

Lourdes Ashley Hunter  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

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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 Lourdes Ashley Hunter -LAH  
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 Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. Today is March 22nd,  
6 2017. I am in lovely St. Paul, Minnesota, right on the Mississippi River, and I am here today with  
7 my really really really good friend Lourdes Ashley Hunter. How are you today, Lourdes?

8 LAH: It's a beautiful day.

9 AJ: We've been trying to get this interview in for a minute!

10 LAH: Yes, indeed.

11 AJ: Like, three - we, this is our third try, and you're here in Minneapolis, St. Paul. I'm so happy to see  
12 you!

13 LAH: I am so happy to be here.

14 AJ: How you doing?

15 LAH: It's a beautiful day. I'm alive and I'm glad to be alive.

16 AJ: So, Lourdes, can you state your name, spell your name, so that we make sure we have it  
17 correctly, tell me your gender identity as you claim it today, your gender assignment at birth,  
18 and your pronouns that you use.

19 LAH: Alright. My name is Lourdes Ashley Hunter, L-O-U-R-D-E-S, A-S-H-L-E-Y, H-U-N-T-E-R.

20 AJ: Right. And you...

21 LAH: What?

22 AJ: Like, how do you define your gender identity?

23 LAH: Oh! Um, I am gender nonconforming, nonbinary.

24 AJ: Okay. Wow.

25 LAH: I'm a gender abolitionist, so I don't believe in gender.

26 AJ: Uh huh. And so the whole concept is...

27 LAH: The social construction of gender is devoid to my existence.

28 AJ: Wow.

29 LAH: Mmhmm.

30 AJ: What was your gender assignment at birth?

31 LAH: I was assigned male at birth.

32 AJ: And do you use pronouns at all?

- 1 LAH: Goddess!
- 2 AJ: Goddess. I love it.
- 3 LAH: Yes.
- 4 AJ: See, I knew I had to do this interview! You have just introduced a new pronoun, two new gender
- 5 - well, not new gender identities, but together - you usually don't hear them together, so...no,
- 6 that's awesome. Lourdes, just to kind of get our juices flowing, what is, like, the first thing you
- 7 remember in life? Your first memory. Doesn't have to be about gender identity, even though if it
- 8 is about gender identity, that's all good, but...
- 9 LAH: I think my earliest memories of - earliest fondest memories are of me watching my mom after
- 10 she would come home from work and come home from school, be late, and she would roll her
- 11 hair up.
- 12 AJ: Mmm.
- 13 LAH: So she would, you know, part her hair.
- 14 AJ: Uh huh.
- 15 LAH: Get the setting lotion and the end papers, and roll up.
- 16 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 17 LAH: I would just talk with her, because I knew that in those moments, there was nothing else that
- 18 she could do but roll her hair. She couldn't - she wasn't going to leave out the room, she wasn't
- 19 going to ask - she wasn't going to do anything but roll her hair, and so -
- 20 AJ: Right! But roll her hair. So you had her undivided attention, so it was for you.
- 21 LAH: Yeah. So those are some of my earliest memories, fondest memories.
- 22 AJ: You just struck up a memory in me, in that - and I'm really, this is not about me, it's about you,
- 23 but you just brought up this memory! I used to watch my mom put on her makeup all the time.
- 24 LAH: Mmhmm.
- 25 AJ: And it was - it was a chance to talk with her, but really, I almost kind of - I was, like, seeing
- 26 myself somehow in that imagery.
- 27 LAH: Mm. Absolutely.
- 28 AJ: Where'd you grow up?
- 29 LAH: I'm originally from Detroit, Michigan, where I was born. I lived there for twenty-six years.
- 30 AJ: Oh, wow. Detroit, Michigan.
- 31 LAH: Yes.
- 32 AJ: What was it like growing up in Detroit? I've been there a few times...

- 1 LAH: Yeah. Growing up in Detroit - I was born in 1976, so growing up in the late 70s, early 80s.
- 2 AJ: Music scene was hopping!
- 3 LAH: Yeah. Absolutely. We'd listen to a lot of music in the home. My mom raised four kids - I had
- 4 three brothers.
- 5 AJ: Okay.
- 6 LAH: And...for me, growing up was filled with a lot of happiness. I don't ever recall being - having my
- 7 gender policed in a way that chained me or made me feel shame.
- 8 AJ: Were you expressive around your gender nonconformity?
- 9 LAH: Absolutely. Absolutely. And it was - it's interesting, because even as I grew up older, like into my
- 10 teen years, I would always berate my mother and like say to her, "Do you have something to ask
- 11 me?"
- 12 AJ: Oh, wow!
- 13 LAH: Yeah. "You have something to say?" Like, yeah, I do!
- 14 AJ: Like, "You don't notice all of this"?
- 15 LAH: Right! You don't have nothing to say? Right. So, she would say "No." I was like "Okay." It was
- 16 always interesting, but I could always remember, like, even as a child, having the way I
- 17 expressed my identity celebrated, even by my peers and contemporaries.
- 18 AJ: Wow.
- 19 LAH: Mhmm.
- 20 AJ: Brothers, too?
- 21 LAH: Absolutely. Like, my three brothers, like, there would be times I would not tell them, like, if
- 22 someone was teasing me, because I knew exactly what they would do.
- 23 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 24 LAH: So, yeah. I can -
- 25 AJ: They had your back.
- 26 LAH: Yeah. I can recall my brother - yeah, taking care of those things. My cousins.
- 27 AJ: Yeah?
- 28 LAH: Like, I never really had a problem, and so I think that - having such a supportive family, cousins,
- 29 and being able to go through high school, middle school, elementary school, you know, without
- 30 having bullies and fights...
- 31 AJ: Right. Wow.
- 32 LAH: Really played a huge part in the foundation of my identity, my self-efficacy, my personal

1 ecology.

2 AJ: Yeah. Well, I can imagine you probably had a lot of friends. I mean, you're a very likeable,  
3 charismatic person, so. Is that true? Did you?

4 LAH: I had...a lot - I had people who admired me from afar.

5 AJ: Okay.

6 LAH: And, like, I had people that I would hang out with, but I noticed like, after I graduated from high  
7 school, and - even ten, fifteen years later, like, I still have, like, phone friends from high school  
8 calling me and telling me, like, how much I meant to them. Like, it was so interesting, this one  
9 guy, he played basketball for my high school. I had a crush on him.

10 AJ: Okay.

11 LAH: Like, I never told him this.

12 AJ: Right.

13 LAH: You know, but I would see him and in my - my heart would flutter and things like that. And so he  
14 had called me a couple weeks ago because he moved to the DC area. And he was - we became  
15 facebook friends, and he was like - I asked him, "Do you remember who I am?" And he was like,  
16 "If you are who I think you are, then yes I do."

17 AJ: Okay!

18 LAH: "And I'm so proud of you."

19 AJ: Wow!

20 LAH: And he was like "Oh, we have to get together sometime," and, you know, he was doing some  
21 amazing social justice work, and - as was I. And so we were talking and made some connections  
22 there. But I remember him telling me, one day at school, when the principle was escorting me  
23 out of school because of something that I had on, they thought it was not aligned with what was  
24 appropriate for young boys to wear to school. And he told me he was in the hallway, and he saw  
25 them escort me out, and how he wanted to say something - he did not know what to do, and  
26 like...and he talks about how he tells this story, even now, he speaks to high school youth about  
27 being an upstander, you know, and speaking up for others who may not have a voice, especially  
28 when you see something that's happening that is, like, a form of violence, and that's exactly  
29 what was happening for me. And he apologized for it, and...and it was like, so interesting,  
30 because I'm like, this was this guy I had this huge crush on.

31 AJ: Wow.

32 LAH: And like, he was noticing me! And like, not just noticing me, but like, wanting to stand up for  
33 me! And I'm like...and it's just amazing that happens, and like, we really don't know the impact  
34 we have on people.

35 AJ: Mmhmm.

1 LAH: And that's why it's so important for trans youth to be affirmed in their truth, to be celebrated in  
 2 their truth, because they can be the catalyst for someone else's liberation. And nine times out of  
 3 ten, that's what happens. Trans people are like the catalyst for others' liberation, because we  
 4 live our lives unapologetically, unabashedly, regardless of what society says.

5 AJ: Mmhmm.

6 LAH: And that's exactly what liberation is.

7 AJ: Yeah. Absolutely. So - you're defining liberation as - sort of this individual freedom as opposed  
 8 to this more broad...?

9 LAH: Well, in addition to individual freedom, but more so, like, a collective affirmation of life of being  
 10 - of humanity. Not just of affirmation but a celebration, you know, where you're being a seed  
 11 and you're being bountifully poured into. You know, to us, what liberation looks like, looks like  
 12 being supported. It looks like you being able to support others. It looks like being able to process  
 13 trauma when it happens.

14 AJ: Mhmm.

15 LAH: You know, liberation is so many things to so many people, but I think at its core, for me, is being  
 16 affirmed and being celebrated, you know?

17 AJ: Wow. So Lourdes, you are a stand-upper. I haven't heard that phrase before, but...

18 LAH: The upstander!

19 AJ: An upstander! Yes!

20 LAH: Yes. It's like an alternative to bystander.

21 AJ: Right, exactly!

22 LAH: Mmhmm.

23 AJ: And I - I mean, if I had to define that word, I would be like - "Oh, Lourdes. That's Lourdes."

24 LAH: Mmm.

25 AJ: Lourdes is an upstander. In fact, you are here in St. Paul today to attend conference tomorrow  
 26 about ending global genocide.

27 LAH: Yeah, it's really really interesting, being invited -

28 AJ: Like, that's some upstanding right there, man! That's like -

29 LAH: Yeah, it's interesting - yeah, I mean like -

30 AJ: Global genocide.

31 LAH: Yeah. To be included in those circles, like - and like, I tell people, like, all the time, I feel like I've  
 32 had to fight all my life for my life, you know, not just to be seen or to be heard, but just to  
 33 breathe.

1 AJ: To breathe.

2 LAH: To exist, you know. To open up my mouth and say my name and feel pride in that. You know,  
3 many people do not have that experience, especially when they're Black, trans, fat, you know,  
4 disabled, you know - there's dark skin, you know, there's so many - so many ways in which  
5 society is working to tell us that we don't deserve to exist. And, you know, being invited out  
6 here by academics from all over the globe, and being - being seen as an academic, not just being  
7 seen as a Black trans person, not just having my identity or my experiences commodified and  
8 exploited, but actually affirmed, celebrated, and required for the conversation.

9 AJ: Right. Right. Wow. No, that's awesome. So, you mentioned - it's a part of a fellowship, is that  
10 right?

11 LAH: The - I cannot think of all of the names of the folk but I know it's...some folk contacted me from  
12 the Cardozo Law School, Cardozo Law School in New York.

13 AJ: In New York, uh huh.

14 LAH: And some other folks who are doing some global work around ending atrocities and genocide,  
15 and across the globe. And some folk who have been doing this particular type of work in  
16 academics, and nongovernment organizations, grassroots organizations, are coming together to  
17 talk about what some folks see as a pending genocide, or mass atrocity that could possibly  
18 happen due to the Trump administration.

19 AJ: Right. Mm.

20 LAH: And so I think that my - my position is that the mass genocide has been going on. This country  
21 was built on genocide and continues to profit off genocide, and there is a structural genocide  
22 that is happening in many communities - Black, indigenous, undocumented, right here on this  
23 soil. And as a Black trans woman, when we're talking about genocide, we are experiencing an  
24 epidemic of violence as we speak. And so I'm interested to hear how some folk are pending a  
25 genocide, while I'm actually living one currently and have been - and I just mean because I'm  
26 Black and trans, but like, my family, my friends, the people around me. They talk about post-  
27 traumatic slave syndrome, and it's not so much about how we experience trauma but when  
28 people around us experience trauma, when we see trauma happening to them, it also impacts  
29 our psychological well-being. And it's so true.

30 AJ: Absolutely. A toll. Yes it does. To that end, I mean, you know, I logged into my facebook page  
31 today, and the eighth trans woman of color murdered in Baltimore.

32 LAH: Mmhmm.

33 AJ: When you see something like that, on a personal level, how does it make you feel?

34 LAH: For me, and, you know - I'm 41, and I've been trans my whole life. And my whole life, trans  
35 women have been being murdered. Black trans women. In the most violent and brutal ways. I  
36 don't see that coming to an end. As with any murder of any particular population, I think why it  
37 impacts trans people so much, particularly Black trans women, is because of the ratio of the  
38 population. There's only but so many of us.



- 1 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 2 LAH: Right. And so when there is a death, the way - like, they can - any - Black men are dying all over
- 3 the place, right?
- 4 AJ: All day, every day.
- 5 LAH: People are dying. Right, exactly. Right. But when a trans woman of color dies, like, young trans
- 6 kids they see that, and they think that that could be them, and so - it's so visceral, because like I
- 7 said, there's so few of us who even have opportunities to live our lives openly, and even when
- 8 we do, every time we speak openly, we put our lives in danger. Every time we're on television,
- 9 in front of a crowd talking, every time we step outside our door, we are putting our lives in
- 10 danger, and that's why I say that every breath a Black trans woman takes is an act of revolution,
- 11 because we're living - we're actually breathing, you know, our existence, and speaking it. And it
- 12 can be taken away from us at any moment. And so it's a revolution, to be sitting here with
- 13 another Black trans woman doing amazing work, you know, documenting history. Creating
- 14 history, you know. Because this has not been passed down to us.
- 15 AJ: Right.
- 16 LAH: So we have to shift that narrative, so we can have those - those treasures passed down to these
- 17 young trans folk. When I see young trans kids, it is the most fulfilling thing. There's a young
- 18 woman - young girl - she's six, just turned six. Ellie. Ellie Ford. She lives in DC, where I live now.
- 19 AJ: Ellie?
- 20 LAH: Ellie Ford, and her parents, Ron and Vanessa, are amazing advocates, and they say, like, Ellie is
- 21 the future. She is the future of the Black trans woman.
- 22 AJ: Wow.
- 23 LAH: You know, she has a very supportive young brother, Ronnie. He's older, actually. He loves her,
- 24 he protects her with his life.
- 25 AJ: Wow.
- 26 LAH: She has a father who loves her and a mother who loves her and supports her. And she is
- 27 surrounded by fairy godmothers, like, trans women of color.
- 28 AJ: Really.
- 29 LAH: Who, like, surround this girl - we - they take her out, we bring her gifts, we shine - she is
- 30 just...she does not see violence. She does not know any of that.
- 31 AJ: Right. Exactly.
- 32 LAH: And in addition to that, she is being affirmed and celebrated for who she is.
- 33 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 34 LAH: Now just like, imagine - if all of us were affirmed and celebrated. You know, not hidden. Right?

- 1 AJ: Yeah.
- 2 LAH: You know how a mama let us play, and then when the company come over -
- 3 AJ: Right. Yeah, yeah, no.
- 4 LAH: And being celebrated.
- 5 AJ: Yeah. Exactly.
- 6 LAH: You know, and so, like, this is the future. And like, to me, we have to continue to do this work so
- 7 that young people like that can say, "Hey, I can be great. I will be great. Because there were
- 8 people just like me. I see them on television." Right?
- 9 AJ: Right.
- 10 LAH: Because I don't remember seeing any Black trans women, you know, doing amazing -
- 11 AJ: No. All of this Jet Magazine stuff that's coming out now, and -
- 12 LAH: That was not celebrated!
- 13 AJ: Like, that was not my experience. I didn't realize that.
- 14 LAH: Exactly. And even if, if we knew that they were trans, like, they're putting their lives at risk. And
- 15 like, that is - that is, like -
- 16 AJ: Mmhmm. Their careers at risk.
- 17 LAH: Absolutely. And even now, today, like, we live in these bubbles, you know, of protection. But
- 18 what happens when we go to East New York, Brooklyn, or Bronzeville?
- 19 AJ: Right. Exactly.
- 20 LAH: You know, or downtown Detroit.
- 21 AJ: Detroit.
- 22 LAH: You know, or South Side of Chicago -
- 23 AJ: Chicago, where I grew up.
- 24 LAH: Exactly. You know what I'm saying? Exactly.
- 25 AJ: Mmhmm. Girl.
- 26 LAH: So we have to make it past -
- 27 AJ: Come on, Baltimore!
- 28 LAH: So we have to make it possible for folks in those areas to say "There's more for me. There's
- 29 more for me. I know because there's people like me and I can connect with them, and - "
- 30 AJ: I think one of the - I mean, it's so beautiful that Ellie is getting this support, and particularly from
- 31 the trans community, like -

1 LAH: Yeah.

2 AJ: To show that there's possibility, because I know when I was growing up, I thought "There's no  
3 way I can ever identify myself as trans," even though I knew who I was, right? Like, you know  
4 who you are.

5 LAH: Right.

6 AJ: But I was just like..."I won't be able to eat, I won't be able to have a house, nobody will love  
7 me," like - all of these things, all of these stories I made up in my head. And - but - I'm thinking  
8 about Ellie and she's six years old, and like - nobody - like, the influence of society didn't create  
9 who she is.

10 LAH: Mm. Right.

11 AJ: She was - she is who she is.

12 [audio stops]

13 AJ: And we are back. So Lourdes, I want to go back to the young man who you went to high school  
14 with...

15 LAH: Oh my god.

16 AJ: And then you connected with on facebook. Did you guys ever, like, physically get together and  
17 go out and do anything?

18 LAH: We're supposed to.

19 AJ: Uh huh.

20 LAH: But we haven't. I travel a lot, and so I'm, like, really busy. And he lives, like, in Maryland, and I  
21 live in DC.

22 AJ: Okay.

23 LAH: So it's not like...but no, like, I'm not...we still, like, talk.

24 AJ: Yeah. And communicate. But, yeah.

25 LAH: Mmhmm. Well, I think what happened - he had asked me to speak at the Women's March.

26 AJ: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

27 LAH: And I was like....hm. So...

28 AJ: So he is definitely in to organizing -

29 LAH: Yeah, he works for the NAACP.

30 AJ: Okay.

31 LAH: And they were looking for some trans women to speak at the Women's March in DC.

- 1 AJ: Uh huh. Oh, wow.
- 2 LAH: I just happened to be at Creating Change that particular weekend.
- 3 AJ: Right.
- 4 LAH: But I still would not have done it. Like, I - I speak for a living, it's how I pay my bills.
- 5 AJ: Right! Exactly.
- 6 LAH: And the Women's March wasn't paying, not to mention it was not intentional - you know, they  
7 tokenized a lot of trans folk, you know, trans women were not part of the planning or the  
8 organizing.
- 9 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 10 LAH: And then there was a lot of, like, you know, gender-based messaging.
- 11 AJ: Yes.
- 12 LAH: That was associated with the Women's March, which I take, you know, umbrage with.
- 13 AJ: Sure.
- 14 LAH: I'm really not interested in, like, you know...binary feminism or gendered feminism as a  
15 construct or way of life. That doesn't work for me.
- 16 AJ: Yeah. You weren't always this academic traveling around the world speaking, doing this amazing  
17 work - like, what was life like for you before all of this jumped off?
- 18 LAH: I don't - let me think. Like, I've always been involved in activism, I would say.
- 19 AJ: Okay.
- 20 LAH: In social justice work, in philanthropy.
- 21 AJ: Sure. Uh huh.
- 22 LAH: Growing up in a Christian home, also growing up in a home with ties connected to Black  
23 nationalism.
- 24 AJ: Right.
- 25 LAH: And my mom worked at Chrysler for the UAW, so I went to a lot of rallies and union meetings,  
26 and so - for me, I became politicized at a very young age.
- 27 AJ: All right.
- 28 LAH: I can remember at 17 years old, starting a youth group for trans and gender nonconforming  
29 people of color in Detroit.
- 30 AJ: Is that right?
- 31 LAH: Absolutely. New generations. Me and my friends got together. They were high school students

- 1 as well, went to different high schools. And like, we wanted more out of life than just what was  
2 being offered to us, so we created a newsletter, we started having groups at a local community  
3 center who gave us space.
- 4 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 5 LAH: It was amazing. We passed out condoms in, like, high risk areas. You know, it was amazing! So  
6 we need - really felt fulfilled with seeing - also seeing how HIV was impacting our community -
- 7 AJ: So I was just going to say, this was in the mid-80s -
- 8 LAH: This was like 90s - the early 90s -
- 9 AJ: 90s. Uh huh.
- 10 LAH: So, like, how HIV was impacting our community, and also how our community was being  
11 policed, as well as being impacted by lack of access to educational opportunities as well as jobs,  
12 so a lot of trans folk were engaged in street-based sex work, and so became in more contact  
13 with the state, therefore, you know, becoming incarcerated. And so we wanted to find ways to  
14 curve that. Like, how do we create safer, braver spaces. Affirming spaces for trans youth. And  
15 so, yeah, I was doing that back in the 90s in Detroit.
- 16 AJ: Oh wow. Okay.
- 17 LAH: But I eventually left Detroit for New York City in 2002, which was a very eye-opening experience  
18 for me, because, you know, you think New York is the place to be, they had Title - Title IV, I think  
19 it was, that protected trans people in public accommodations, and when I got there, like, I  
20 ended up having to live in a shelter.
- 21 AJ: Oh my goodness.
- 22 LAH: And it was a men's shelter. You know, for 21 months. And it was an eye-opening experience. It  
23 even became more politicized around just how state-sanctioned violence is set up.
- 24 AJ: Uh huh.
- 25 LAH: You know, and how it manifests in so many folks' lives, and particularly Black, brown, poor,  
26 indigenous, disabled folk. Seniors. People with mental histories.
- 27 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 28 LAH: And so, having to live in the shelter system, you know, really taught me a lot about where my  
29 voice belonged. I got involved in organizations like Queers for Economic Justice, who are doing a  
30 homeless shelter program.
- 31 AJ: QEJ?
- 32 LAH: Mmhmm. Mmhmm. Those folks over there. Jay Toole, and Kenyon Farrow, and folks over there.  
33 And so I got involved with their shelter program because they would come to the shelter and  
34 look for folk to talk about their issues.
- 35 AJ: Okay. Mmhmm.

- 1 LAH: And we ended up being influential in having the shelter change their policies in New York.
- 2 AJ: Wow.
- 3 LAH: Where now trans people can stay in appropriate shelters aligned with their gender. So after that
- 4 happened, then I got involved with groups like Trans Justice, Sylvia Rivera Law Project. So this
- 5 was back in the early 2000s, and was doing amazing work around shifting the narrative in New
- 6 York City for the lives of trans and gender nonconforming people, particularly Black trans
- 7 women, trans women of color.
- 8 AJ: Wow. Okay. That's awesome. And when did you first meet a trans-identified person?
- 9 LAH: Oh! Funny. The first time I met a trans person was my seventeenth birthday.
- 10 AJ: Uh huh.
- 11 LAH: Like, I - I can't even say that, because my aunt was trans. I just did not know she was trans.
- 12 AJ: Okay.
- 13 LAH: I didn't find out she was trans until, like, my family told me after she was already dead and out
- 14 of my life.
- 15 AJ: Oh my goodness, wow.
- 16 LAH: And I'm like, okay, well, so I know this is not a surprise to you, that I'm trans.
- 17 AJ: Right! Yes.
- 18 LAH: And so, yeah -
- 19 AJ: Had you ever met her? Did you ever meet her?
- 20 LAH: I have no memories of her. But I have - I have these phantom memories.
- 21 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 22 LAH: Because I can remember being a child and being at parties that my family would have.
- 23 AJ: Right.
- 24 LAH: You know, and my family always had parties and gatherings, and I know she was there, and I
- 25 have these phantom memories of like, which one could she have been? Was I sitting on her lap?
- 26 Any of these things, and I often say, you know, I never got the chance to hear her say how
- 27 beautiful I was. How amazing I would become, and how the world was my oyster.
- 28 AJ: Right.
- 29 LAH: But I carry those words, especially, like, through my mother and through my grandmother,
- 30 because those were the affirmations that I got from them, and other women in my family, and
- 31 so...yeah. So, for me, the first person I saw a trans person, I think, was seventeen years old, I
- 32 was driving down the street, and there's this club in Detroit on Seven Mile and Woodward, it's
- 33 not there anymore, it's called Heaven's. And everybody went to Heaven's.

1 AJ: Wow.

2 LAH: And so I was driving down the road -

3 AJ: You said it's on Seven Mile and...

4 LAH: And Woodward.

5 AJ: Woodward, okay.

6 LAH: Mmhmm. Woodward Avenue. So I was driving down the road and this very tall woman walks  
7 across the street and I was like... So I turned around, and there was more of them! And so - they  
8 were all going into the gas station. So what happens at Heaven's, everyone leaves the club and  
9 go and gets, like, an Arizona iced tea or a drink or something. So I went into the gas station and I  
10 just parked and I sat there.

11 AJ: Wow.

12 LAH: And it was so funny because the next week was my birthday, and all - my gay friends took me  
13 out to dinner. They took me to a gay restaurant, and then they took me to Heaven's.

14 AJ: Oh, wow.

15 LAH: And I was like, "I was just here last week!"

16 AJ: Okay!

17 LAH: But it was the best experience of my life.

18 AJ: Uh huh. Did you ever get to meet this person?

19 LAH: I don't remember which particular one that was, but I did meet -

20 AJ: Okay, so it was just this tall trans person?

21 LAH: Yeah. A tall woman, a trans woman, in huge heels, big hair. And I was like "Oh. My. God."

22 AJ: Okay! Wow.

23 LAH: And I turned around and I was like sitting in the car watching all of them, and it was like - having,  
24 like, the time of their life! And I was like, "This is what my life needs to be."

25 AJ: Wow. Wow. That's cool.

26 LAH: Yeah.

27 AJ: So - I'm going to bring up this question. I've been...I've been, like...when I wrote this question, I  
28 think I thought about you. I thought about how Laverne answered the question. You know, our  
29 medical history is a part of trans identity. So to the extent that you feel comfortable, have you  
30 had any medical interventions on your journey? And if you don't want to answer that question,  
31 tell me why.

32 LAH: I have had medical interventions. I've taken hormone pills, injections, and things like that to help  
33 to give me the aesthetic that would make me feel more comfortable in my body.

- 1 AJ: Mmhmm. Okay.
- 2 LAH: And so I'm not ashamed of anything like that.
- 3 AJ: And keep me safe, in the world.
- 4 LAH: And actually I just like having smooth skin, so a hormone injection will give you that, you know.
- 5 AJ: Yes! Ain't that -
- 6 LAH: I hated shaving! Shaving was my -
- 7 AJ: That melanin, honey!
- 8 LAH: Shaving was my dysphoria. And like, I would never go out on dates. I would always go on dates
- 9 with guys, but I would never let them touch my face.
- 10 AJ: Mmmm.
- 11 LAH: Because that's the first thing - a man always wants to touch your face, but the first thing a man
- 12 will do, especially if he's trying to talk to you, is take his hand and rub it up your chin.
- 13 AJ: Ohhh.
- 14 LAH: And I don't care how close you shave, you know.
- 15 AJ: Yes.
- 16 LAH: And so for me, taking hormones, having laser treatments. The only dysphoria I ever had was the
- 17 hair on my face.
- 18 AJ: Uh uh.
- 19 LAH: And like, when I do this - it's like butter. And so...
- 20 AJ: Mmm. I woke up like this!
- 21 LAH: So yeah, for me, I mean -
- 22 AJ: Flawless.
- 23 LAH: Yeah.
- 24 AJ: Wow! No, thank you. It is a problematic question in some ways though, and you know, I
- 25 certainly recognize that. What are some of the challenges you think about - I mean, there was
- 26 another Katie Couric moment where Laverne was like "You shouldn't be asking people about
- 27 those and blah blah blah blah blah," you know?
- 28 LAH: Mmhmm. I think that, you know, that - for me, I like when people ask me if they can ask me a
- 29 question about a particular thing.
- 30 AJ: Sure.
- 31 LAH: I have trauma, I have anxiety disorder, I have PTSD, I'm an introvert, you know. I'm not - I



1 engage when I - when I want to engage, when I'm ready to engage, and I think everyone should  
 2 be like that. I just happen to be like that. And so I would - I would want someone to say to me "I  
 3 would like to ask you a question about this particular subject, is that okay?"

4 AJ: Sure.

5 LAH: Then I have agency.

6 AJ: Yep.

7 LAH: Right? And so I think what happened in that moment is Katie Couric took away the agency of  
 8 Laverne, and that's why she got the response that she did. Had she said "Is it okay if I ask you  
 9 this question?" and Laverne said "No," then they just would - it would - you know.

10 AJ: Right, went on.

11 LAH: Right. But you cannot take away anyone's agency, and then you cannot police how they respond  
 12 to your violence. You know what I'm saying? You don't - you just smacked me in the face, and  
 13 then I take out a gun and shoot you. You don't get to say that's not fair.

14 AJ: Right. Right.

15 LAH: You should've kept your hands to yourself.

16 AJ: Mmhmm. What challenges have you experienced as a gender nonconforming, nonbinary  
 17 goddess?

18 LAH: I think that most challenges I have been met with is...I'm very confident.

19 AJ: Mmhmm.

20 LAH: I exude confidence. I believe that faith without works is dead, you know, and I believe in  
 21 working. I believe in creating something that's worth a legacy, that's worth leaving behind. And  
 22 so - that's because that's been instilled in me, by my mother, by my grandmother, you know.  
 23 You do something, you be the best at it, you know? And so, for me, some challenges is that  
 24 that's not always the case with trans people. And particularly that's not even always the case  
 25 with Black people. That's not even the case with Black women, right? When Black women are  
 26 confident then that's aggressive, or when they're assertive they have an attitude.

27 AJ: It's a threat.

28 LAH: Correct. And so I recognize that, you know, being Black, being, you know, trans, nonbinary, you  
 29 know, gender nonconforming, being femme identified, having several degrees, having a family  
 30 that supports me, all of these things enable me to sit where I sit today, so why would I ever be  
 31 ashamed of them. That doesn't make sense. And I think for some people who do not have - who  
 32 do not sit in those places in their own lives, feel a type of way about that. And that's with  
 33 anything. The same thing with trans people, like, cis people have yet to realize that they've been  
 34 lied to their whole lives. Every time they see us, it is a reflection of the lie that they've been told.

35 AJ: Mmmhm. Wow.

- 1 LAH: It is a reflection of the lie that they live every single day. And this is why they murder us.  
2 Because we don't give a fuck.
- 3 AJ: Right.
- 4 LAH: We live our lives unapologetically, with great risk. Even if this was the last day, we're going to  
5 live it. You're not going to take that from us.
- 6 AJ: Wow.
- 7 LAH: And so I think that because I live my life that way, it is seen as a threat. Not just for me, but like,  
8 for trans people period live their lives that way. Unapologetic. I'm not doing, I'm not playing this  
9 game anymore. And cis folk need to wake up. They momma lied to them. They daddy lied. The  
10 church lied. Society lied! You know, free yourself!
- 11 AJ: Free yourself. Wow. No, that's a - that's an amazing viewpoint. And I've always said that, you  
12 know, a lot of...So I used to talk about, like, there was this degree of acceptance from different  
13 groups of people, and, you know, like, white women are the most accepting, and then Black  
14 women, and then white men, but then Black men were at the bottom. In my world. And I would  
15 always say, and I think it's true for all people, like you just said, but particularly for Black men, it  
16 - it makes them question themselves, right? Like, it opens up this thing, like, Oh. Somebody can  
17 do this with gender, and it frightens people. It scares people.
- 18 LAH: Absolutely. Absolutely. It frightens them, like I said, not only do they need to realize that they've  
19 been lied to, but they've been living a lie, and everyone around them is doing it too. And it's like,  
20 so then, they have to do everything to extinguish the fire that they see in us that they wish was  
21 burning in them.
- 22 AJ: Sure. And I know - as a trans person living a lie, it was pretty traumatic. It was very intensely,  
23 emotionally -
- 24 LAH: It'll make you want to kill a bitch!
- 25 AJ: Upsetting, yes! Cut a bitch.
- 26 LAH: You know, Real World quick.
- 27 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 28 LAH: And you know, sometimes internalized transphobia, when some trans women seem to be more  
29 affirmed and celebrated in their identities and others are not. That trauma shows up, you know  
30 what I'm saying? I have yet - I read once about another - one trans woman killing another trans  
31 woman in Brazil, but like, in the US, we have yet to read, like, about that type of violence. But  
32 that violence happens all the time.
- 33 AJ: It happens.
- 34 LAH: Not necessarily murder, but violence.
- 35 AJ: No. Yeah. Have you ever been to a drag club at all?

1 LAH: Listen! Have you ever been to a ball? Have you ever been on a stroll?

2 AJ: Okay!

3 LAH: That violence happens! Like, you know, because the way systems are set up.

4 AJ: Right.

5 LAH: You know, and we think we're fighting for crumbs when actually if we just look above the table,  
6 there's a whole feast.

7 AJ: Right. Wow. I'm - I met you on social media. Like, my first introduction to Lourdes Ashley Hunter  
8 was online. Like, who is this bitch? But you use social media really well to lift up issues, to lift up  
9 concerns, to build community. Talk about the role of social media in your activism.

10 LAH: I love social media. Especially as someone who's still reeling from trauma, who has to take pills  
11 to get out the bed, to get out the house, you know. Social media enables me to be active in a  
12 world that I really wish I was in, but because trauma, I just can't get there today. Social media  
13 allows me to say that, like, I want to be there but I can't get there today. And then, next thing  
14 you know, it's two hundred people who feel the same way.

15 AJ: Way. Yeah.

16 LAH: And then we all get there together.

17 AJ: Mmhmm.

18 LAH: So not only is it like, me, like, affirming and supporting and encouraging others, I'm affirming  
19 and supporting myself, and soliciting that, right? Like, unabashedly saying, "I can't do this  
20 today."

21 AJ: Right.

22 LAH: You know? And I think that's a rawness that many leaders, organizers, people in the media do  
23 not show, do not - do not reveal, because they think it's vulnerability, and vulnerability - we're  
24 not supposed to be vulnerable. I don't have a problem being vulnerable, you know. Because I'm  
25 not perfect. That is not something I am looking forward to be. I want to feel all of my emotions,  
26 and I want to be celebrated and affirmed in all of the things that I'm going through, you know? I  
27 show up as a whole person, and everybody - if you are not being affirmed in part of yourself,  
28 you're not showing up whole.

29 AJ: Right.

30 LAH: And if you ain't showing up whole, you're going to start fucking up, you're going to start messing  
31 up, you're going to start lashing out.

32 AJ: Yeah.

33 LAH: You know? You're going to start medicating. And so that's why it's important to show up whole,  
34 you know? And be affirmed in all of who you are. And so I use social media to connect with folks  
35 who may not have that in their lives but want that in their lives, and so we find ways to create

1 that community.

2 AJ: Right. One of those communities is the TransWomen of Color Collective.

3 LAH: Yes!

4 AJ: What's that all about?

5 LAH: TransWomen of Color Collective is an amazing...it was born out of a need - it was a response. It  
6 was a response to the violence that was happening in our communities and particularly to Black  
7 trans women. Young people.

8 AJ: And even more specifically, Islan -

9 LAH: Islan Nettles, who was murdered in August of 2011. And...or was it 2012 or 11? I can't recall. But  
10 she was murdered in - there was a vigil, they had a vigil, the community had a vigil. And a lot of  
11 cis people orchestrated it, and they - they pushed the trans people out the way.

12 AJ: Oh, wow.

13 LAH: They didn't include us in the dialogue, in the organizing, they were misgendering Islan on the  
14 stage.

15 AJ: Oh, my goodness.

16 LAH: Using her deadname, using the wrong pronouns, and like, you have a park full of trans women in  
17 the daytime in Harlem, who are risking their lives -

18 AJ: Their lives to even be here.

19 LAH: It's like ninety degrees outside, but we were out there. You know? And - it sent a visceral effect  
20 throughout the community, but before we left that park, we decided to organize and to meet  
21 that next Thursday to talk about what we were going to do. To come together as a community in  
22 a response to the violence, to the lack of access to resources, the lack of commitment from  
23 LGBT organizations in New York City, you know? And so thirteen of us came together that first  
24 meeting. It was amazing. Laverne was there, Janet, myself, Katrina Goodlett, Nala Simone,  
25 Madison St Claire - there was a host of women - Octavia, Octavia was there - a host of women  
26 was there. And at first, it was like, let's just hold each other.

27 AJ: Right.

28 LAH: It's a lot of trauma. And we understood that, and we recognized that.

29 AJ: Mmhmm.

30 LAH: Let's hold each other. Let's build each other up. And that was important to us. We broke bread,  
31 we went out to eat, you know, we walked in the park together. It was important for us to build  
32 that sisterhood, because we were all coming from broken pieces. We were all coming from  
33 being told that we weren't worth shit, we didn't have shit, you know what I'm saying? And it's  
34 New York City, they had just killed this twenty-one year old beautiful Black girl, who was  
35 involved in organizing, was starting her own fashion line, had come from the shelters, had a

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1           supportive mother.

2   AJ:     Mmhmm. Yup.

3   LAH:    And she was murdered, and we're like - if she can get it, any of us can. So we need to come  
4           together.

5   AJ:     Right. Right.

6   LAH:    And that was four years ago! And so now we have moved towards working to uplift those  
7           narratives, the lives and leadership of trans and gender nonconforming people of color using our  
8           culture as a tool of healing and liberation.

9   AJ:     Wow. I know I - I was so struck by the - the retreat that you helped organize. Just - sisters,  
10           just...getting together and, like, meditating, and doing yoga, and walking, and chanting and  
11           eating and...just, enjoying the sisterhood. I thought that was a beautiful concept, and I really  
12           think we need more of that in our community.

13   LAH:    Because we can't - we had these four principles. Healing, restoration, fellowship, action. A lot of  
14           times, we see our community reacting to things, so reaction.

15   AJ:     It's all action, or reaction.

16   LAH:    Somebody died, let's have a march. Somebody died, let's have a vigil. And you know, when  
17           people were coming together with all of this energy but still even broken. Depleted. Empty. You  
18           know, so we said we needed to do some other things before we can just act, act, act. You know,  
19           I don't even know you, I can't even trust you. You may have slept with my man. Maybe you  
20           didn't, but somebody looked like you slept with my man, and I haven't worked that out yet.

21   AJ:     Right, right. Exactly.

22   LAH:    You know what I'm saying? So we had to engage in some healing work. Some chanting, some  
23           meditation, some taking it back to the ancestors.

24   AJ:     Right.

25   LAH:    So that we can be restored to a place where we can fellowship together, right? We ain't  
26           planning no action shit, we just finish healing. Now we restore, right. So now let's fellowship.

27   AJ:     Right. Yes. Mmhmm.

28   LAH:    Break bread. Go shopping. Do the things that nurture sisterhood. And once we've created those  
29           bonds, now we can build some sustainable action to shift some of this shit that's happening, and  
30           that's what we have done.

31   AJ:     I remember - I just had this flashback of being at Creating Change and you, and many others, I  
32           can't remember who all was helping to organize it, but there was this healing space -

33   LAH:    The healing circle! Mmhmm.

34   AJ:     The healing circle that was created, and that was like, sixty-five people.

- 1 LAH: It was huge.
- 2 AJ: And, I mean, at Creating Change, like, you know, people are partying out in the streets, gone, or  
3 whatever they do, they're usually not -
- 4 LAH: Yep yep. And it was like, nine o'clock at night! Like, people have had four days and they're like,  
5 you know, I'm going to hit the street. No. They were there.
- 6 AJ: It was one of the most beautiful things. And it was just - yeah. There was no actions, it was just  
7 poetry -
- 8 LAH: Art, song, love.
- 9 AJ: Oh yeah. Alok. I met Alok there for the first time.
- 10 LAH: And that is something important in our communities, because what happens when I don't feel  
11 safe at a rally?
- 12 AJ: Right.
- 13 LAH: Or protest. What happens when I have a bad knee and I can't do the march.
- 14 AJ: Right.
- 15 LAH: Or I have anxiety, or I'm a senior, or I have small children and we can't go protesting and  
16 shutting down the thing, right?
- 17 AJ: Right. Right.
- 18 LAH: So we create and curate these spaces for those people who say "I have something to give. It  
19 may not be shutting it down, but it may be a song in my heart that will touch somebody else,"  
20 you know what I'm saying? Or maybe this paella, or this panini, or this macaroni and cheese. I  
21 don't know no poems, I can't sing no songs, but I can bake this macaroni and cheese, and I want  
22 to bring it to the event. So we all -
- 23 AJ: Can we make a pound cake?
- 24 LAH: Listen! We all have something to contribute. There's a place for all of us in this movement.
- 25 AJ: Absolutely.
- 26 LAH: And that's really what TWOCC is about, like, what is it that I do? Where is it - where can I be  
27 celebrated and how can I feel affirmed? You know, and not have to feel like I'm competing with  
28 somebody else and their talent and what they're giving. Because trauma still shows up, right?  
29 Every day, we can say we healed, but every day we have to engage in healing, because trauma is  
30 -
- 31 AJ: Every day.
- 32 LAH: All during the day! Okay?
- 33 AJ: See? Yes. Every day.

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1 LAH: All during the day, because it's real.

2 AJ: Wow. Yeah. You have been going all around the country, all around the world, speaking and  
3 lecturing, training. I think maybe one of the pinnacles, I'm just guessing, you did a TED talk.

4 LAH: I did.

5 AJ: What was that like? And what did you talk about?

6 LAH: My TED talk was exciting for me. It was done at Middlebury College, which is a private white  
7 institution in Vermont. And they were excited to have me, and - probably more because I was a  
8 Black trans woman as opposed to what I was bringing to the table.

9 AJ: Okay. They didn't know?

10 LAH: They did not know. And so, but, it was great. I introduced them to a lot of the harsh realities of  
11 our lives, as well as the celebratory aspects. Because a lot of times people want to hear the  
12 story, they want to be the tear jerker. But my talk was more so holding white people  
13 accountable to the violence that is happening in our lives, the violence that they have actively  
14 participated in, you know, that they have become complacent and silent in, you know? And  
15 really holding them accountable. And it really showed, because, like -

16 AJ: And benefiting from! I hope you threw in that part, too.

17 LAH: Yeah, absolutely! And after my TED talk, it was interesting, because there was this white woman  
18 in the audience and she was crying, and you know, I thought she had a come-to-Jesus moment,  
19 you know. And she was crying, and she was like, "You know, I hear all the things that you're  
20 saying, you know. I wish you would say them a little bit more kinder. You should be a little more  
21 gentler with us."

22 AJ: Oh, so she was tone policing.

23 LAH: Mmhm. And so I told her, slavery wasn't gentle. The transatlantic slave trade was nothing  
24 kind. You know, debt peonage, you know. That wasn't gentle either. Separate but equal, that  
25 wasn't gentle or kind, or the War on Drugs, the War on Poverty, all of these things that  
26 happened worked systematically and institutionally to continue to disenfranchise Black and  
27 brown bodies - are not gentle things. You're sitting here at a private white institution, crying to  
28 me, a Black poor trans woman, about being more gentle with you about holding you  
29 accountable. And it was so funny, because then a white professor got up and said "What I think  
30 she's trying to say is - " and I said "I don't need you to come and save the white woman," you  
31 know. "I understood the words she said, I have several degrees," you know? But you know, that  
32 is the thing, where the white man, you know, has to come save the white woman from the big  
33 bad Black trans woman who is holding her accountable to the violence, you know, that - for  
34 generations. You know, come on! And it wasn't like I said "You did it." I can.

35 AJ: Yes. But.

36 LAH: You know? That's not even what I said, right? You didn't kill a Black trans woman. What's going  
37 on with you?

1 AJ: Yeah. Wow.  
2 LAH: Good times.  
3 AJ: Wow.  
4 LAH: They never invited me back.  
5 AJ: They did?  
6 LAH: They never.  
7 AJ: They never invited you back. Okay.  
8 LAH: It's okay!  
9 AJ: But the - just the nature of TED talks, like -  
10 LAH: Well, not in Middlebury. But yeah, TED was amazing, it was like - it was, it was a wonderful  
11 experience. I had a great time.  
12 AJ: Because you know, I've done one, and like, we - six months of just, rehearsing and coming up  
13 with your talk, and - did you kind of go through that same experience?  
14 LAH: No.  
15 AJ: No?  
16 LAH: I just wrote it.  
17 AJ: You just wrote it.  
18 LAH: I didn't recite mine.  
19 AJ: Okay.  
20 LAH: They had a stand, and I read it.  
21 AJ: Oh, wow.  
22 LAH: Mmhmm. I'm an orator, so I don't - I'm not well at remembering large mass of information.  
23 AJ: Right. No, no.  
24 LAH: So I can write notes, and hit points, so that worked better for me.  
25 AJ: Yeah. Yeah. No, mine was on a teleprompter.  
26 LAH: Oh, wow!  
27 AJ: I did not - they had a nice little tele - just on the floor, thing.  
28 LAH: Okay!  
29 AJ: It was cute! No, I don't remember - I tell people all the time, I'm a poet because I can't  
30 remember that shit, I'll write it down.



- 1 LAH: Okay! Write it down! Mmmmm. I'll give you a great speak, but, no.
- 2 AJ: Wow. You've had an amazing life, Lourdes, and you think about a lot of deep issues. But I just
- 3 want to - a little personal, like, who do you sleep with, are you sleeping with anybody, are you in
- 4 a relationship, are you in love, are you married? I don't know what's going on with you.
- 5 LAH: I sleep by myself.
- 6 AJ: Okay.
- 7 LAH: Sometimes my dog Cashmere gets in the bed.
- 8 AJ: All right.
- 9 LAH: Yeah, I sleep by myself.
- 10 AJ: Okay. So no - no -
- 11 LAH: I have - for me, I love a lot of people. I have a lot of love in my life.
- 12 AJ: Okay.
- 13 LAH: I don't...equate sex with love, and love - sex is not always an ingredient that's part of love for
- 14 me.
- 15 AJ: Absolutely.
- 16 LAH: And also, in healing from trauma, sexual trauma, like - I'm not ready to just go jump into bed
- 17 with anybody anyway, but there are people in my life who I'm close to, who I love, and they
- 18 understand where I am in my journey, and they respect and affirm that, and so it makes me love
- 19 them even more, you know. Maybe one day I will have...I don't know. But at this moment, I'm
- 20 happy being happy with people. I think because of being a sex worker in my past, and having sex
- 21 being equated with this, this, this tangible thing. It was this commodity, right? And so - and also
- 22 being a Black trans woman, sex is also a - it's a commodity. And - it's a commodity period, in this
- 23 society that we live in.
- 24 AJ: As an object, right?
- 25 LAH: Right? And I reject that. I reject that you should - this is how you show you love me. I reject the
- 26 fact - just, no. The way sex has been propagated and proscribed is for the satisfaction and the
- 27 gratification of a man. And I reject - I'm not about to do anything - that's just not me. I'm not
- 28 that type of woman. Like, you're going to please me! Like...
- 29 AJ: Right. There you go! Come on, baby.
- 30 LAH: Am I pleased? Right? This is not about you, it's about me. It's clearly about me! Right? So, yeah -
- 31 I need a man who'd understand, no. You're - no. And if I - no. It's because I decided and I
- 32 wanted to, and it's not going to mean what society has said it means. It has to be greater than
- 33 that.
- 34 AJ: Wow. There's been a lot of visibility around trans identities lately - negative and positive, right?
- 35 Like, you know...Laverne Cox has a new TV show, but also the new president or 45 has rescinded

1 the orders that allow, that necessarily allow trans kids to use the bathroom because...as far as I  
 2 know, trans kids been using the bathroom all the motherfucking time.

3 LAH: He rescinded the recommendations of the Obama administration of how to apply Title IX in  
 4 public access at schools. So all he did was say "I'm taking away - I'm saying as the president that  
 5 I don't apply these recommendations." Title IX is still in effect. It still protects us under gender.  
 6 However, people will be assholes. You know? Like, even when Obama gave those  
 7 recommendations, people didn't have to follow them, you know? But, you know, you risk being  
 8 sued by the Supreme Court, or you risk being sued. But now, that has changed.

9 AJ: And there was some violence involved too, right?

10 LAH: Correct, and so that has changed now, but, like, trans people - it does not mean that now people  
 11 can't use appropriate bathrooms at schools. It means that now people can be assholes and be  
 12 violent to trans people by denying them the right to use those restrooms, and they have no  
 13 support from the office of the president. So that's what that means.

14 AJ: Sure. And my point was that, you know, there's been - all of this dialogue, national dialogue,  
 15 conversation, around trans identity. What do you think are some of the agenda items we need  
 16 to be addressing right now?

17 LAH: Housing, healthcare, education, employment. Dismantling state-sanctioned violence, white  
 18 supremacy. But those are not issues that are indicative to trans people, right?

19 AJ: Right. That's a whole bunch of Black folks, a whole bunch of poor folks.

20 LAH: A whole bunch of folks, right! How about that?

21 AJ: Right. Right, absolutely.

22 LAH: Those are - those are the issues I'm concerned with. Housing, healthcare, education,  
 23 employment, violence, you know, structural violence, you know? I'm interested in having  
 24 conversations around fuck a bathroom, what good is a bathroom if I don't have a job?

25 AJ: Right! Exactly.

26 LAH: If I can't walk out my house without getting hit with a brick, what am I going to do with a  
 27 bathroom?

28 AJ: Right. Huh. Yeah. Wow, Lourdes, this is - this has just been a really great conversation. I feel  
 29 enlightened, and I've been doing this thing for quite some time, honey. But, you know, it's really  
 30 amazing to be able to interact with other people who are sort of experiencing some of the same  
 31 things in life that you are who are showing up in some of the same ways and then sharing ideas  
 32 and thoughts. Where do you see our community in fifty years? You talked about Ellie and these  
 33 young babies...

34 LAH: Fifty!

35 AJ: Yeah!

36 LAH: That means I'll still be alive -

1 AJ: All right, twenty five years!

2 LAH: Oh!

3 AJ: You know - so, you'll still be running up and down the street in twenty five years.

4 LAH: I - you know, hopefully. We'll be flying by then. But...I can't say. I can't say. There is a level of  
5 uncertainty amidst the certitude, so...I am hopeful. However, I'm also aware. I believe, again,  
6 faith without works is dead.

7 AJ: Right.

8 LAH: And as long as we continue to plant seeds and water the fields -

9 AJ: Something's going to grow.

10 LAH: Something's going to grow!

11 AJ: Mmhmm.

12 LAH: And if we're planting good seeds and we're being diligent about tilling the field, when it's time  
13 for the harvest, there will be a bounty.

14 AJ: Yes. That's a universal law. Like, no matter who's the president -

15 LAH: Hello, you plant bananas, sun shine, you water it, the banana's going to grow.

16 AJ: Yeah.

17 LAH: You don't water it, them shit's going to die.

18 AJ: Right. Exactly.

19 LAH: It is what it is.

20 AJ: It is what it is.

21 LAH: And like, Trump didn't create white supremacy. Trump didn't create trans - these things existed  
22 when Obama was the president.

23 AJ: Absolutely.

24 LAH: We had the most deadliest -

25 AJ: And long before that, right?

26 LAH: Yes! We had the most deadliest on record murders while Obama was the president. What do  
27 you expect to happen now that Trump is the president?

28 AJ: Right. What's the solution to the - to the murders?

29 LAH: Mmm.

30 AJ: And I mean, I know that's a broad, wide question, but - how do we plant seeds to create a less  
31 violent transgender experience? Black women -

1 LAH: Continuing to creating opportunities and curating spaces where trans people can thrive and see  
 2 each other thriving. You know? And hope it catch on like wildfire. Because even in the midst of  
 3 creating spaces where we can thrive, you still have to leave those spaces. You can't walk around  
 4 in these transgender bubbles.

5 AJ: Right. Exactly.

6 LAH: I live my life like that a lot, like - I have trans friends, when I go out to eat I'm with my trans  
 7 friends, you know, people come into my house are trans people, like, so - but what happens is  
 8 when I engage with cis people...

9 AJ: Mmhmm.

10 LAH: They're like, "Well, who do you think you are?" Like, cause, to me! As you saw, like -

11 AJ: Yes!

12 LAH: They're expecting us to be something else, and I'm like, no, I'm all of what you see right here.

13 AJ: Yes. Exactly.

14 LAH: You know? So creating more spaces where trans people can be all of what you see right here  
 15 and they not be ashamed and they live their lives unabashedly. But I don't think that murders  
 16 will stop for any community, and it will always hit us harder because of the population ratio.

17 AJ: Sure. Yeah. That's a great analogy in terms of the ratio.

18 LAH: Mmhmm.

19 AJ: I think, you know, some of the issues you identified as being agenda items - housing, healthcare  
 20 -

21 LAH: Jobs, education -

22 AJ: Jobs, education. Like, lack of access to those, how they contribute to -

23 LAH: Correct. Mmhmm. Of course! When you don't have a job, then you're left to do things that you  
 24 gotta do. If you don't have education, that limits the amount of jobs that you can get.

25 AJ: Jobs you get -

26 LAH: You know what I'm saying? And if you don't have a job, then you don't have healthcare, or the  
 27 type of healthcare you have is, you know, less than, or, you know -

28 AJ: Mmhmm.

29 LAH: So, yeah, it all contributes to now how do I survive.

30 AJ: And - or, you don't have a house, and so -

31 LAH: Correct!

32 AJ: At four o'clock in the morning, you're on the street!

- 1 LAH: How you doing. And since I ain't got no job, I don't need to be at home -
- 2 AJ: Right.
- 3 LAH: Yeah. It's a vicious circle. So there's - there's no one. That's why I said we have these linear, 3D
- 4 lives - you just can't solve the housing problem. You need to be working on all of these problems
- 5 at the same damn time.
- 6 AJ: Same time.
- 7 LAH: Mmhmm.
- 8 AJ: Mmhmm. Lourdes, is there anything that I did not ask you that you feel compelled and/or
- 9 determined to add to this conversation?
- 10 LAH: I like to cook.
- 11 AJ: Yeah! What's your favorite meal?
- 12 LAH: Oh, I don't know. I love fish.
- 13 AJ: I see you online. You eat pretty healthy.
- 14 LAH: I try!
- 15 AJ: Oh my goodness.
- 16 LAH: I do, I try. I like delicious foods, I like colors, so yeah - I am very particular about the food that I
- 17 eat -
- 18 AJ: So seafoods -
- 19 LAH: Mmhmm. I love seafood, and I love to go to the market to get fresh food. So, like, I go to the
- 20 market almost every day because I eat fresh, and so it's always a journey. It's always an
- 21 experience. It always brings me back to my mom, my grandmother, my family, because that's
- 22 something that we always did together - go out to the field and pick particular foods or
- 23 vegetables that then would be prepared in the kitchen by all of us, right? So it's like, something
- 24 that the family did together. So every time that I cook, I'm like, bringing in my ancestors with
- 25 me. Because I live in DC, I don't have family there. So it gets lonely, you know? And plus, I'm
- 26 single. It gets really lonely.
- 27 AJ: I know one thing I wanted to ask you about, or I've just now thought about particularly. You
- 28 mentioned food and then you mentioned that you live in DC, so - last year, in the last year of the
- 29 Obama administration, you posted a transgender women, or...
- 30 LAH: It was the trans briefing. White House trans briefing.
- 31 AJ: White House trans briefing.
- 32 LAH: Yes I did.
- 33 AJ: At the White House.

1 LAH: Mmhmm.

2 AJ: That was a pretty eventful day. I'm - I - I'm - thank you for the invitation. I was not able to be  
3 there, but I mean, I hear people just -

4 LAH: It was amazing.

5 AJ: - gushing about it now!

6 LAH: It was amazing. It was a great opportunity. It was the last LGBT event of the Obama  
7 administration, and the White House office of engagement had reached out to me and asked  
8 me would I be interested in working with them to, you know, create this monument, this  
9 historical event, you know? Led by trans women of color, it was a celebration of art and culture.  
10 We invited over 175 people, people brought their parents, there were trans kids there, their  
11 partners - my mother came, my cousin came, and it was just a way for our family to see that  
12 they are not alone. Other mothers seeing other mothers supporting their kids.

13 AJ: Right.

14 LAH: You know, trans kids seeing other trans kids, or cis kids that will support them, you know what  
15 I'm saying? Seeing Black fathers say "I love my trans child" on the stage at the White House. You  
16 know what I'm saying? So being able to create those memories and those moments that nobody  
17 can take away. It was priceless. It was wonderful. And then we had a wonderful reception.

18 AJ: Yes!

19 LAH: Yeah. It was catered, it was amazing, and we were dancing, and having a good time. So yeah, it  
20 was cool.

21 AJ: Yeah - they throw a pretty nice party at the White House.

22 LAH: They didn't throw the party, actually.

23 AJ: Oh, so you guys -

24 LAH: Trans Women of Color Collective sponsored the party. We paid for the caterers, we paid for the  
25 DJ. And so the White House just gave us the space.

26 AJ: The space. Okay. Wow.

27 LAH: So -

28 AJ: That's a pretty big contribution, I gotta say!

29 LAH: Oh, yes! The White House don't give out rooms for you to have a party.

30 AJ: Right! Exactly. They don't even rent them out.

31 LAH: They don't. Obama told us that we could bring liquor, like, I could have each guest bring a bottle  
32 of liquor into the White House. They were like, do what you want. Have a good time.

33 AJ: See?

1 LAH: I mean, I didn't do that, I hired a bartender, but...

2 AJ: Yeah.

3 LAH: I had open bar, because I didn't want, you know.

4 AJ: Right.

5 LAH: They were like, what?

6 AJ: Whaaaaat?

7 LAH: I'm like, look. Obama said it, I didn't say it, you know? No, we had a wonderful time.

8 AJ: Oh, wow. That's - that's historic, Lourdes. That's amazing. That's major.

9 LAH: It was.

10 AJ: That is a testament to the work that you have been doing -

11 LAH: It was my gift to the community, like - so often, like, nobody tells us thank you.

12 AJ: Right.

13 LAH: Nobody says "I appreciate you."

14 AJ: Mmhmm.

15 LAH: And if they do, they just give you a flimsy old award. They don't give you a five star meal at the

16 White House, you know?

17 AJ: Right. Exactly.

18 LAH: You know, and opportunity to - like, we were booking people's hotels, flying them out - you

19 know, it was amazing. And people were like, why are you feeding them? I was like, you don't

20 bring nobody to Washington to -

21 AJ: Well, and that's what made me think about the food -

22 LAH: What?!

23 AJ: - that you had a pre-event, too!

24 LAH: I did. The night before I had a dinner party at my house for everyone who was, you know, my

25 closest friends who were coming into town, we had a dinner - yeah, you don't bring nobody in

26 to town and you don't feed them! I'm from a different school, you know what I'm saying? And

27 I'm also one who is fanciful and I enjoy the pomp and circumstance.

28 AJ: Yes!

29 LAH: And so when you have folk in your hometown for a couple of days, you know, you treat them

30 well.

31 AJ: You treat them well.

1 LAH: You treat them well. And so - and that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to treat my friends well, I  
 2 wanted to treat people well. I wanted to create amazing memories for young folk who may not  
 3 have ever had the opportunity to have those memories. And now, they may not, because we  
 4 see 45...he's not inviting none of us over to....

5 AJ: No. I - we probably won't be there for a while.

6 LAH: And that's okay! And that's why I'm so glad - and you know, it really really pained me, and I'm  
 7 going to say this on camera. It pained me to get support from other, like, trans-led, LGBT  
 8 organizations financially to support the event.

9 AJ: Okay.

10 LAH: You know, everybody wanted to be on stage at the White House, but nobody wanted to -

11 AJ: They wanted to put up -

12 LAH: They were asking me, well, why are you feeding people? You know, it's just a briefing. There's  
 13 never been a reception after a briefing.

14 AJ: Right.

15 LAH: I was like, well, there's never been a briefing planned by Lourdes.

16 AJ: Okay! Yeah.

17 LAH: There's going to be a reception.

18 AJ: Right!

19 LAH: You know. And so they didn't understand it. The reception was like five thousand dollars and  
 20 they were like, why does it cost so much. I said, excuse me? We have pulled pork sliders, we  
 21 have shrimp and grits, we have crudite, we have open bar - how much you think it's supposed to  
 22 cost?

23 AJ: Right.

24 LAH: I said, don't even worry about it. And I paid for it myself.

25 AJ: Oh my goodness.

26 LAH: Because I - I - yes. Because I'm not going to let that happen - folks not eat, not have food. Plus  
 27 my mother was coming, so you know - it was a to-do.

28 AJ: Mmhmm. Yeah, exactly.

29 LAH: My mother came down to the dinner party and made peach cobbler.

30 AJ: Mmm.

31 LAH: Homemade peach cobbler.

32 AJ: Mmhmm.



1 LAH: She was so intentional that she actually brought the dough from Michigan that she used to  
2 make the cobbler because they didn't have it in DC.

3 AJ: What? Wow!

4 LAH: So, no, mm-mm.

5 AJ: She was ready.

6 LAH: Right! You know? If you gonna do something, do it right.

7 AJ: Oh my goodness. I'm so glad I asked about that question. I know that there was an event that  
8 happened that night.

9 LAH: Yes.

10 AJ: I don't know if you want to talk about that, because it's...legal action.

11 LAH: Well, it's pending litigation. I think that what I can say is that it's important for trans people to  
12 stand up for their rights no matter what. If you lose your life, lose your life because you stood  
13 for something.

14 AJ: Yes.

15 LAH: You know, and...there was an incident where my home was entered, you know, unlawfully by  
16 the police.

17 AJ: Mmhmm.

18 LAH: And I stood my ground. And so the police have admitted that they were wrong, you know? And  
19 it was important for me because we know what happens when Black bodies, when trans bodies,  
20 when disabled bodies come in contact with the state.

21 AJ: Mmhm. Yeah. It usually does not end up well. I just read the saddest fucking story I ever heard  
22 in my life this morning about a man - schizophrenia, in jail. They put him in the shower.

23 LAH: In the shower. For three hours.

24 AJ: 180 degrees.

25 LAH: Came back...

26 AJ: Burned to death.

27 LAH: Skin peeling. And me as a person who has PTSD, who has anxiety disorder - for the police to  
28 come to my home and treat me - and I'm also disabled, you know, physically - for the police to  
29 come to my home and treat me in such a manner. And then to put me in a cell. You know, like - I  
30 feared for my own life.

31 AJ: Absolutely. Justifiably so.

32 LAH: But it did not matter. It did not matter, because they were wrong. I knew they were wrong. And  
33 people actually shamed me and said, well, why didn't you just go with them and work it out in

1 the court? Like the court system is on our side?

2 AJ: Right.

3 LAH: It just so happened that the prosecutor refused to charge me, so they dropped all the charges,  
4 which helped me push forward with my lawsuit. But like...And then, like, I got out in three  
5 hours, like, when does that ever happen?

6 AJ: Mmhmm.

7 LAH: I was reading about a story about a young man in New York City who went into jail and couldn't  
8 pay his bond. He was there for three years.

9 AJ: Right. They didn't even charge him with anything.

10 LAH: Mmhmm. They didn't even charge him. And then when he came home, he killed himself.

11 AJ: Suicide. Yeah.

12 LAH: You know. And so we see what happens. And so that's why it's important for us to tell our  
13 stories, to be, you know, to stand up. Because if you don't? They will kill you and say you  
14 welcomed it. You invited it.

15 AJ: Mmhmm. Lourdes, I want to say thank you. You've always treated me well whenever I've been  
16 to your home with you and Cashmere, and...or I've come to DC and we've gone out and just  
17 kicked it on the town. So thank you. Thank you for sharing your story today. A part of your story,  
18 because we can't get your own story in an hour and a half.

19 LAH: Has it been that long?

20 AJ: Yes. Yes.

21 LAH: At least it's still daylight, though. I like -

22 AJ: It is! So we have some time. We are - I think we should go get - maybe we should get like a four  
23 star meal. I don't know if we can do five stars.

24 LAH: Okay, I like that too!

25 AJ: But -

26 LAH: We can get a three - listen, y'all got a Coney spot? Or, you know, a good fish spot over there?  
27 You know what I'm saying? You know what I'm talking about! Listen, listen, listen. You know. So  
28 yes, I appreciate this opportunity and especially to contribute to the amazing work that you're  
29 doing. You know how I feel about history and legacy.

30 AJ: Yes. I'm - and documentation. That's the first thing you said the first time I met you, you were  
31 just like "We gotta document this!"

32 LAH: Absolutely.

33 AJ: And you said this to a whole group of people. Always document what you're doing.

1 LAH: That's right. And that's how I was able to, like, move forward. Cause like, with my lawsuit, is  
2 because when the police were doing what they were doing, there were people in my apartment  
3 filming.  
4 AJ: Come on, boo.  
5 LAH: That's right.  
6 AJ: Wow. All right, baby girl.  
7 LAH: Thank you!  
8 AJ: Thank you! Peace!  
9 LAH: Oh, that was good.  
10