

Geena Rocero
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

November 16, 2016



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 Geena Rocero -GR
3
4

5 AJ: So, my name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian with the Transgender Oral History
6 Project. Today is November 16, 2016, just one week after an historic election. I guess all of them are
7 historic, but this one has been painful for a lot of people. I'm here on the campus of the University of
8 Minnesota and I am here today with the lovely, talented and amazing Ms. Geena Rocero. Geena, how
9 are you doing?

10 GR: I'm doing good. We could say this because I love you, it's actually pronounced Rocero.

11 AJ: Rocero. Thank you for correcting me.

12 GR: It's the oral love, how's that?

13 AJ: Yes, absolutely. So, just for all practical purposes, I'm going to ask you to state your name,
14 again, so that we make sure we have it correct. How do we spell your name? Can you tell me
15 your gender identity today, your gender assigned at birth, and the pronouns that you use?

16 GR: Sure. My name is Geena Rocero. That's spelled G-e-e-n-a. Do you want me to do this now? Is
17 it good?

18 AJ: Yeah, right now – do it right now.

19 GR: My name is Geena Rocero. Spelled G-e-e-n-a, last name R-o-c-e-r-o. Assigned boy at birth,
20 identify as a trans woman. Preferred pronoun is she, goddess maybe.

21 AJ: Goddess.

22 GR: You know in the Philippines we don't have pronouns; we don't have he or she.

23 AJ: Really?

24 GR: Oh, yeah – we don't, in the Tagalog language.

25 AJ: Say the language again.

26 GR: Tagalog is pretty much the main language in the Philippines.

27 AJ: T-o-g-o . . .

28 GR: Tagalog spelled is T-a-g-a-l-o-g.

29 AJ: OK, all right.

30 GR: The gender neutral that we use is siya.

31 AJ: Siya.

32 GR: S-i-y-a, we don't have he or she.

- 1 AJ: Wow, OK. So, everyone just knows and understands when you use this gender-neutral sort of
2 pronoun who you're referring to?
- 3 GR: Yeah, it's referring to that person – that immediate person that one is describing. I think it's a . .
4 . I think the complicated stuff around because we were colonized by Americans so people
5 understand he/she, people speak English fluently, school is taught in English in the Philippines -
6 a lot of the subjects. There are some in Tagalog, but mostly science is taught in English, Math,
7 pretty much a lot of things.
- 8 AJ: Wow, so much to talk about, Geena.
- 9 GR: So much.
- 10 AJ: But let's just start from the earliest, earliest beginning.
- 11 GR: Sure.
- 12 AJ: Can you tell me what is your earliest memory in life? Just keep in mind it does not have to be
13 around your gender identity . . .
- 14 GR: Right.
- 15 AJ: . . . but if it is, that's perfectly OK. But, just what is the first thing you remember?
- 16 GR: Really . . . it's a great question, I love this question when people ask this. I think one of the early
17 memories that I remember is we were in a family picnic and I was riding a bike, I was trying to
18 ride a bike and I was insisting that I ride a bike, but because I was so short I was telling my
19 aunties, "I can do this, just help me out because my legs can't . . ."
- 20 AJ: Couldn't come all the way down.
- 21 GR: So, that's some of my early memories. The other memory that comes up is instead of
22 breastfeeding to my mom, I was asking for the milk bottle, but instead of milk I want chocolate –
23 like milk chocolate.
- 24 AJ: What???
- 25 GR: That's one of the things I remember – that I want that. Actually, my mom told me when I was
26 asking, it was like, "Do you remember when I used to . . .?" And she remembers, like, "Do you
27 remember that even your 1st grade in elementary school, you even asked to have the chocolate
28 milk to continue – not in your bottle, but to continue that, because you loved chocolate milk –
29 milk chocolate."
- 30 AJ: That's funny. You know, I have had the pleasure of watching your Ted Talk and you talk about
31 the t-shirt on your hair, which is a very similar story to what Janet talks about, Janet Mock, in
32 her growing up in Hawaii or Pacific Island, and sort of having that same sort of similar
33 experience with a towel, and she used to put a towel on her head. Is that an API thing?
- 34 GR: Maybe, I hear this a lot – certainly I hear this a lot, especially when I speak people would
35 mention that same sort of interaction with the towel with the head.

- 1 AJ: Sure.
- 2 GR: Not even necessarily with someone who is trans, even like a young effeminate gay boy who
3 wants to . . .
- 4 AJ: Be glamorous.
- 5 GR: I think there is a connection on the first interaction, like this expression of this is my feminine
6 side and the first idea of a feminine person is having long hair. But, for me, that's one of the
7 first things that I remember in connection to I loved playing with Barbies. I think really that's my
8 first interaction to fashion. So, there's four of us – there's brother . . . so the oldest is brother,
9 sister, and then my next sister and me. I was the youngest. The immediate sister next to me,
10 she's a little bit more on the tomboy-ish side. So, mom and dad will give her Barbie but I would
11 steal it and she's OK with it, she's fine with it. And then I would play with my Barbies and play
12 with a lot of . . . sort of the remaining fabric from the tailor shops – we would go there and ask
13 for remaining fabric, and that's sort of the initiation of, "Oh, there's something I can play around
14 with, fabric," and that led to . . . you know, I remember memories after I'd take a shower. First
15 of all, it's super hot in the Philippines – super hot, so you take a shower at least four or five
16 times.
- 17 AJ: Is that right?
- 18 GR: It's sweaty, it's hot and humid. So, one of my favorite things is like when I take a shower and
19 then after you take a shower, I have an excuse to wrap my head with a towel and feel that
20 connection and look at myself in the mirror and it's like, "I'm femme, look at this." Or, when we
21 would play with . . . my favorite thing was when I would play with mom asking you to clean up
22 your bed and the blanket and I would put it . . . and it's so long, and like wrap it around and tie it
23 up in my hair, just so long in that blanket. It's my initial connection to feel feminine. And it's
24 funny, because when I talk . . . it's funny you said that, I definitely hear that a lot in the
25 Philippines. I also hear it here in the U.S., people have mentioned that as well - the towel and
26 blanket. Another thing that . . . I know Jazz Jennings talks about this a lot on *Little Mermaid*,
27 mermaids, because in the Philippines we have access to American pop culture, I remember . . . I
28 don't know . . . I was seven, and I was watching Betamax, not VHS . . .
- 29 AJ: Not VHS, Betamax.
- 30 GR: Betamax, rented, but a neighbor had a Betamax and I was watching *Little Mermaid* and I
31 remember peeking through . . . like literally it was happening her on the video, me peeking
32 through and looking at just a sense of connection – whether it's the technical half-body, half-
33 whatever, but just felt connected with mermaid – that's who I am. I didn't know how to
34 describe it but just that sense of connection and why I loved *Little Mermaid* – it allowed me to
35 access.
- 36 AJ: That's fascinating. I know that Jazz has a *Little Mermaid* outfit that she swims in.
- 37 GR: A lot of trans people that I have spoken to, you know, if you ask a young trans person some of
38 the early Disney characters, people would refer to the *Little Mermaid*.

- 1 AJ: Wow, I've never thought about it. I mean . . .
- 2 GR: That's the beauty of it, right? Because it's so different, but I hear that a lot.
- 3 AJ: Yeah, it's maybe a generational thing – I'm a little older than the *Little Mermaid*. So, you grew
4 up in the Philippines?
- 5 GR: Yes.
- 6 AJ: What was that like, beyond taking five showers a day?
- 7 GR: I grew up poor, but I grew up in a very small neighborhood. I was born and raised in the city,
8 I've always been a city girl.
- 9 AJ: Which city?
- 10 GR: It's called Makati. Makati is a city in Manila – Manila is sort of like the metro.
- 11 AJ: OK.
- 12 GR: I grew up in this tiny little alley in Makati.
- 13 AJ: How do you spell Makati?
- 14 GR: M-a-k-a-t-i.
- 15 AJ: OK. Makati. That's easy.
- 16 GR: Yeah, and I grew up poor. Our houses . . . I mean some would say that we live in a . . . it's
17 literally houses next to each other separated by a wall – like plywood wall to wood. What's the
18 word I'm looking for? Not . . .
- 19 AJ: Like row houses?
- 20 GR: It's like stacked one after on top of the other, you know. Some people say it looks like a
21 squatter house but it's not really because it's my grandma's house that we were living at – that
22 my grandma gave to my mom. But it's that kind of house – like I smell someone's cooking and
23 we could just walk in, it's that really intimate community.
- 24 AJ: It's really close.
- 25 GR: Initially the house that we were staying at, it's wood and it's . . . it's a shack, it's basic. We were
26 living underneath and there is a family that lives above us, which is my auntie and then when
27 they moved out, we moved upstairs and somebody moved downstairs from us – a different
28 family that my mom is renting. It's a very, very humble . . . it's next to each other. Everybody
29 knows each other, it's very familial. That little alley was my playground – always outside. I used
30 to be . . . my mom used to always be the one screaming during summer at lunch time. My boy
31 nickname was June-June.
- 32 AJ: June-June.
- 33 GR: "June-June, come over, lunch is ready," because I am always outside playing street games
34 whether it's . . . we have this thing called Agawan Base, which is like a tag equivalent here in the
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- 1 U.S., or soccer, or the Philippine version of soccer, or Chinese Garter. I was always outside, bare
2 feet.
- 3 AJ: Wow.
- 4 GR: Bare feet, super dark. Always outside, always in the sun, always the one being called to come
5 and take a break because I'm always outside – we were always outside, that's our game. Much
6 later on, yes, we got introduced to Nintendo but it's outdoor, especially when it's full moon and
7 we'd do hide 'n seek and we would play – always outside.
- 8 AJ: What was school like? You went to school in the Philippines?
- 9 GR: Yes, so my mom is an elementary teacher.
- 10 AJ: Oh, wow. OK.
- 11 GR: Yeah, she was a 3rd grade elementary teacher. And, it's interesting because I love it because my
12 mom is there and she certainly has a certain position of power and she's also . . .
- 13 AJ: So, you went to the school where your mom teaches?
- 14 GR: Yeah, yeah. And so, Guadalupe Viejo Elementary School, and each grade there is five sections
15 and she teaches the third section. And my brother, the oldest brother and my sister that was
16 close to me, my mom was their teacher in their 3rd grade because they were in third section, but
17 because I was always in first section, the smart kids . . . just kidding. So, my mom . . . I was like,
18 "My mom was not my teacher, I love her." But my mom is a big presence growing up, she was
19 the breadwinner too. My dad was the best stay-at-home dad – he's the one who cooks, he's the
20 one that does the laundry, the one who gives us a shower in the morning on the way to school.
- 21 AJ: So, you grew up with your parents intact, your family was together.
- 22 GR: Oh, yeah, family together – like really together, eating together. School was interesting. I loved
23 the extra-curricular activities. My mom was teaching dance, I loved to dance – folk dance.
24 Obviously at the time I couldn't be the girl's position, can't be that – I wanted to be that.
- 25 AJ: So, you were policed? Your gender expression was very much . . .
- 26 GR: Oh, yes – be the boy, be in the boy's section. I think when I have a conversation now with my
27 mom, she always says, "You always were effeminate." And, she would mention this thing – her
28 co-teacher would always tell her there's something about my skin that was so smooth.
- 29 AJ: Yeah.
- 30 GR: I have no idea where that would come from, but that's what my mom would remember. When I
31 would ask her whether some of those initial memories that you thought of that I expressed very
32 effeminate, the way I walk and all that. But, also I was always afraid because . . . and it's still a
33 sense of trauma, it still triggers something in me. We had this public transportation in the
34 Philippines, a tricycle, which is usually what we would take from our house to school – from
35 here to maybe downtown. It's like a 10-minute or 15-minute ride but because we were young,
36 sometimes we would take that. However, sometimes when I would walk from home to school,

- 1 the man that drives that, they would scream at me – the word called, “bakla.” Bakla is this
2 Tagalog word, it’s a complicated word – it has a very sort of indigenous history, but spoken in
3 that tone, the way they would say it is basically saying, “Faggot.”
- 4 AJ: Yeah.
- 5 GR: I would always get taunted – like all the time. They would just see me – I guess they would see
6 the way I walk or just loud and flamboyant or effeminate and I would get screamed at all the
7 time – all the time. It still happens every time . . . just because of the nature of the Filipino
8 culture or the men that just feel entitled to do that and that brought a lot of memory of fear and
9 I was so afraid of that for a long time.
- 10 AJ: Even now too?
- 11 GR: Even now, I mean it’s . . .
- 12 AJ: To you or to other girls?
- 13 GR: It still happens. Some of the girls said less and less, but certainly when I was in the Philippines, I
14 think, in 2000 . . . when did I bring my boyfriend to the Philippines? I brought him in 2009. We
15 were walking, holding hands together and I wanted to show him where I grew up. I felt so
16 femme in my dress, we were walking, and that fricking tricycle driver drove past us and
17 screamed at me, “bakla.”
- 18 AJ: Oh, my God.
- 19 GR: I felt so embarrassed. I actually lied to my boyfriend because he asked me, “What was that?” I
20 said, “I think maybe he’s talking to his friend.” I was so embarrassed. So, it still happens.
21 Because trans people are so visible in the Philippines, I go there and I’m clockable – people
22 know. I experience the taunting and depending on where you live in the neighborhood . . .
- 23 AJ: I can’t imagine how one would know.
- 24 GR: And that’s complicated, right?
- 25 AJ: There’s no outward symbols.
- 26 GR: Because it’s in the Philippines, because it’s so visible because they . . . the concept of passing, I
27 have an obviously complicated relationship because of where I grew up in that culture. Passing
28 is not a . . . I didn’t have that luxury, in the Philippines, because I was a well-known trans beauty
29 queen. It’s also, people know – people could clock. I’m pretty tall and so I . . . can be spotted.
30 So, that’s my relationship with street harassment. Which, at that time I was just like, “Holy crap,
31 why am I doing this?” But, do I . . . I think at the time define it as sexual harassment? Probably a
32 different thing but yeah, it’s . . .
- 33 AJ: What about in school? Were you . . .?
- 34 GR: I would get teased about my femininity. In elementary, because my mom was a teacher, it was
35 a little different. So, they know Mrs. Rocero, don’t mess with her. There’s still some students

- 1 that would just say, “Bakla (inaudible),” meaning, “You acted that certain way because you’re . .
2 .” Bakla means gay but the way they say it is basically the f word.
- 3 AJ: Right. How do you spell bakla?
- 4 GR: It’s spelled as b-a-k-l-a.
- 5 AJ: OK, all right. And the only reason why I’m asking you this is because I know . . . Hi, Mary, my
6 transcriptionist, she’s going to write me and say, “Andrea, what did she say? How did she spell
7 that?”
- 8 GR: No, please – ask me any questions.
- 9 AJ: So, there was some teasing and harassment in school. What about high school?
- 10 GR: High school . . . so, I went to two high schools. The first and second year I went to that city, in
11 Makati, and that was my first sort of getting away from the comforts of my mom, the protection
12 of my mom because she was a teacher and, “Don’t mess with me.” So, yeah. I think that’s also
13 when I first expressed feelings toward other men, where it validated my feeling that, “Wow, I
14 think that guy is really handsome, I think he’s really cute, I really like him.” And I remember
15 being turned down, like sort of . . . turned down, being so cozy. I remember seeing, “Jeffrey
16 Caliendo.” Being so cozy with him and it’s like, “You know, I’m not gay.” But it’s weird because
17 sometimes there are moments where I would feel that he would reciprocate that softness and
18 the way I approached him or he would walk with me in school during recess, but definitely I got
19 rejected – like, “I can’t continue this.” And here I am fantasizing he’s going to be my boyfriend.
20 But yeah, getting teased – I was getting teased every time during physical education where we
21 had to wear shorts. Girl, I just wanted to show my legs.
- 22 AJ: Right.
- 23 GR: And be like, “It’s super short.” I’d get teased, “Bakla, your legs are too much, don’t make it too
24 short.” I would get so teased out, being policed about my feminine expression. But then I
25 would always just want to hang out with the girls and every time in the section with the girls, I
26 wouldn’t get teased out. So, it’s there, it’s definitely there being policed all the time. In the
27 third and fourth year of high school where we moved out from that high school and the city, we
28 moved to the suburbs, it was a little less. And I owe it sort of like the . . . we’ll call it trans but at
29 the time they identified as bakla, which is sort of like this umbrella term. We would call them
30 bakla but people think that they’re gay boy. I moved into this new high school that has a long
31 history of the people that was above me, that they have such presence. I came in there with
32 that history of them, that they are sort of the queens and they’re popular so don’t mess around.
33 So, in that second part of my high school, the taunting and the teasing, it’s a little less. I was . . .
34 not super, like an A student, but I hung around with the cool folks.
- 35 AJ: Yeah.
- 36 GR: And I was so flamboyant in owning it. I had my fan, I had my barrettes with like two butterflies
37 that twinkles like that. I benefited from the people who made it possible for me. So, yeah – I
38 was feminized with my expression and owned it. But, it was a Catholic school so the guidance

- 1 counselors were always like, “You have to cut your hair short,” and the uniform – it’s a private
2 school so there was a uniform. The women had to wear the skirt and the blouse with the pocket
3 and the boys have to wear pants and . . .
- 4 AJ: A polo shirt or something.
- 5 GR: A polo shirt. And I was like . . . every beginning of the school year, I’m going to a very specific
6 tailor because I want my shirt to be . . . looks like a blouse with a pocket, and then my pants will
7 be sort of tailored. So, I did that, and I would steal my sister’s . . . I was in junior high, she was in
8 senior high, so I would steal her . . . I think it’s called Mary Jane, the shoes.
- 9 AJ: The shoes – yeah, yeah, yeah. Mary Janes.
- 10 GR: But I call it the doll shoes. So, I would wear them. I remember the fun vision of her chasing me
11 in the corridor saying, “Don’t use my shoes,” because I would wear them. And then I would get
12 in trouble and be called into the guidance counselors and they’d be like, “You can’t do that, you
13 can’t continue doing this.” It’s like, “I’m not going to go to school . . . I’m not going to continue
14 going to school if you don’t allow me to be this.” And they just continue letting me – I stood up.
- 15 AJ: Yeah, wow. When did you first realize that you were not the gender you were assigned at birth?
- 16 GR: Very young – like four years old, around that time. I just felt like I . . . I think maybe I owe it to
17 the culture of the huge beauty pageants – Miss Universe and Miss World, where it’s like a
18 national sport in the Philippines – pageants. Beauty pageants are huge in the Philippines. So, I
19 would always first . . .
- 20 AJ: Because there are so many beautiful women and people.
- 21 GR: It’s part of the culture, but I think I would just really always express the way I walk and every
22 time I would walk, like joining the beauty pageant, that’s when I feel connected to that feminine
23 self and I would do that at such a young age. But truly, I think, the one day I really defined it at
24 such an early age was when I would wear the towel – that’s when it felt like, “I’m so queenly.”
- 25 AJ: It felt normal to you.
- 26 GR: Yeah, like four or five years old.
- 27 AJ: It felt like, “This is who I should be.”
- 28 GR: “This is who I am.”
- 29 AJ: Wow.
- 30 GR: It felt so good.
- 31 AJ: Did you ever experience trying to deny that part of yourself?
- 32 GR: Oh, yeah. In elementary school, I was actually forced to have a crush with this girl. Her name
33 was Jasmine. We were in the same class and I was being teased that . . . I was being shamed,
34 like, “You’re bakla, bakla, bakla.” And sort of we were being partnered, we were in 4th grade, so

- 1 we were sort of like . . . every time we would have an excursion, like a class excursion and stuff .
2 . .
- 3 AJ: Like a little field trip.
- 4 GR: A field trip and there would be buddy-buddy and things like that. So, we became sort of like
5 buddy-buddy and we were sort of forced into it. Or, like, "I will play this role," like maybe I'm
6 Jasmine's boyfriend and things like that.
- 7 AJ: OK.
- 8 GR: But I like Jasmine because she's super freaking smart, I just want to hang around her. So, I was
9 forced. I tried to do that, I tried to sort of conform at that age to maybe I'll be Jasmine's
10 boyfriend but I think Jasmine knows – definitely.
- 11 AJ: Ahh, funny. Wow, so, what terms do you use to describe yourself today?
- 12 GR: I'm a trans woman.
- 13 AJ: That's a political term.
- 14 GR: Yeah, yeah. I'm an immigrant, I'm curious.
- 15 AJ: I say that's a political term because . . . I'm speculating clearly, I mean you could just identify as a
16 woman and no one would ever question that.
- 17 GR: Yeah, that too – yeah.
- 18 AJ: At least not here in this country.
- 19 GR: I do, certainly I don't carry the word trans woman all the time. If it's my work, but certainly now
20 more than ever with what happened in the election, now more than ever I wouldn't carry that
21 word. It's a complicated relationship with how I identify with the word trans woman and how I
22 identify that publicly, personally, at work situations, sitting next to each other on the plane – it's
23 a constant negotiation. Do I say that? Do I need to talk about that? Do I need to talk about
24 this? I'm certainly a woman of trans experience. I think my womanhood in all of its form and
25 complexities, there's a power in that. I got so much of my power, certainly, in my own definition
26 and especially after I had my surgery where I felt complete, and I felt I wanted to own this
27 femininity, this womanhood in my own definition. I'm a powerful woman.
- 28 AJ: And please don't hear me saying anything negative. It is a political term and I'm just wondering
29 how you . . . why do you feel it is important to use that label and I just want to hear you talk
30 about it.
- 31 GR: Because, for the longest . . . I want to carry that identity as a trans woman because for the
32 longest time I was shamed to not carry that word.
- 33 AJ: Sure.
- 34 GR: When I was in New York City being a model for 10 years and I wasn't out, identifying as trans
35 was something I considered I'm ashamed of that. Obviously, I look back now and I need to heal

1 myself and accepting it, but I was carrying a lot of that shame to use that word. But also, I also
2 think about young trans women who sees me in magazines, who sees me out there being proud
3 and carrying that word and that term and that label proudly because I came on the other side of
4 that. For the longest time, I can't even identify as those trans women – like, I'm just going to do
5 my work – like, I don't want to be that trans woman. Or even there's a notion that I'm not a real
6 woman, even that sort of philosophy . . . I don't know if it's really so much of the Filipino trans
7 experience, but certainly when I have a conversation with a lot of trans women, especially an
8 intimate relationship or the way they define themselves, "I'm not a real woman, I'm a trans
9 woman – I'm not a real woman." You're as real as you are. But because it's a much-
10 complicated layer to deconstruct that, but yeah – the identity, I carry that because I'm so proud
11 of it. I'm so proud of the healing that I had to go through to accept that word and to live with
12 that word and to proudly carry that word and the long history that comes with that, and for the
13 younger generation to know to be proud of that because that makes you the powerful goddess
14 that you are. Once you get there, because we have to unpack so many things and the trauma
15 and the experience and the shame, all that stuff – I use that, I carry that whether it's at work,
16 personal, political. I own that word – I own that word because now more than ever it's so
17 critical to acknowledge that personal is political. Obviously, there's a concept of safety and
18 access and all that stuff in different places, which I choose, which I'm very aware, but I carry that
19 word. I used to not be able to just randomly have that conversation with anybody about being
20 trans. For me, with my journey as a young trans girl in the Philippines, that little alley where I
21 grew up playing outside to where I am now in the Philippines – moving here, the work that I'm
22 doing, how dare me not be proud of that, how dare me not . . . how dare me not carry that word
23 because it caused so much shame for the longest time in my life. So proud of it.

24 AJ: Yeah, wow. You're so proud that you even started an organization called Gender Proud. I want
25 you to talk about that a little bit . . .

26 GR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

27 AJ: But, I think this is a really good time to just name who you are. You're a very accomplished
28 fashion model, a TV television host, you gave a Ted Talk that has been viewed by I don't know . .
29 . millions of people, and in your Ted Talk you actually came out to the world.

30 GR: Yeah.

31 AJ: In a Ted Talk.

32 GR: Even that – for the first time saying that word and knowing that the world would see this, was
33 such a moment. So, I'm a model, I'm an artist, I'm a producer. I joke around this at times and I
34 think maybe in my next Ted Talk I'm going to come out as a closet anthropologist.

35 AJ: OK – OK.

36 GR: I think the knowledge and the discipline and the beauty and the complexity of anthropology and
37 the study of it, the philosophy of it, I look at my life through that lens. I look at my journey
38 through that lens, my history, my position in the world through the anthropological lens. So, I
39 think my curiosity in learning so much more about my culture and de-colonizing my mindset and

- 1 learning about other people's culture and the complexities of those layers, I look at it from an
2 anthropological lens. So, that's a big part of my personality, of my quest to . . .
- 3 AJ: So, in terms of looking at your life through an anthropological lens, means you connect yourself
4 to . . .
- 5 GR: History.
- 6 AJ: To history, right?
- 7 GR: Yes, and then know that my position in the world and the history that I carry with me has been
8 laid, maybe it's forgotten, maybe it was erased, obviously many times, in every single culture. I
9 want to reclaim those pasts, whether it's knowing so much more about my indigenous culture in
10 the Philippines . . . so, yeah, I look at it from an anthropological lens, my journey.
- 11 AJ: I was on your website and I noticed you posted up an article about the trans experience
12 throughout antiquity and ancient cultures.
- 13 GR: Yes, that's a big interest – ancient time.
- 14 AJ: Ancient culture and ancient times – talk a little bit about that.
- 15 GR: Yeah.
- 16 AJ: Name some names, drop some knowledge on us.
- 17 GR: So, yeah. In the Philippines, it's a country nation that was colonized by Spain. Ferdinand
18 Magellan got to the Philippines in 1521, but before we were colonized it's a country of diverse
19 dialects – language, background. So, we've known this term called Babaylan, which are the
20 spiritual healers. They're gender fluid, female, male, that sort of idea is wrapped into this
21 person – the healer. So, before Spain got to the Philippines, our priests, our healers, our
22 shamans are trans people – gender fluid people. Let's call it gender fluid people, right?
- 23 AJ: Sure.
- 24 GR: So, Philippines, at the time being it's so far away . . . and we're talking 1521 specifically, being
25 it's so far away from Spain, usually at the time when Spain, at the time, would colonize a
26 country, a place, they would usually send sort of like a governor. But because they were like,
27 "Oh, that place the Philippines, it's too far away."
- 28 AJ: "It's so hot."
- 29 GR: "So hot, instead of sending a governor, let's send a priest." So, some of the early beginnings of
30 sort of the missionary sense of like, "Let's send the missionaries." So, when priests got there
31 and realized that spiritual leaders are gender fluid people, that culture got erased.
- 32 AJ: They erased that.
- 33 GR: Yes. So, but we've known of this, there's historical records around this in the Philippines. So . . .
34 and in the Philippines I've heard of it but not really dug any deeper. I have to be honest,

- 1 growing up in the Philippines, I have a very colonized mindset because . . . an inferiority complex
2 is part of the culture in the Philippines.
- 3 AJ: It's engrained . . .
- 4 GR: It's engrained in the culture, exactly – you're not even aware of it. So, I had to move to the U.S.
5 to be awoken into this thing, to be enlightened, and I think once I have more access to more
6 information, I need to . . . it's self-taught, I need to educate myself and validate it to people who
7 are studying it. But one other bigger stuff that sort of connects this whole sort of
8 anthropological curiosity and lens and history that I am so fascinated and I'm so wanting to do
9 and tell this story. In 2012, I was in the south of Thailand, very, very south island in Thailand –
10 one-half a mile you could see Malaysia, it's that south of Thailand – so it's next to Malaysia. We
11 were vacationing there with my boyfriend and towards the end we were leaving that island to
12 go back to the mainland in Thailand. We were going on the transfer boat. My boyfriend and I
13 got into . . .
- 14 AJ: Like a ferry or . . .?
- 15 GR: Small – ferry-like, it fits 30 people. Moldy, stinky, sweaty, nasty, dirty – it's very humble.
- 16 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 17 GR: So, we were there, we got there and my boyfriend was like, "It's so nasty here, why don't we
18 find out if there is an upstairs. We took this little stairs, got upstairs and it's like the local
19 indigenous people were sitting there and live chickens, like the produce, sort of like a smoking
20 section at times. So, we were up there smoking, right? And then this guy – next to live chickens
21 and produce and all that, the transfer boat – they're transferring produce.
- 22 AJ: That's how these people get around, there's so much water.
- 23 GR: Exactly. So, I was there with my boyfriend and this guy came up and asked for a cigarette light
24 and so I gave him a light and started having a conversation. And he asked me, "So, where are
25 you from?" I said, "I'm from the Philippines." And he said, "Do you know that you're cousins of
26 the local indigenous people here called chao le?" It's like, "I know the chao le people, the local
27 tribe. What do you mean I'm cousins?" He said, "You're part of this language family called
28 Austronesian language family. It's like, "Austronesian . . . Melanesian, Polynesian, what do you
29 mean, Austronesian?" He said, "Well . . ." And he told me this story. My boyfriend was like,
30 "You were in awe." Because I'm already on that quest of finding more and more.
- 31 AJ: Sure.
- 32 GR: And this thing, in the most random place – next to live chickens, dirty, moldy produce, I had my
33 enlightenment, consciousness. And he told me . . . so, he's an anthropologist who specializes in
34 Austronesian Language Family. I bet you right after we got off that boat, researching and
35 learning more – all that stuff. It opened up . . . blew up my mind. And, these are the things that
36 were not taught in our history class in the Philippines. These sort of things, because of that
37 colonized mindset . . . maybe there's a mention of it, but everything . . . the majority of the
38 history in the Philippines was taught after Spain got there.

- 1 AJ: Wow.
- 2 GR: The erasure of the indigenous culture.
- 3 AJ: Just gone.
- 4 GR: Or growing up, because I played outside all the time, my skin gets so dark, the constant
5 reminder was, “Don’t stay in the sun for so long, you don’t want to be those aeta?” This aeta,
6 which is the indigenous culture in the mountains. “Do you want to look like those mountain
7 people?”
- 8 AJ: Wow.
- 9 GR: It just is, that’s the conversation. So, when this guy told me, I researched everything. So, then
10 when we were in . . . so from Thailand, we were actually on the way to mainland to take a plane
11 to go to Indonesia and Bali. We were in Bali, my boyfriend and I and some friends were like
12 shopping around in downtown Bali in the market and there’s a little stall of sunglasses . . . like in
13 the market, sunglasses.
- 14 AJ: Right.
- 15 GR: And then there’s a number, which is a prize and then on top of it, it says, “mata.” It’s like mata is
16 also the language in the Philippines called eye. So, it’s the same description of the language in
17 the Philippines in Indonesia. That’s why. So, basically the story of Austronesian people 7000
18 years ago, a group of indigenous culture, in Taiwan left and followed the south wind.
19 Austronesian means south wind – so from Taiwan they followed the south wind, the sailors . . .
20 the sea farers, my culture – my people, are the sea farers.
- 21 AJ: Sea farers, yeah.
- 22 GR: Catamarans started because of my people, sailing community is from my culture.
- 23 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 24 GR: Followed the south wind, got to the Philippines, this is from 7000 years ago – this I read, right?
25 So, Taiwan, Philippines, got to Indonesia and from Indonesia they went two ways. In the east,
26 they conquered Indonesia and Papua, New Guinea, all the way south to New Zealand, all the
27 way to Hawaii, all the way to Rapa Nui – the whole Pacific Islands. To the west, all throughout
28 Indonesia, but from Indonesia went straight to Madagascar. Madagascar is a country, a big
29 island next to Africa, but indigenous culture there is not . . . it’s Austronesian people. It is next
30 to Africa, they sell directly there, so it’s the biggest language migration dispersal. So, when I go
31 to Madagascar right now, there are people that look like me and I could understand some of
32 their language. So, it’s the language family – that’s how it’s connected.
- 33 AJ: Sure.
- 34 GR: And in this language family, Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii – and that’s why even growing up there’s
35 always the thought, “How come I look like Hawaiians?” Or like when I was in New York, “Are
36 you Hawaiian? Are you Polynesian?” There’s that component, right? Because that’s the
37 language migration, that’s the migration history. So, in this culture and these languages, gender

- 1 fluidity, like the Papuan, the Mahu and the Polynesian islands, it's there. There's a language,
2 there is a place in society that not a lot of people understand. So, that's my quest. The
3 anthropological stuff, that's a big part of that.
- 4 AJ: I love that. There's so much to talk about, oh my gosh. To the extent that you feel comfortable,
5 and you already sort of named this a little bit, but what sort of medical interventions have you
6 undergone?
- 7 GR: I've had my boobs done in San Francisco.
- 8 AJ: Yay.
- 9 GR: I love it. And I had my surgery in Thailand.
- 10 AJ: OK, wonderful.
- 11 GR: I love it.
- 12 AJ: Did you ever do hormonal therapy?
- 13 GR: Yes, I am on hormone therapy now. It's less and less because I've had the surgery. It's a
14 complicated relationship with hormones because in the Philippines, we don't have . . . we were
15 self-medicating. All the money that I was making joining those trans pageants when I was
16 young, I would buy birth control pills, basically, and there was some woman who would travel
17 from Japan or Thailand and every time they would come back to the Philippines and we would
18 buy . . .
- 19 AJ: Black market.
- 20 GR: Black market, yeah.
- 21 AJ: Underground.
- 22 GR: Yeah, all that stuff and it's dangerous, obviously. I have friends who died, friends who had
23 overdosed because of it – it's dangerous, I don't suggest it. But, a girl's got to survive, a girl's got
24 to feminize – whatever it takes, right? I think at 15 or 16 I started taking birth control, some sort
25 of injectable that a lady and woman would take back in the Philippines. But it didn't have the
26 proper actual taking of medication with the supervision of an endocrinologist until I got to San
27 Francisco, when I moved there in 2001, through Asian-Pacific Wellness Center through Tita Aida.
- 28 AJ: Tita Aida, the trans mother of San Francisco.
- 29 GR: The trans mother of Asian-Pacific and activism in the San Francisco area. So, yeah, we would go
30 to API every Wednesday, we would have sort of like a get together with the girls, but usually
31 through eating with food, cooking, and dinner and then we would . . . you know, talk about trans
32 stuff. And then, that's how I learned how to properly take hormone injections and all that stuff.
33 So, yeah – so, that's my relationship around hormones.
- 34 AJ: Well thank you for being willing to share around that. I always lead with that question by
35 saying, "to the extent that you feel comfortable discussing," because, you know, I personally
36 know that the trans experience goes well beyond the medical model, right?

- 1 GR: I just talked about history.
- 2 AJ: Yeah, you just talked about this long history.
- 3 GR: Can we take a quick break; I just need to go to the bathroom? Is that OK?
- 4 AJ: Oh, sure – yeah. (pause) And we are back. Geena, one of the things that I was hoping you could
5 talk about, because I know that this is a big thing for you, visibility and what's the importance of
6 it? But what's the danger of it too? And then, sort of talk about that in the context of probably,
7 one might say, the most famous trans-identified person in the world right now, Caitlyn Jenner,
8 because I know you are a part of *I am Cait*. So, visibility, what's the benefits of it, but what are
9 the challenges?
- 10 GR: Sure. Visibility, for me it started with . . . it was personal, I needed to do it first for myself. I
11 wanted to come out, I wanted to share my story. It was a personal struggle. I choose to do it in
12 the biggest possible way, through a Ted Talk which . . . who comes out in a Ted Talk, right? "It's
13 going to go viral, the world will know after 10 years." So, it was a real personal decision and I
14 wanted it because I wanted this . . . I wanted to make that impact. And talking about timing, this
15 was in 2013, before all that stuff.
- 16 AJ: Before Caitlyn.
- 17 GR: Talk about timing . . . I didn't know Laverne yet and Janet personally, because after the Ted Talk,
18 that's how we connected.
- 19 AJ: And their stories weren't as big in 2013 either, right?
- 20 GR: Yeah, so it's like there was something happening, obviously, that I think people were talking
21 about . . . I was ready, I was finally ready. So, after that Ted Talk came out, I think *Orange is the*
22 *New Black* came out, Janet's book came out.
- 23 AJ: *Redefining Realness*.
- 24 GR: And then all of a sudden, it just . . . the conversation . . . and then Caitlyn came out. So, I think to
25 the context of Caitlyn what it has done, I think, it's a beautiful thing because it allowed people in
26 the world – like it was gigantic news. Even the fact that if someone has said, "Oh, there's a trans
27 person," all over the world, it's huge. I think, for me, visibility . . . because it was a personal
28 choice, I really wanted to do it so I carried that with me because it would allow me to do my
29 work as an artist because I'm fully myself in the world – people know me. As an artist, I think
30 that I was definitely suffering, that I couldn't really fully be myself. I couldn't do the work, I
31 couldn't fully express myself in all that stuff. However, sometimes I think about what happens
32 now, what happens to privacy, what happens to that most personal . . . because I still have
33 friends that doesn't want to come out, doesn't want to carry that – and that's obviously their
34 decision.
- 35 AJ: Because of safety, because of access . . .
- 36 GR: Because of safety – and safety is important. Because now with me being visible, me being out
37 there with the possibility of stalkers, which I do, and there's some instance of me speaking in a

- 1 certain place where a random guy would come in and do some really scary stuff – you know,
2 taking pictures of me underneath while I’m speaking or somebody coming up to me and you just
3 know that this person is not supposed to be there. So, there’s that element. There’s fear
4 because I’m speaking so politically and, at times, radical – whether it’s especially media-facing
5 stuff, you tend to, at times, offend people and their point of view, especially religious point of
6 view. So, there is that danger component and I’m aware of that, but I need to be myself – I
7 need to carry that.
- 8 AJ: Absolutely.
- 9 GR: In the context of what has happened since Caitlyn Jenner, I think it just allowed people to open
10 up the conversation in mainstream, little America, intergenerational especially I think it’s
11 important to say that because I think the people in that generation that saw her as this ultimate
12 masculinity – the one to be idolized, that gave so much pride and all of a sudden flipped that
13 and, “I am this.” It changes, it covers so much from young generation – her being part of that
14 Kardashian family. However, I think it’s important to critique as well. Through that visibility that
15 she carries, we need to interrogate that that’s not it – we have to complicate that, we need to
16 make it intersectional, we need to make it also send her stories of people who are not like her –
17 rich and white and privileged and all that. I think people are . . . you know, I think people have
18 really called her out on that. I’m friends with her, I don’t want to talk to her about politics, but
19 I’m thankful that she made that decision – certainly . . .
- 20 AJ: For her own wellbeing, right? To hold that in, I as a trans person . . . you’re trans, I mean to hold
21 . . .
- 22 GR: And I know that, from a person who was hiding a secret for a long time.
- 23 AJ: That is so much trauma.
- 24 GR: So much. And it’s a lot to ask her to expect so much of her. It’s a complicated thing – to ask so
25 much of her, we expect her to know all this language and intersectional feminist standpoint and
26 all that stuff. Take it for what it is, for what she represents and who she is.
- 27 AJ: Because I think she said she never met a trans person.
- 28 GR: Can you believe it? I’m the first trans person that she met. I was like, “Really?” So, that really
29 shows you how much she’s internalized that shame and . . . I’m sure she met trans people but to
30 actually sit down and have a conversation. The first time I met her was the first time she was
31 meeting a trans person.
- 32 AJ: Wow.
- 33 GR: So, yeah, I’m happy that she’s out and she’s done so much from the visibility standpoint but we
34 need to allow it to make it complicated. Fifteen minutes, twenty minutes? Is it on? It better be
35 on.
- 36 AJ: It’s on. Yeah, that whole Caitlyn thing . . . I can’t tell you how many people just in my
37 interviewing process have told me that their parents who couldn’t understand anything about

1 their lives and had shut them out, would call them up and say, “Hey, I just watched *I am Cait* and
2 I get it now.” Or, “I saw the interview with Diane Sawyer.”

3 GR: Oh, yeah, that was huge. Her place in the culture is . . . that just made it . . . her show is shown
4 in like 138 countries. It’s global.

5 AJ: Right, yeah. What was it like being on the show?

6 GR: It was fun. I had such . . .

7 AJ: They are so many amazing people who were a part of it.

8 GR: I had such a good time. I mean, Andrea, who is also her production partner, was there – she’s
9 just the best. I had a great time. But also, going to her house in Malibu – being in that place
10 was like, “I can’t believe I’m here.”

11 AJ: Wow.

12 GR: I think it’s . . . for me, I didn’t really know about the Olympic stuff. I saw Caitlyn as Caitlyn. I
13 always had known the history, I know what it was, but it was intergenerational stuff.

14 AJ: It was before you were even born.

15 GR: Exactly. So, I just saw her a new sister and just wanted to share my story to you and that’s what
16 we did – we just talked about each other’s history and obviously this was a person that was free,
17 finally, to be herself. But during tapings and everything, they’re always so amazing. Obviously,
18 the people behind it, it’s a great crew.

19 AJ: Oh, good.

20 GR: Good people. I had a great time.

21 AJ: Did you meet Kim?

22 GR: I never got a chance to meet Kim. Who did I meet? I met Kendall.

23 AJ: Kendall?

24 GR: Yeah.

25 AJ: That’s the youngest?

26 GR: The model. And who else did I meet? Just that.

27 AJ: Just Kendall. Cool. The Kardashians, yes. What do you think the agenda is for the transgender
28 community?

29 GR: So much . . . freedom, freedom in everything. Freedom to self-identify, to pass equality act, for
30 young trans youth to have access in their transition at such an early age, support in schools,
31 easier access to health insurance . . . oh my gosh, there’s so many . . . our place in the history.
32 Hopefully, people really won’t take us as a joke anymore. I’m tired of being made as the butt of
33 jokes. Access to jobs and . . . there’s so much.

- 1 AJ: Are those the kinds of issues that Gender Proud works on?
- 2 GR: So, Gender Proud is . . . so there's two sides. One is the advocacy part which is whether being
3 called by UNDP and say, "We're doing a project, what do you think? Do you want to come in
4 and host a panel, talk about policy." UNDP . . .
- 5 AJ: UNDP, what is that?
- 6 GR: United Nations Development Program.
- 7 AJ: Got it. Thank you.
- 8 GR: So, UNDP has this program called Being LGBT in Asia, which is advocating for LGBTI rights in Asia
9 . . . or Asian-Pacific. So, did some programs there and then most recently I was invited by the
10 State Department to sort of co-facilitate, be a speaker to represent the State Department at this
11 forum called LGBTI Youth Pacific Forum, which is the first time they're doing it – inviting about
12 50 young LGBTI Pacific people.
- 13 AJ: Has this happened yet?
- 14 GR: It happened already, it just happened – I was in Sydney for it.
- 15 AJ: OK.
- 16 GR: I gave a talk, I was on a panel about Gender Proud and how we access funding. I think the goal
17 is for them to give funding in LGBTI rights to NGOs in the Pacific area. But also, I think I helped
18 to sort of bridge that culture between Asian-Pacific culture and U.S. culture. So, my experiences
19 and where I grew up. So, that's one part of Gender Proud, advocating for that.
- 20 AJ: Sure.
- 21 GR: Last year we went back to the Philippines. We did a three-city tour, got funding from Arcus and
22 Human Rights Campaign to do sort of a community talk about an anti-discrimination bill that's
23 now in the House of Congress in the Philippines, and then also media training.
- 24 AJ: OK.
- 25 GR: And then the other side is a production company. So, we produce this web series called
26 *Beautiful as I Want to Be*, which is highlighting trans youth and their dream and let's talk about
27 it and let's film it - whether it's someone who wants to be the first trans president, a painter, a
28 poet, or just simply two trans girls who just want to show their love and their friendship and
29 what that is. So, we did a four-episode series on that with Logo. We did a recent web series
30 with Fusion, three webisodes about discrimination and employment process and employment
31 experience of trans women of color, trans women specifically in New York City.
- 32 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 33 GR: And it was good to highlight that story and center that narrative of trans people of color
34 specifically. Last September, most recently, sort of coinciding with the Olympics, we released a
35 24-minute TV documentary with Univision tackling the issue of . . . or this notion of competitive
36 advantage. The International Olympic Committee . . .

- 1 AJ: It was in Brazil, right?
- 2 GR: Yeah. International Olympic Committee, about two years ago . . . almost three years ago,
3 changed the policy that allows trans women to compete as women – even if you don’t have
4 surgery, as long as you’re taking hormones for certain months and obviously the doctor
5 determines that. We highlighted stories of trans athletes.
- 6 AJ: Oh, wow – that’s beautiful.
- 7 GR: I think the bigger philosophy around that is the advocacy and the advocating with this bigger
8 institution’s . . . sort of like the policy side, and then the production side is the storytelling. I
9 think those two things always have to interject together.
- 10 AJ: Absolutely.
- 11 GR: Can’t talk about all the statistics without humanizing it.
- 12 AJ: Right.
- 13 GR: Can’t humanize it unless it benefits a policy.
- 14 AJ: Exactly.
- 15 GR: So, those two things sort of work together so that was the strategy behind having a policy
16 advocacy and production company.
- 17 AJ: Wow. That’s so amazing. How is Gender Proud doing?
- 18 GR: It’s doing good. We have a couple of projects that we’re working on right now. Right now, we
19 are in early, early pre-production with a six-episode highlighting the history of trans models. I
20 can’t even believe that it is actually happening, that I’m actually doing it, that I get a chance to
21 honor the women who have paved the way for me. They were just a dream – working with
22 Tracey Africa Norman, Lauren Foster, Crimsona Kaiser, these were the women who made it
23 possible, why I’m able to do what I’m able to do.
- 24 AJ: What were those last two names you said?
- 25 GR: Lauren Foster.
- 26 AJ: Lauren Foster, OK.
- 27 GR: She is a South African born supermodel, folk model, back in the day – same thing, unfortunately,
28 she got outed as well during her time.
- 29 AJ: And then . . . ?
- 30 GR: Tracey Africa Norman.
- 31 AJ: Yeah.
- 32 GR: And then this other woman, Crimsona Kaiser. Crimsona – C-r-i-m-s-o-n-a. Her last name K-a-i-s-
33 e-r. She’s from Guam but she’s Filipino, Filipino-American.

- 1 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 2 GR: So, she used to model back in the day with Christian Dior, Runway in Paris – same thing, she was
3 not out. And I think the good history is that she didn't get outed, she left the industry. So,
4 we're partnering them with . . . pioneer with a younger sort of model. Me with Crimsona; I think
5 Carmen Carrera with Lauren Foster, and Juliana Huxtable with Tracey Africa Norman, and then
6 we're going to do a photo shoot towards the end.
- 7 AJ: Is that right? Wow, incredible. That is so . . .
- 8 GR: And other things I can't talk about yet.
- 9 AJ: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, you know, this has been an amazing, fascinating discussion. I wish I
10 could sit here with you for six more hours but we have more work to do, right? But, I guess, just
11 the last thing that I would ask, does the T belong with LGB? And where do you see the trans
12 community in 50 years?
- 13 GR: Wow. I think, definitely, it belongs in the LGBTI, LGBTQ. Certainly politically and from NGO's
14 standpoint, civil society's standpoint, there's always been a . . . and there will always be, in every
15 movement, there's always going to be tensions and arguments and all that.
- 16 AJ: Sure.
- 17 GR: But, I think as a family, as a continuum, as our place in history – especially during Stonewall . . .
18 or before Stonewall, that have always sort of lumped together but separate issue, I think now
19 more than ever we need to be together. Now more than ever I just want to hug every single
20 queer person, trans person, LGBTI person that I meet, and acknowledge and recognize their
21 beauty and their power and their love and what they can do to the world.
- 22 AJ: Sure.
- 23 GR: So, now more than ever we need to be together and organize and fight this, right? In this
24 context of what's happening right now. I think it should stay in there. Where do I see the trans
25 movement, trans people in 50 years? I would love to see more trans people in political
26 positions. I think that would be really, really powerful. I would really love that – especially trans
27 person of color to be in political positions, higher political positions.
- 28 AJ: I'm waiting for that trans woman of color to be president.
- 29 GR: Exactly. Why not? We asked one of our featured trans youth, "Do you want to be the first trans
30 president? Let's film that." That's a dream.
- 31 AJ: Yes, exactly.
- 32 GR: It's a dream – dreams do come true. I'm just a young trans girl from the little alley in the
33 Philippines and here I am talking to you.
- 34 AJ: I know. I'm just a little Black trans girl from inner city Chicago, very humble beginnings and I'm
35 sitting here at the University of Minnesota talking to you.
- 36 GR: Here we are, we're recognizing this.

- 1 AJ: Absolutely.
- 2 GR: I think we always need to recognize each other.
- 3 AJ: I just want to say thank you so much from the bottom of my heart for willing to be a part of this,
4 but more so for doing the work that you're doing in the world, literally in the world –
5 internationally, here in the United States, but for being what Laverne Cox calls, "a possibility
6 model." I mean, I just think so many young people are looking up to you and to others like
7 yourself and maybe, to some extent, others like myself – but for being that possibility model.
- 8 GR: I love you, thank you.
- 9 AJ: I love you, sis.
- 10 GR: I'm just going to say thank you to that.
- 11 AJ: I'm always wrapping my arms around you and all of our beautiful trans brothers and sisters who
12 are out here making moves and making our issues known and doing their work and doing their
13 lives and just being who they are. It's a beautiful thing.
- 14 GR: I have a deep sense of gratitude to you. When I'm by myself on an airplane thinking to myself,
15 writing . . . I think for my spirit to move forward, my will to move forward, my quest to do more,
16 to find out more, to be curious and to learn more, it's really coming from a deep, deep sense of
17 gratitude. My mom has told me before I think the reason why I'm able to do this work is
18 because I was given love by my parents, by my mom, and I carry that with me – that love and
19 gratitude that I carry with my all over the world – every interaction. That's where, for me, that
20 word comes from. I just want to share that.
- 21 AJ: Yeah, that love from our family is just so important particularly . . . for all people, but I think
22 particularly for trans-identified and gender non-conforming people it really makes the biggest
23 difference in the world.
- 24 GR: Yeah.
- 25 AJ: Thank you, Geena.
- 26 GR: Thank you.
- 27 AJ: Bye.