 5 AC: No.
- 6 AJ: - prior to that.
- 7 AC: No, no, no. Yeah, I didn't -
- 8 AJ: Not even in high school?
- 9 AC: You know, I mean, in high school, like, I don't - you know, I just had small group of friends that I
10 never really, kind of deviated from, you know? Like, I mean, I definitely saw some kids who I
11 think were kind of starting to explore their own gender identity.
- 12 AJ: Sure.
- 13 AC: You know, but, you know, again, I didn't have much interaction with -
- 14 AJ: Right. Right.
- 15 AC: - a lot of - so Venus was one of the first -
- 16 AJ: So Venus was -
- 17 AC: Yeah.
- 18 AJ: - was Venus - yeah.
- 19 AC: Yeah. Yeah.
- 20 AJ: Wow. Has that had any impact on your thoughts around gender at all?
- 21 AC: Absolutely. Absolutely, you know?
- 22 AJ: Like what?
- 23 AC: Like, I mean, just all of these - well, I mean, yeah. Well, I suppose...I'm just trying to think - in
24 terms of my own identity and stuff, you know, again, you know, she was this really, you know,
25 kind of goth rock and roll person.
- 26 AJ: Yeah.
- 27 AC: You know? Like, and her personal style, you know, and just a lot of that just was so, just
28 amazing.
- 29 AJ: Yeah. Lots of safety pins, and -
- 30 AC: Safety pins -

- 1 AJ: - ripped -
- 2 AC: - was very - yup.
- 3 AJ: - jeans, and...
- 4 AC: And I just found it fascinating, and the stage presence -
- 5 AJ: Or actually ripped fishnets is more like it.
- 6 AC: Yeah. Exactly! And that was so cool, because that was just who she was, you know?
- 7 AJ: Yeah.
- 8 AC: Like, I just - I was so inspired by that, you know? Like, and - you know, it was interesting, you
9 know, like - 'cause, I mean, I - in high school, again, you know, I don't feel like I really thought a
10 lot about anything, you know? Besides just, like, getting through high school, you know, like -
- 11 AJ: Yeah.
- 12 AC: And so I met Venus, and again, she was one of the first trans people that I had interaction with,
13 you know? And to hear her stories, you know, like, and to hear, you know, kind of, her, you
14 know, coming out, and kind of, you know, realizing who she was, you know, while married to
15 Lynette, you know?
- 16 AJ: Yeah.
- 17 AC: Kind of going through all that. You know, especially in that kind of time where that wasn't a
18 thing that was discussed, that was talked about, you know, so - you know, wrestling with that,
19 and all these different things that she went through, you know, I mean, I just found it so
20 inspirational, and to suddenly find myself in this weird kind of wrestling and figuring out things,
21 you know, to - to move into that space and to be, you know, around somebody who kind of
22 went through, you know, this huge untangling, and all of this, that was so inspiring to me, you
23 know? Like, and then to see, you know, kind of her - you know, she - kind of...how do you say,
24 be on the other end, you know, kind of, you know, still together with Lynette, you know, like it -
25 having been able to build this profile as - to build this profile as, as, as an artist, you know? Like, I
26 just - I found that really inspiring, you know, like, it just - it gave me a lot of hope, I suppose.
- 27 AJ: And you're an artist yourself.
- 28 AC: Yes. Yes.
- 29 AJ: Did you identify as a artist and a writer prior to moving in with -
- 30 AC: I wrote. I wrote a lot. And - but I don't think I really ever called myself an artist. I always felt
31 creative, you know? I always felt like I was a creative person, but I never really said, "Oh, I'm an
32 artist" until probably when I started to go to Hamline for creative writing.
- 33 AJ: So you have a BFA from Hamline?
- 34 AC: Yup, yup. I've got - yup, from Hamline in creative writing. And I've got a minor in English. And
35 even then it was still really hard to call myself an artist.

- 1 AJ: Yeah?
- 2 AC: You know, like, 'cause I just - I don't know, felt like I had to have something published or
3 something. Now I, you know, like, I would say yeah, I'm - I'm an artist, I am trying to be an artist,
4 I am trying to -
- 5 AJ: Well, now that you're in the Loft Mentors Series -
- 6 AC: Yeah.
- 7 AJ: - which is pretty prestigious.
- 8 AC: Yeah. Yeah.
- 9 AJ: I mean, how does that - has that impacted your ability and/or willingness to call yourself an
10 artist now?
- 11 AC: I think so. I mean, I definitely call myself a very creative person, you know? I don't know why I
12 get sheepish when I say I am an artist, you know? Like, I just -
- 13 AJ: It's - it's a hard label to own, I think.
- 14 AC: Yeah. Yeah. Kind of - it really is, you know? I mean, it's what I do, and, like, I don't think I could
15 live a life that wasn't creative, you know? Like, I have to write, you know? And my other art
16 forms - I love painting, you know, I - I love it so much. And I - I don't think I could exist and
17 function as my human self if I couldn't do these things, and if that is being an artist, then very
18 much, I am an artist, you know?
- 19 AJ: Yeah. Yeah.
- 20 AC: You know, because I just - I just could not exist without doing those things that I think I've done
21 for all my life, you know? I remember being a child drawing, like, writing crappy pop rock songs
22 to myself, you know?
- 23 AJ: Oh, wow. Okay.
- 24 AC: Like, 'cause I'm like, hey! You know, like, you know, or, like, maybe middle school age, anyway,
25 you know? Like, so - you know, and the Loft Mentor Series definitely is one of the biggest, kind
26 of, you know, tips of hat -
- 27 AJ: Yeah.
- 28 AC: - you know, to, my creativity and stuff.
- 29 AJ: Yeah. Right.
- 30 AC: You know, so it's been a very amazing, amazing experience, you know. It definitely does give me
31 more confidence, you know, to -
- 32 AJ: Who are some of your mentors this year?
- 33 AC: So I applied for the poetry part of it, so in poetry, the mentor - local mentor is Sun Yung Shin.

- 1 AJ: Oh, my god. I love her.
- 2 AC: It's been an amazing experience to work with her. Her critiques and, just, everything, are just
3 amazing. She's so down to earth. I love it. And I was at the Minnesota Book Awards, and they
4 called her -
- 5 AJ: A couple weeks ago.
- 6 AC: Yeah. And so when they called her name, I was like, "Oh my god it's so cool!"
- 7 AJ: Yeah.
- 8 AC: You know, like, I just, I let out an audible yelp. I was like "Yay!" And then it's -
- 9 AJ: Unbearable Splendor, I think -
- 10 AC: Yeah. Unbearable Splendor.
- 11 AJ: - the book is called?
- 12 AC: It's - it's really good. And then the - so they have local writers, and then they have - that they
13 bring in to do the mentoring. And then they have international writers. So the international
14 writer is Abdul Ali.
- 15 AJ: Wow.
- 16 AC: Yeah. And I wasn't really familiar with his work until then, so - so we'll be working with him next.
17 We've already done the kind of formal work with Sun Yung Shin, so he'll be next. And then in
18 fiction, it was Julie Schumacher.
- 19 AJ: Okay.
- 20 AC: She wrote Dear Committee Members. And some other books, but that was, like, her really huge
21 one.
- 22 AJ: Yeah, that's a great - that's a key book. Yeah.
- 23 AC: Yes. It is really, really funny, too. And then -
- 24 AJ: Is it about her experience with MFA, or -
- 25 AC: Yeah, so it's this book, and it's written as a series of, just, letters of recommendation. Kind of
26 through the eyes of one particular disgruntled English faculty member -
- 27 AJ: Right.
- 28 AC: - at a community college. And that's really what it's about, and it's just - it's really, really funny,
29 you know?
- 30 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 31 AC: And it's drawing from her experiences and stuff, you know, obviously, you know, but - it's a
32 really funny, funny book, and it's just kind of talking about, you know, lack of funding that the
33 English department has, versus, like, the science department, so - and it's just really funny.

- 1 AJ: Wow.
- 2 AC: And again, all as these letters of recommendation. It's - and it's really been something to, like, I -
3 to hear her read from this book, and it's just - it's hilarious.
- 4 AJ: Yeah.
- 5 AC: I think she's coming out with, like, one of those, like, adult coloring books, too.
- 6 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 7 AC: That's kind of based on this story, so - I saw one of the, like, pictures, and one was a small
8 English department building with cracking foundation.
- 9 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 10 AC: And then the science building was, like, this tall skyscraper.
- 11 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 12 AC: That, like, trees on top of it -
- 13 AJ: Solar panels.
- 14 AC: Yeah. Exactly. It's kind of really funny.
- 15 AJ: Green roofs.
- 16 AC: Exactly. It was really funny, actually. So she's fiction, and then we had Ayana Mathis, who wrote
17 Twelve Tribes of Hattie, which was an Oprah Book Club 2.0 winner.
- 18 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 19 AC: So really huge.
- 20 AJ: Yeah, she's a big deal.
- 21 AC: Like, it was really cool. Yeah, she was awesome, you know? And then for creative nonfiction we
22 had Laura Flynn, who wrote -
- 23 AJ: Oh, my god. I love her.
- 24 AC: Swallow the Ocean was an amazing book. Like, it was so...you know, transformative, you know?
25 'Cause there was this element of - and it was a different situation, but, you know - you know,
26 growing up with, you know, a parent, you know, I don't - I don't know if I should - don't want to
27 get too into it, but you know, like, there's some addiction stuff going -
- 28 AJ: Yeah?
- 29 AC: - on when I was, you know, kind of, you know, saw some family going through, like, some - you
30 know, addiction stuff, you know? And, you know - you know, my mother definitely dealt with
31 kind of, you know, some addiction stuff.
- 32 AJ: Yeah.

- 1 AC: You know, and that was something that I had to deal with a lot when I was a child.
- 2 AJ: Right.
- 3 AC: And one of those things that I think kind of made me grow up really fast, you know? And it
4 wasn't, like, hard drugs or anything, but she was an alcoholic.
- 5 AJ: Sure.
- 6 AC: You know, and there was always this element of secrecy and shame around that, you don't talk
7 about it or anything like that, and so when I read her book - and again, it was different, but it
8 was still there, you know? She was talking about what it was like to grow up with basically a
9 single parent who suffered from severe mental illness. In this case, it was schizophrenia. But at
10 the time, when she was growing up, there wasn't really any kind of diagnosis for it. But still, you
11 know, a version of, kind of, mental, you know, I know if I don't want to say mental illness, I don't
12 know if you want to call it - but it is an illness.
- 13 AJ: Instability...
- 14 AC: Yeah.
- 15 AJ: Imbalance.
- 16 AC: Yeah. So I felt really drawn to her book, because there was, again, this kind of element of
17 secrecy, and, you know, shame, and we don't talk about what happens in the household, we just
18 go on and do what you do. So that was a really transformative book for me to read. And she was
19 just really amazing.
- 20 AJ: Wow.
- 21 AC: And - yeah. And then the other creative nonfiction writer that they're bringing in is a woman
22 named Allison Hedge Coke, who wrote a book called - she's written many books but the book
23 we're reading is called - if I can remember the title - "Rock Willow Ghost Deer," and it's a story
24 about - she's, I guess, she's a Native American and just kind of growing up, kind of figuring out
25 all that, like, stuff. I'm getting my copy tomorrow. Anyway! But, yeah, so those are the mentors
26 that we've been working with.
- 27 AJ: Wow.
- 28 AC: And it's been a really - just awesome.
- 29 AJ: Incredible.
- 30 AC: Awesome experience.
- 31 AJ: Congratulations.
- 32 AC: Thank you.
- 33 AJ: So you're Native American, person of color. You - you know, to many people, I'm sure, you're
34 perceived as either female or - or gender nonconforming. I mean, the point I'm getting at is it
35 probably confuses people sometimes.

- 1 AC: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.
- 2 AJ: How has that impacted your interactions with institutions like police, or schools, or getting a job,
3 like, has it had any impact, or has it been a positive thing? I don't know.
- 4 AC: You know, I...I - oh, you know, I remember - you know, it's shifted, you know? Like, I think in my
5 life, you know, like, I feel like there was a time where I made people very uncomfortable,
6 especially, you know, I think of a job I held - you know, and even in high school, one - in high
7 school I had really long hair and I still, you know, got the kind of -
- 8 AJ: Longer than it is now?
- 9 AC: Oh, yeah, it was probably down to here.
- 10 AJ: Oh, my goodness.
- 11 AC: But I guess it's almost getting down to here. SO probably close to the same length.
- 12 AJ: 'Cause it's pretty long now.
- 13 AC: You know, in high school, you know, the hair is long -
- 14 AJ: Do you mind taking your binder off?
- 15 AC: Oh, sure. Absolutely. My hair - I just washed it.
- 16 AJ: But it was much - it was much longer when you were in high school, huh?
- 17 AC: Yes. So there it is.
- 18 AJ: Wow. That's beautiful.
- 19 AC: Thank you. Thank you. I need to trim the ends, it's getting all kinds of yech. Yeah, so,
20 just...Anyway! Like, I just washed it, so it's all like bleh!
- 21 AJ: Yeah.
- 22 AC: But you know, in high school, the hair was still pretty long and stuff, and - you know, I don't - I
23 think people just saw me as, like, some angsty long-haired kid. You know? Which I was, you
24 know, but I don't necessarily - I still got mislabeled quite a bit but, you know, like, I think I just
25 didn't want to think about much of anything in high school, I was just like, "Nyeh, I'm angry."
- 26 AJ: Right.
- 27 AC: You know, but then, again, you know, I really felt so much freedom to just explore this concept
28 of gender within myself after I moved in with Lynette and Venus, because suddenly there's
29 nothing saying "You can't be this person."
- 30 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 31 AC: You know, and I'm like, I want to be this person, you know? Like, I always loved gender
32 expression, you know? Like, I've - and when I still felt like - 'cause I remember growing up, you
33 know, like, like I said, I was always drawn to a more kind of feminine expression. I remember the

- 1 movie The Bodyguard.
- 2 AJ: Oh, yeah.
- 3 AC: I just remember being, like, however old I would've been when that came out, maybe, like,
4 seven or something? You know, and I'd always, like, kind of, you know, reenact scenes, you
5 know, and I was always Whitney Houston, you know, and it was fucking amazing, you know?
6 And like, hey! It was awesome, you know? Like, I loved being her character, you know? And like,
7 I was always just so drawn to that, you know?
- 8 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 9 AC: And I do remember wondering why it was, like, such a bad thing if I was, like, if I wanted to
10 express myself that way, you know, like, growing up, like, it seemed like, "Oh, you don't do
11 that," and I'm like, "I don't get it," you know?
- 12 AJ: Yeah.
- 13 AC: Like, I don't understand this, you know? Because I just enjoyed it so much, and like, you know,
14 the music I listened to, like, again, you know, Cher, and stuff like that, I really got - I just - I loved
15 these strong powerful females, and I wanted to - just, I don't know. I just - I loved it, you know?
16 Like, everything about it was so much more interesting, you know? You know, so after - again,
17 you know, like, I moved in with Lynette and Venus and suddenly I had freedom to be that
18 person, you know? Nothing really was there to stop me, and so I really, like I said, kind of - and
19 again, coming from a situation where, you know, everything was kind of quelled down a bit, you
20 know, I just - I just wasn't allowed, you know? Like I said. And so I think -
- 21 AJ: Yeah. So no problems, then, with, like - no challenges?
- 22 AC: When I - when I - I was working at a pizza shop at the time in Uptown Minneapolis. Papa John's
23 pizza. And a lot of the guys that worked there were pretty guy-ish, and it made them hella
24 uncomfortable, you know?
- 25 AJ: Really.
- 26 AC: Like, they didn't - you know, they didn't know how to - how to take it. I think there was a lot of
27 nervousness that if they took it the wrong way, you know, especially, like, managers and stuff,
28 that, you know, you know, they would - I don't know. They would be at fault for something or I
29 would be, like - I don't know, you know? Like, I just think they were really - just, they didn't
30 know how to handle it. You know?
- 31 AJ: Yeah.
- 32 AC: They didn't know how to handle it 'cause, you know, I mean, I would show up at - at, at, at Papa
33 John's, you know, like, and I'd have this bright red lipstick on, and, like, all this foundation, and,
34 like, you know, intense, like, bright blue, bright purple eyeshadow.
- 35 AJ: Oh, wow, okay.
- 36 AC: And then the hair and stuff, and, like, I mean, I would rock a red lip, like, I mean, the red lip is
37 just brilliant, you know?

- 1 AJ: Yes!
- 2 AC: Like, I still love it, you know? But I just think, you know, there are a lot of guys there who were
3 very guy-ish and my being around made them really uncomfortable, you know?
- 4 AJ: Yikes.
- 5 AC: Like, you know? Like - and then there's some people there who were, like, really cool with it,
6 you know? I had this one supervisor, you know, who, like, he just, like, thought it was awesome,
7 you know? Like - so it was - I guess it's always been met with a mixed reaction, you know, like
8 some people -
- 9 AJ: So you've never lost a job because of your gender identity?
- 10 AC: No, no, no. And there have been times where, you know, I feel like maybe it's helped to a
11 certain extent, you know?
- 12 AJ: Oh, cool.
- 13 AC: Like, I mean...you know, just, like, you know, there's - I mean, it's - it's weird, like, I feel like, you
14 know, sometimes, you know, there's this kind of...people want to be - I don't know exactly how
15 to describe it.
- 16 AJ: More avant garde, more hip, more -
- 17 AC: Well, no, I don't know, like - well, because, like, I think who I am - like I said, I work at the
18 Ordway right now.
- 19 AJ: Okay. Yeah.
- 20 AC: And I feel like who I am is really appreciated there.
- 21 AJ: Sure.
- 22 AC: You know? Like -
- 23 AJ: It's a creative environment...
- 24 AC: And I think, you know, like, you know...I don't know. Like, I don't feel like it's been met with
25 anything bad, you know?
- 26 AJ: That's good!
- 27 AC: Like -
- 28 AJ: That's absolutely good. I'm thrilled to hear that.
- 29 AC: You know, I mean, out in public, you know, I've definitely had different experiences, you know?
30 Like - but as far as -
- 31 AJ: Like, street harassment and that kind of stuff?
- 32 AC: Oh, yeah. Oh, plenty, plenty, plenty. You know, like, that is where it's really posed, you know, a
33 lot of issues as far as like, jobs and school and stuff like that. Maybe it's just because I've always

1 kept myself around creative people and stuff.

2 AJ: Sure.

3 AC: Who are, you know, more open about that than, like, you know, like, the job that I had the
4 trouble with, you know, was Papa John's, you know, where it was just like -

5 AJ: Right, just kind of a -

6 AC: Yeah, just like -

7 AJ: - corporate...

8 AC: Yeah. You know, that's where I had it. And, well, I suppose, you know, I had some - I worked at a
9 hotel gift shop for a bit of time in downtown Minneapolis. The Marriot. And, you know, there
10 were a lot of bro-ish guys working there, and you know, they never really - they weren't mean to
11 me or anything, but they never really seemed particularly nice to me, either.

12 AJ: Right.

13 AC: They were just kind of, like, you know, like - and I definitely - you know, at the time I had, like,
14 kind of shorter hair and stuff, but, you know, I've always gone back and forth, you know? Like
15 here and there, anyway. But you know, so...really I think, you know, I've always kept myself
16 around creative people, you know, and, like, I've been able to, you know - it just hasn't posed as
17 much of an issue, you know, like, going to Hamline, getting my undergrad done there, you know,
18 I think that was cool because I was around other writers and other creative people who just
19 didn't have that -

20 AJ: Those same hang-ups?

21 AC: Yeah. Yeah. You know.

22 AJ: What about your love life? Are you involved with anybody right now?

23 AC: This is very good. Phew. I...I...just got out of a year and a half long relationship.

24 AJ: I'm sorry.

25 AC: Yeah. It ended about, oh, a month and a half ago.

26 AJ: Wow, that's very recent.

27 AC: Yeah. And that was really, really tough, because, you know, you just let yourself - it was my
28 longest relationship, you know? Thus far. And, I don't know. Like, he just kind of had all these
29 different thoughts and stuff about, you know, like, where the relationship would go, and like,
30 what it will - just how it will change, and, like, you know, in good ways, like, ooh, what's next,
31 I'm - I'm so excited. And, you know, then things don't quite work out the way you envision
32 them, and you end up in this space where you're like, "Wow," you know, "this is not what I
33 thought it would be, and it's been kind of a year and a half."

34 AJ: Wow.

1 AC: And, you know, so I just -
2 AJ: A guy? With a guy?
3 AC: Yeah. With a guy. And - you know, I just - I knew that, like, things weren't really going to work
4 out, so, you know. I just kind of had to, like, stop that, and it was tough, because, you know, I
5 definitely had a lot of emotion involved.
6 AJ: Sure.
7 AC: You know?
8 AJ: A year and a half. That's a long time.
9 AC: Yeah. You know, and I did see this - this person quite a bit, you know? And he doesn't live that
10 far away, so!
11 AJ: Oh, wow.
12 AC: There are energies, you know?
13 AJ: Yeah.
14 AC: There are energies that, you know - you know, things are haunted.
15 AJ: Wow. Maybe you guys will get to hang out a little bit more.
16 AC: It - it'll definitely take some time.
17 AJ: Yeah.
18 AC: You know, like, 'cause, you know - I've - one thing that's always been tough for me in a
19 relationship is, just, willingness to be emotionally vulnerable, you know? That's putting a lot out
20 there. And so if you do, and what you get back doesn't feel like it's really taking notice of
21 vulnerability you're putting out there, you know, it's not really valued, it's not cared for, and
22 relationship when that happens, it's - it's - it's - it's - it's quite devastating. You know?
23 AJ: Sure.
24 AC: You know, so it's a situation where, you know, I think...perhaps this person and I could come
25 back together and, like, be friendly and kind to one another, but not for quite some time.
26 AJ: Yeah.
27 AC: Yeah. So.
28 AJ: Sorry to hear that.
29 AC: Yeah. These things happen.
30 AJ: Yes. What - what do you think about the term Two Spirit, and, you know, you - you identify as
31 Native American, but you don't use that language, so I'm just curious as to what you think about
32 it.

- 1 AC: You know, I think it's perfectly fitting for somebody who wants to use that term. For me, again, I
2 never grew up with that term, you know? Like, so it's weird to, like, suddenly call myself
3 something new.
- 4 AJ: Yeah. Absolutely.
- 5 AC: You know? Like I said, I've always been - I've always called myself a gay androgynous Native guy,
6 you know? Like, heh, you know, like, that's where it's been, you know?
- 7 AJ: Right.
- 8 AC: Like, you know, and then suddenly there was this term, and I thought - I just - I - and it applied
9 to me. It applied to who I was, you know? But it was just, like, I - again, not growing up with it,
10 you know, in my kind of everyday vernacular and stuff like that, it was, like - and also, after
11 feeling, like - you know, 'cause I feel like I came, you know, became more aware of this term,
12 you know, after I feel like I found a lot of stability in who I was.
- 13 AJ: In - right. Yeah. So why - why mess with that, right?
- 14 AC: Yeah, you know? So I was just, like, you know, I guess - you know, it's a term that if other people
15 want to use it, well then that's absolutely fine, you know.
- 16 AJ: Sure.
- 17 AC: That's your term. Own that term. You know? But for me, it just always felt kind of, like, strange
18 to label it after the fact, you know? Label myself after the fact, if that makes sense.
- 19 AJ: Yeah. Do you know people in that community, or people who identify as such?
- 20 AC: Kind of through art and stuff. I had some visual painting artwork as part of the show that was at
21 the Two Rivers - Rivers Gallery in Minneapolis.
- 22 AJ: Right! I remember that. Yeah.
- 23 AC: Yeah.
- 24 AJ: It was a beautiful show.
- 25 AC: Yeah, it was - it was really, really awesome.
- 26 AJ: It was called - it was called Two -
- 27 AC: The Many Faces of Two Spirit.
- 28 AJ: Right, The Many Faces of Two Spirit.
- 29 AC: Yeah, and so that was really awesome, to be a part of that and, you know, kind of to, you know,
30 just, like, get to know other people who, you know, were, you know, gay and indigenous, you
31 know? Or, you know - you know, whatever it was, you know, like trans, you know, like, just
32 under - under that LGBTQ kind of rainbow.
- 33 AJ: Sure.

1 AC: So through art, you know, and that kind of community, you know, I've been able to, you know,
2 really meet, you know, other cool artists, you know, who I have that kind of connection with,
3 you know? Like, 'cause I don't feel like I grew up around a lot of, like, Natives who identified as
4 some part of, like, LGBTQ. And like, so suddenly I'm like, "Oh! Wow, there - there are others out
5 there. That's so awesome." You know?

6 AJ: Yeah. Cool. So - have you ever, like, I know you - you have this - you did some artwork in the
7 Two Spirit exhibition. Have you ever worked for or volunteered with any LGBT or trans or -
8 organizations at all?

9 AC: I haven't. It's something that I've definitely wanted to do, and it's interesting, you know, I've
10 read - doing the readings with two things, really. Well, Intermedia Arts has really kind of made
11 me want to take on, just, more. Because there's something that's been very exciting for me to
12 be a part of the Queer Voices reading series.

13 AJ: Yeah!

14 AC: It's just been so, like, gosh -

15 AJ: With someone who I know very personally.

16 AC: Yeah.

17 AJ: Co-curates.

18 AC: Yeah. You know, that's been so, so awesome, you know? And then just a few days ago, I think I
19 mentioned to you being part of this, like, youth panel, like -

20 AJ: Right, exactly! Yeah.

21 AC: You know, and just, like, being there, and hearing this kids talk, oh my gosh, it was something,
22 you know? It's like, you know, and then thinking, you know, I think part of my mid-twenties has
23 been realizing that, you know, my narrative is important. What I've been through is important.

24 AJ: Absolutely.

25 AC: And, you know, what I've experienced -

26 AJ: Which is why I asked you to be a part of this conversation today.

27 AC: Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate it. You know, and then starting to realize, you know, like,
28 there's, you know, I need to - I want to do - I, you know, that - you know, the narrative needs to
29 be out there. Not just for me. There is an element of it that's very cathartic, you know?

30 AJ: Yes.

31 AC: To be able to talk about this stuff that I do feel like for a lot of my childhood and stuff wasn't
32 really - was kind of kept behind something, you know? Like - so there was this element of
33 "Wow." You know, like, I can talk about this stuff, you know? Like...you know, even family
34 suddenly, like, you know, I have the autonomy to talk about this stuff, this stuff that I suddenly -
35 I couldn't, when I was a kid, you know? Like, so there's this cathartic element of it, you know,

1 but at that same time, something I'm realizing - well, who are these other people that might be
2 going through something similar that I went through when I was that age, you know? Like, what
3 - what, you know - you know, they're out there, you know? And like, if my story and stuff can
4 inspire them in any way, shape, or form, I think that's absolutely the most important thing. You
5 know, again, being, you know, in this panel, and just giving, you know, the words that I had,
6 anyway, to these kids, you know, and hearing them talk, and creating, you know, seeing this
7 space be created for them, you know, I was facilitating, and I did have some stuff to say, but
8 also, you know, just letting it be this conversation, you know? Between all of them. That was
9 just, like -

10 AJ: Wow.

11 AC: - a really inspiring moment. And it's like, I want to do more like that, you know? And then I feel
12 like, you know...you know, I just, I - I - I have to. You know? Like, it just feels like, you know, my
13 story and stuff needs to serve that purpose, you know?

14 AJ: Sure.

15 AC: Especially because growing up with so much silence, you know, and like, "Hush, we don't talk
16 about this." Suddenly it's like, "Well, no." Now I want to talk about it, and I want to put it out
17 there, and if it helps people in any way, that's - that's - that's what I'm there for, you know?

18 AJ: Wow.

19 AC: Why not, you know? Like, 'cause I - I want to just undo that silence. You know?

20 AJ: Wow. Well, I - I've just got to say, Anthony, this has been an incredible conversation.

21 AC: Thank you.

22 AJ: Thank you so much.

23 AC: Thank you.

24 AJ: Is there anything that I didn't ask you that you really feel compelled to say?

25 AC: You know, I...you know, and it's interesting, like, I do have, like, these glimmers of something
26 that I want to say, and it's about never ever taking anything for granted, you know? The fact
27 that I can walk around and have my long hair -

28 AJ: Sure.

29 AC: - and, you know, be, you know, this, you know, as I've said, gay androgynous Native, freely, like -
30 that - I'd - I'd never, ever, ever take that for granted.

31 AJ: Perfectly beautiful -

32 AC: Perfect manicured nails!

33 AJ: - manicured nails.

34 AC: Well, and I say this, because - because of Lynette and Venus, you know, I've met a lot of, you

1 know, people from the community who went through a time where they could not present
2 themselves in that way.

3 AJ: Sure.

4 AC: You know, people who, you know, really it was hushed, you couldn't be out, you couldn't be
5 that person at all. You know, Venus went through that, you know? Like, you couldn't -

6 AJ: Yeah.

7 AC: - be out. This one friend of theirs who recently passed, you know, his name was Don, and he was
8 an older gay gentleman, and, you know, I mean, just hearing him talk, you know, about just like,
9 just, you know, what it was like, that kind of struggle, you know?

10 AJ: Sure.

11 AC: Being kind of in a dark age, you know, not being willing - or not being free to just be who you
12 are.

13 AJ: Right.

14 AC: Like, I never ever take that for granted. And I guess that's what I want to say, you know, like, I
15 have this appearance, and I do all this, but I know that it's so much more - I - there's a lot to it,
16 you know? Like, there's a lot to my being able to be that person, you know? Like, and that is so
17 significant. And for me to do this, I never ever think of it as some, like, oh, and - I don't know.
18 Does this make sense?

19 AJ: Yeah. It's - honey, it's your thoughts.

20 AC: I know, I know.

21 AJ: I'm not judging that.

22 AC: I know. I just - you know, I guess -

23 AJ: It totally makes sense, though. Absolutely.

24 AC: You know -

25 AJ: I mean, what I hear you saying - the word hasn't come out, but it feels like you're saying "This is
26 a privilege, and I don't want to take it for granted"? Is that -

27 AC: Yeah. Yeah.

28 AJ: - kind of what you're saying?

29 AC: You know -

30 AJ: I don't want to put words in your mouth, though, so.

31 AC: You know, I feel like I have this ability now - I have this ability now to, you know, walk around
32 and express myself, especially, you know, in terms of gender, and my sexual orientation, and I
33 don't get as much heat for it. But I realize that wasn't always the case for people.

- 1 AJ: Yeah.
- 2 AC: Because of people like Venus and people I've met through Venus and Lynette, you know, who
3 are from a generation where you got all kinds of heat. It was dangerous to be out. You couldn't
4 be out -
- 5 AJ: Sure.
- 6 AC: - because you might get killed. I am so aware of that, and I think as a young person, for me,
7 that's really important to be aware of that, you know? Like, and that nothing I do, especially
8 when it comes to gender and sexual orientation, that is part of, like, the now and the ability to
9 be out, you know? It's never, ever something I take for granted.
- 10 AJ: Sure.
- 11 AC: Because I know people have lost their lives, because of - of - of trying to express themselves.
12 And you know, that's one of the things that was really important for me. At Intermedia the
13 other day, you know, it was, like, being around these kids, you know, who just, you know -
- 14 AJ: Yeah, I mean -
- 15 AC: - who just wanted that safe space, you know? To be able to express themselves, you know?
- 16 AJ: Sure.
- 17 AC: And, you know, I don't know, it's just - it was - it was - it was something, you know? Like - I don't
18 know. So I guess I just, I - I never take that freedom for granted, and I never could, and I think,
19 again, being in my mid-twenties, that - for me anyways, very significant, you know?
- 20 AJ: Wow.
- 21 AC: That, you know, some people have gone through so much just to be who they are. And thinking
22 about a lot of young kids now, who when they do come out, it's met with so much animosity,
23 you know? You know, there are no safe spaces. You know, my being able - you know, there isn't
24 a Lynette and Venus for everybody -
- 25 AJ: Right?
- 26 AC: - to like, meet.
- 27 AJ: Yeah.
- 28 AC: You know, like, that's - it just - it - it kills me, because somebody just wants to be who they are
29 and they can't, you know? And there's no place for them to go to be who they are. You know,
30 who I am right now, I never take any of those freedoms for granted, or whatever, you know? So
31 I feel like that's definitely something that I really want to, just, say, you know, like -
- 32 AJ: Perfect.
- 33 AC: Thank you. Yeah.
- 34 AJ: All right. Well, thank you so much -

- 1 AC: Thank you.
- 2 AJ: - for participating. Appreciate your time, your honesty.
- 3 AC: Thank you.
- 4 AJ: And - until we meet again, my friend.
- 5 AC: Yes.
- 6 AJ: Bye!
- 7 AC: Thank you.
- 8