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- Interviewer:* I'm starting the recording. Is that cool?
- Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. I'm excited for these questions.
- Interviewer:* Yeah. I did not – I sent you the first ones. I didn't expect you to tell me to go back and revise them. I was like. Yeah.
- Interviewee:* Was it mean of me?
- Interviewer:* No.
- Interviewee:* Good.
- Interviewer:* No. I don't think it was mean. Did you intend it to be mean?
- Interviewee:* No.
- Interviewer:* Okay. Good.
- Interviewee:* I didn't intend to be mean. I'm glad with what you came back with.
- Interviewer:* Why is that?
- Interviewee:* 'Cause I like what you came – you took my direction on it and I knew that you had more specific things that you wanted to talk about than what you gave in your first proposal, which was just like, this is what we could do.
- Interviewer:* Yeah. No. It's interesting 'cause I feel like the weird thing about this project is it's so fluid and structured at the same time in that we're building an interview space, but we're also calling audio history portraits a collective shared authority, creative project together. When you have rules and then maybe no rules, it's like then the actual interaction itself – it's like you have to structure it the way – on the fly almost.
- Interviewee:* Or adaptive to who you're interviewing.
- Interviewer:* Right. And some people are inclined to be really interview style or answer only the questions that I present. Some people would be inclined to take it and run and not even listen to my questions. But what was cool about I think our pre-interview process was that I sent you something and you're like, "No, this way. Let's go this way." And I was like, "Okay. That." I think that's maybe an interesting or genuine part about queer oral histories that I wanna take along with me and I found important. So I don't know. What

do you think about this history project? What do you think about queer oral histories?

Interviewee: I think that oral histories are, for me, a lot of work. It's something that I definitely – when I was approaching the project of the queer paper I was like – oral histories was one of the first things that I wanted to do, but even though archival research and oral histories are thematically similar, they're not the same at all. Oral histories are a lot of work and the work is different an archival research. So I definitely had to narrow the focus of my research to just being archival and I think that it –

Interviewer: With this paper?

Interviewee: Yes. It benefited from that narrowed focus, but I'm gonna still get around to it. I have strong relationships in community where I would get really beautiful – if I could – if I had the consent of some of my friends to record them. I think that that could be illuminating for people because just in my conversations today with the girls I was hanging out with it was just like learning more about politics but experience, but also just weaving in and out of talking about policy and our shared past, but also talking about tea and talking about other things that are more – surgery or child care or other things that are more interpersonal, but they're issues that face us all in the community.

Interviewer: What are the differences that you've found between archival history and queer oral histories that you really delved into here?

Interviewee: Well, I haven't conducted any formal oral histories yet. So I can't really speak with authority on that. I think archival research, it's about – what gets saved is about the institution and saving it just like with oral histories, what the interview is subject is about is related to what perspective the interviewer comes to it with. So I think subjectivity is a question in both, but yeah. The demands for labor – with oral histories the majority of your amount of time is gonna be spent transcribing whereas with archival research you're just gonna spend hours and hours poring over photographs or newspapers or whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah. Did you come into it with an institutional kind of force behind you?

Interviewee: I don't think that I could come to anything with an institutional force behind me if I wanted to. So no. I didn't have the support of my university to do this research. I did have a person who helped

me, like an ally within my institution, and that was really critical in getting my project done and also just having somebody believe in me and give me the tools that I can take and run with, but no. At no point did – after I graduated and I did the huge fucking mural project of the block then me university wants to be like, "Oh, yeah. We care about trans things now."

I'm like, "You didn't care when the university was misgendering me or when I was telling you to do this or that," or when all this stuff was happening I couldn't get help from anybody within the entire institution because you don't care. You just care about how you can look shiny and new and nice, which is not reflecting on my university UB specifically, but all of them. All of them are like that. I also just realized I'm still wearing my kneepads. So I'm gonna take those off.

Interviewer: Yeah. Rip it in the mic.

Interviewee: Ripping my kneepads in the mic.

Interviewer: Do you always wear kneepads when you skate?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: It's important.

Interviewer: Safety first.

Interviewee: I wear kneepads and elbow pads and I've been wearing a helmet more recently.

Interviewer: Cool. Yeah. I will say I don't wear a helmet when I bike and I'm probably...I think it's really cool that the way you came into this project without that institutional force. You're so already in archival work where you said that it comes from with an institutional purpose. These interviews and documents get saved. You coming in from the opposite end of that without that support is pretty critical. I think that that's something that your paper really highlights, being critical and being queer.

And I found that so moving because I think I've also had a lot of questions about how queerness and being critical are always in the same space. As of late I've seen them also escape each other. So I wanted to focus on criticism or being critical in a way. Not in a

negative light, but just how that's shaped I think a lot of your work here and your thinking maybe day to day being critical.

Interviewee: Right. I think what you're saying is queer as a political identity or alignment. Is that what you're saying?

Interviewer: I think I use critical not in a political sense, but it could be political identity, but it could also be a social cause or just the way you carry yourself every day. I don't know if that could be considered political. I guess it could. I don't know. The only word that's coming to mind is invade, but that's not it. It permeates all spaces, queerness and bringing to being critical and being queer. If queerness is also in all spaces and that attitude of being critical is also brought into all these spaces.

Interviewee: I think my paper definitely – queer as a way of seeing maybe, the way that I see different spaces as queer is something that I wanted to highlight and share through my research saying this space is queer for this reason even if it doesn't look that way externally. It is that way because of this history and that's one way of proving it. A space can also be queer experientially like, "Oh, I kissed my girlfriend on that street corner."

I think having those gay and queer memories as I'm moving through the city, it's definitely one of my favorite parts about living here. I think another point that I wanted to make was about queer and dyke being reclaimed slurs turned into identities and how that's a very intentional act to identify as something that used to be a slur as to take away the power that that word is used to degrade and then embody what people are scared of when they're attacking that part of you.

Interviewer: How do you hold that queerness, I guess?

Interviewee: I see queerness as an identity that covers the long arc of my life when other aspects of my identity, like trans don't necessarily – I came out as trans I guess in 2015, 2014. I realized that I was trans in 2010 probably, but I've been queer all my life. It's always been something that people could see and tell about me, but it was something that people named differently in different areas of my life. Sometimes I was called other slurs, but other times like my mom's friends were like, "Oh, yeah. Your child is very artistic." I'm like, "I don't even have a sexuality. I'm five."

Interviewer: Oh, five.

Interviewee: Literally. I've been fruity that long and I'm queer and that's what that means is to – that queerness has manifested differently. I think that if you had talked to my mom when I was age five my mom would be like, "Yeah. My son is gay." But that's not what ended up happening. How I manifest that queerness is mine to decide.

Interviewer: Where did you grow up, if you don't mind me asking?

Interviewee: I grew up in Hartford County, which is suburban, but pretty conservative, I would say. I'm glad that I'm in Baltimore City now. We'll just say that. I think I had a lot of negative adolescent experiences because of the place that I grew up in and just how hegemonic it was there, how everybody was supposed to be the same and shop at Aeropostale or whatever.

Interviewer: All smell the same.

Interviewee: Yeah. Smell the same, look the same. There was not room for all of the ways that I was different in that space. I'm very glad that I didn't come out as trans when I still lived there.

Interviewer: Where did you come out as trans?

Interviewee: Here. In Baltimore City.

Interviewer: In Baltimore. Wow.

Interviewee: Here geographically too –

Interviewer: I was gonna say, do you remember where exactly?

Interviewee: Coming out is a long process, but I definitely remember going to Red Emma's being really transformative to me.

Interviewer: Where?

Interviewee: Red Emma's, which used to be on North Avenue and lots of trans women used to – well, trans women still do work there, but the trans women who worked there would be like, "Are you moaning?" And I'd be like, "What's moaning?"

Interviewer: What's moaning?

Interviewee: Moaning is taking hormones. I wasn't taking hormones and I didn't know to take – I was aggressively nonbinary.

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- Interviewer:* Aggressively.
- Interviewee:* Yes. I was like, "Professor, call me they/them. RA, call me they/them."
- Interviewer:* Why aggressively?
- Interviewee:* "Cashier, call me them." 'Cause you don't – especially in the case of the cashier it's like, "Bitch, I'm only gonna see you for five seconds." I'm not – I don't need to – I don't need it that bad, but in that moment that's what I needed was to just occupy that liminal space and where the space in between masculinity and femininity in my expression and just have that be okay and respected by everybody around me. I was very – I'm glad that I fought for that when that's what I wanted.
- Interviewer:* How long did you want that for?
- Interviewee:* I still use they/them pronouns with she/her pronouns, but I don't think that I'm –
- Interviewer:* Aggressive.
- Interviewee:* I don't think I'm aggressively they/them anymore. I think I'm definitely femme. Femme: F-E-M-M-E. Femme is a lesbian gender identity that is externally looks like woman, but within queer culture it's nothing like woman at all.
- Interviewer:* How so?
- Interviewee:* This is a complicated question, but I feel like femme's hold a unique power and also femme's –
- Interviewer:* What kind of power?
- Interviewee:* Soft power.
- Interviewer:* Unspoken or like...
- Interviewee:* Soft power, like the power of suggestion, the power to get other people to do their bidding.
- Interviewer:* How would you separate that from manipulation?

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- Interviewee:* Wow. Because they want to do it. They want to do it. It's manipulative to do something for somebody with the expectation of getting repaid.
- Interviewer:* So the expectation is what makes something manipulative?
- Interviewee:* It would be manipulative to say, "If you do this for me, I'll do this for you," and then I don't do that for you.
- Interviewer:* I see.
- Interviewee:* But you wanna do this for me because I'm pretty and I shouldn't have to open the door for myself.
- Interviewer:* So is it attraction?
- Interviewee:* Sometimes. Yeah. That's – it's a complicated question to explain femme.
- Interviewer:* I like it.
- Interviewee:* But that's the best that I can do is that it's a soft power. That's why I'm femme inevitably is I get treated better in a femme presentation. I'm trying to search my mind for microaggressions.
- Interviewer:* We're supposed to forget those.
- Interviewee:* Today before I went to the nail salon I did my make-up because sometimes when I don't do my make-up before going to the nail salon, like in the days when I was more aggressively nonbinary, people, like the nail tech, will be like, "You want clear polish?" "No. I don't want clear polish. I want a full set." But it's – or when I was doing mutual aid in 2020, I would be delivering groceries to people's houses and the way that I would be received wearing lashes versus not wearing lashes was night and day. When I was not wearing lashes people would be like, "Why are you here? What are you doing?"
- And then when I was wearing lashes people are like, "Oh my God. A pretty girl has just come to deliver me food. I'm so happy. How can I help you? Let me open the door for you or let me make your life easier in these small ways." I really respect those moments where those moments do make things easier when it's – there is – I guess I feel safer within my femme identity because of the power I have. There's also misogyny in the world and people treat women badly too, but that's only part of the experience.

Interviewer: Yeah. I would say that I think picking identities outside of the ones that I think are given to you right when you're born is in and of itself a very power thing to do because you have to step outside of some kind of label or box and have the courage to pick something else. To call that also power, what you picked, soft power and it makes you feel safer, I think that's a cool way to identify the process of identification.

Interviewee: Yeah. I would say so. I also think I'm trans femme and you're talking about that aspect of my identity, but I guess – I'm – for cis femme: F-E-M-M-E, technically they're assigned women at birth, but they're not assigned femme at birth. It almost is going past women into something else 'cause it's like – or just yeah. It's complicated too.

Interviewer: How do you identify a woman then?

Interviewee: That's another complicated question. I don't. I don't. The edges of woman to me are blurry and encompass a lot of people, but I love just in those blurry edges of that word. So I try not to police who is a woman and who isn't. The people who aren't, I know that they aren't. Shaking my head.

Interviewer: What about queer?

Interviewee: What do you mean?

Interviewer: The term.

Interviewee: How do I define it? Queer is countercultural, like a homosexual lifestyle. That's how I see queer. You're not just gay in who you're attracted to. You're queer in your politics or the spaces that you occupy or your priorities. That's how I see it, but...

Interviewer: Would you call Baltimore queer?

Interviewee: In general or I don't know. Baltimore definitely has queer spaces.

Interviewer: I know you touch upon this in your paper and I was really interested in the gayborhood article. You touched a lot on the history, which I think is something that's quite overlooked when it comes to queerness history.

Interviewee: For sure.

Interviewer: Your whole thing was about it. You went through the archives and traced out what could and what couldn't be. I guess I'm wondering where do you think those spaces exist today?

Interviewee: I think the difficult thing is in the past queer spaces were institutions and physical locations because it wasn't safe to have anything else. We really needed our own and we still do need our own self-deterministic spaces. I would say queer spaces today are more a night or a part of a larger space that isn't necessarily queer, like the Crown, for example, where we are now. I wouldn't say that the Crown is itself inherently queer. It's not queer owned. It's not every night is queer, but there are nights here that are super queer.

I've had a lot of queer experiences here. I've met past girlfriends here. So it's – so I think that that demonstrates the point of it's like – it's more about where queer people choose to take up space and where they can get the most agency possible, but I would love it if we had spaces that were just gay every single day and night and you could just go there and there wouldn't be any straight people and straight people wouldn't want to go. Now it's like straight people go to gay bars and they ruin it. Straight people come to the one gay night that we have a week and they ruin it.

Interviewer: Dyke night.

Interviewee: They come. They do. I've seen whole ass men. Just women bringing their boyfriend to Dyke night. I'm like go home. Go home.

Interviewer: We label that.

Interviewee: What?

Interviewer: We label that.

Interviewee: Come on. I get you can have – but leave your fucking boyfriend at home at least. Cis bisexuals, come on. Please.

Interviewer: So could you – do you – I don't think we can generalize, but do you still consider that a queer space?

Interviewee: Dyke night?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. Definitely. It's not my – it's a very white space. I've heard this criticism level, but – it's also Dyke night, but it's also Dyke night misses a lot of people who are Dyke who – masculine of center, black lesbian, butch, dyke, stud people don't go to Dyke night. Studs don't go to Dyke night and studs are dykes. Studs should own Dyke night, but they don't because it's a very white space and it centers white queerness a lot. I've been a part of trying to change that culture there, but there's only so much I can do especially as not an event organizer there.

Interviewer: How do you change the culture?

Interviewee: Well, I've been cultivating spaces in different capacities with community organizations, with nonprofits by myself or with my band. The spaces that I occupy, I feel really good about when I have an authoritative role in them or just when I can run the space I can have more power over what it's like. But I don't think it's on people as individuals to change it and I also don't think that everything needs to be for everyone.

I think that people should go where the people like them are and people will have different perspectives on that just based on their experience and that's okay. I feel like that's a big thesis of the queer paper too is there are all these rifts and divides in community. Sometimes they're really unnecessary and petty, but other times they're what needed to happen. It makes sense for everything to be centralized and in one place and really easy to get to and identify and never move and never change and be static, but that's not representative of our community at all. Sometimes shit needs to split away so that both parts of it can grow especially when there's consistent friction by two things trying to stay together.

Interviewer: What you're talking about is intercommunity conflict?

Interviewee: I am. Yes.

Interviewer: I really liked that term across the article in the paper. You say that there's been consistent tension from within the LGBT acronym itself. "As evidence my writings concluded trans people have often been used to distance the struggles of gay men and women." That's a quote that I just pulled straight from your paper I really liked. It got me thinking, how have you I guess personally experienced intracommunity conflict and wish it would be?

Interviewee: Not all people in my community are my community. I don't know. Not everybody in the LGBT I fuck with for real. Turfs, I have a lot of experience with turfs. When I'm trying to expand people's definitions of womanhood so that I can fit inside a space and then running into friction with people who disagree with that. I think that that's a good big one for me is a huge nonstarter, people who are explicitly trans misogynistic and don't see transwomen as women or shouldn't – don't want to share the space with transwomen. I think there's a whole lot of other problems and reasons including a racial lens as well where conflict would come about, but I think that's the other difficult part.

We were talking about neighborhoods earlier, but it's like we're not – we're a community, but we're not a community in the sense of other communities, even racial communities are because queerness isn't passed down in a hereditary way like property is. So you can't gain generational wealth through queer community. I don't know. So I think that that really contributes to the way that our community is different from others. I just say that to say often times that conflict breaks out on an individual scale person to person, but those conflicts are mirrored across the whole community, like this type of person consistently conflicting with this type of person on an interpersonal level, but several times the –

Interviewer: In terms of transwomen?

Interviewee: Yeah. That story repeating over and over throughout different – yeah.

Interviewer: You call queerness a culture. I remember you said that in class and I really resonated with that because...

Interviewee: I do see it that way.

Interviewer: So you're talking about not the generational wealth doesn't get passed down like other typical kinds of culture, I guess, or racial cultures, but it is a culture. We have space. It exists where people gather.

Interviewee: We have music and dance that is authentic to us. We have all these things that make us unique that we share. I think that's really, really beautiful. I think it's just also – I say that to say, gay people are my people. Queer people are my people. Lesbians are my people. Trans people are my people. I'm not trying to spend long amounts of time with anybody who isn't identified in that way and

that's how that stays to be my people is that that's who I spend my time with. That's where my priority goes.

Interviewer: Right, but you also said in accordance to intercommunity conflict, not all queer people are your people.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you manage that dissonance?

Interviewee: I guess knowing my red flags. When people's whiteness is taking up too much space, when people are weird or policing the definitions of womanhood, when people collaborate with and enjoy the presence of the police. All of those things it's like, you're nothing like what I'm going through. I can hold space for – there's so much diversity of experience in the queer community, but just knowing my own red flags it's like, no, I would not hang out with a person like that even if they were gay. No.

Interviewer: So then how do we continue to cultivate queer culture and pass it down or sideways?

Interviewee: Sideways is a really good way of thinking about it 'cause I think it's older to younger bonds are not – are increasingly not the way the community is conducted. It's more about peer groups.

Interviewer: Horizontal spaces.

Interviewee: Yeah. People who share an identity. It's also – this is the other thing that's different about our community. If you get a bunch of lesbians together who share a bunch of the same identities, hobbies, and interests, yes, they're gonna share experiences and do stuff together, but they're also going to fuck each other and they're going to create beef with each other. I'm so serious.

Interviewer: No. I know.

Interviewee: I'm so serious.

Interviewer: The way you said it.

Interviewee: It's like that's the way that all of these groups work is – that's why there's the community aspect degrades.

Interviewer: Why degrades?

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- Interviewee:* Because after a second point it's like why I am – I don't know. Some people don't value that cultural aspect of queerness in the same way that I do in the sense that when shit gets messy people don't –
- Interviewer:* Stick around?
- Interviewee:* Yeah. People don't stick around.
- Interviewer:* I think that is a really unique part about queerness is that sexual activity, romance, connection, it's so fluid in the way that – also ending that connection and space is just as possible as continuing it and growing it.
- Interviewee:* Yeah.
- Interviewer:* That's weird a little. Hard to navigate at least.
- Interviewee:* Yeah. I think I've learned a lot from my elders and also just being in activism work to value the relationships that I have especially platonic relationships or just –
- Interviewer:* That's huge.
- Interviewee:* Yeah. Finding new ways to be compatible with another person.
- Interviewer:* What's a new way you've learned to be compatible with somebody?
- Interviewee:* Like my bandmates. My bandmates, I – my bandmates are very sexy, but I would not – I have boundaries in those relationships because I know that my way of relating to them – the best way that I can relate to them is through music.
- Interviewer:* I really resonate with that. Me too. Would not lay a finger – a single hair on their head.
- Interviewee:* Yeah. I just know – or friends that I skate with. I rather be able to keep this hobby that we share together than try to see if there could be something more. Maybe that's just the way that I move. It's just like when I see somebody romantically, I'm not a friends to lover type bitch. I'm a love at first sight type bitch.
- Interviewer:* Really?

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- Interviewee:* I see somebody from across the room and I'm like you, and I will work on that person for a year.
- Interviewer:* Wow. Dedication.
- Interviewee:* I'm so serious. I'm so serious. I'm like I've already decided. That's just the way that I am. I don't know. It's just the way that I fall for people. I just know that you're what I want right now.
- Interviewer:* That's really interesting. What you're talking about is how – the way I'm understanding it is queerness exists everywhere and I think something that sets it apart maybe is the nature of sexual relationship and connection and romance is also a big part of queerness, but what you're finding is different ways in which queer relationships can create culture.
- Interviewee:* Yeah. Definitely. There's some people who – I'll be not generous and call them self-hating gay people who have only straight friends and they only enter queer spaces to find other queer people to fuck and they don't have queer friends to share their experience with. They wonder – I imagine that they wonder why they feel so lonely because it's –
- Interviewer:* The only part of the culture they're partaking in.
- Interviewee:* Is fucking.
- Interviewer:* Is sex.
- Interviewee:* And that's not lastingly nourishing.
- Interviewer:* How do you navigate that? Or more specifically – maybe this is too directed, but how can we delineate queerness from such an emphasis on sex or should we?
- Interviewee:* I don't think that we necessarily should. I think – I say all this, but I think the queer spaces should be more sexual.
- Interviewer:* Wait. Curveball.
- Interviewee:* Sorry.
- Interviewer:* No. ____.
- Interviewee:* That's really how I feel is – I don't know. I also think this might be a difference between the lesbian spaces that I'm entering like Dyke

night versus gay spaces like the Eagle up the street or something. When I was _____ people who are just going to places to fuck, you're going to the Eagle. But people are going to Dyke night with that same intention, but I don't know. Lesbians don't know how to flirt. They're just like, "I like your outfit," and nothing happens. But I feel –

Interviewer: And men do?

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah. Maybe.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: I feel like Virgin as a queer space that was here at the Crown –

Interviewer: Wait. What's Virgin?

Interviewee: Virgin was this queer party at the Crown.

Interviewer: Before my time.

Interviewee: Yeah. Before your time. It was queer in all the best ways. It was rowdy. People would go home with people. Fucking happened, but also not fucking happened and it was queer in the sense that gay men, trans people, and lesbian women could occupy the same space and just cruise, but it wasn't weird. That's my idealized space. It also wasn't overwhelming in a way. That –

Interviewer: Utopia.

Interviewee: It was literally so good. All the fucking gay people who were at the Crown I guess in 2019, 2018 will speak with the same fondness for sure.

Interviewer: What happened to it?

Interviewee: Well, the Crown shut down and Virgin is coming back this summer actually, but I think it'll take a few months to get back to its former glory.

Interviewer: Months?

Interviewee: Yeah. It's a monthly party. See, it's like a one night thing. It's not the whole – Virgin is not –

Interviewer: Not queer the whole month.

Interviewee: That would be nice. It would be nice. But this way people save the best look for that night. People are like, "Oh, I have this sexy outfit that I got for Virgin night."

Interviewer: Is that why we're all so well-dressed 'cause we only see each other once a month?

Interviewee: Yes. I'm well-dressed every day. I don't know about you, but...

Interviewer: Okay. School you got to be in sweats.

Interviewee: Did I even answer your question though? I don't –

Interviewer: I don't remember the question.

Interviewee: I think that it was like how do we decide if – how do we de-emphasize sex in queer spaces so that other forms of queer connection could happen. I think that there are community spaces for that.

Interviewer: It's weird though we have to delineate. Not delineate. Separate.

Interviewee: Yeah, I guess. There's day time spaces versus night time spaces. You know what I mean? I guess the GLCCB isn't what it was. It's still around.

Interviewer: The what?

Interviewee: The Gay and Lesbian Community Center in Baltimore, but it's called something different. I think it's called the Pride Center of Maryland or it might even be called something even more different than that. That's – when the GLCCB was in its last location I remember going there a lot during the day time and connecting with people in – there was a group there called Teen Art Group and it was just literally that, teens making art on a weekly basis and it was – Teen Art Group was also right after my organizing meetings for the Baltimore Transgender Alliance.

So I would be organizing with these girls for two hours. We need to work on this. Home girl needs to be bailed out of jail. This needs to get done. We need to work on this event. What if we tried this strategy and incubating this new idea and whatever, whatever, whatever. It's just so burnt out at the end of that meeting and then I just went to the room over and was able to just make art with other

people my age. I guess maybe younger than me by a few years. I was maybe 20 and other people in the space were '16, '17, '18.

Interviewer: What kind of art?

Interviewee: Vent art. Vent art. Just scribbling or just making faces or just whatever I needed to do to get those feelings out, but I made a lot of really beautiful connections in that space to peers that were younger than me who I've – as I've grown up and I have a fucking salary now I'm like, "It's my responsibility to take care of you 'cause we were teams together." So yeah. That's where I met Divine and Ace and Hunter. I really treasure those connections.

Interviewer: Is Hunter a DJ by chance?

Interviewee: Hmm?

Interviewer: Is Hunter a DJ by chance?

Interviewee: No. I think I might be talking about somebody else. But I guess I just say that to say there are nonsexual _____ spaces that exist and I encourage people to utilize them because they're underutilized. People don't show up enough. But it's also people don't need them as much as we as a community used to in the '70s and '80s and '90s.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Interviewee: Because gay people are more unanimously accepted in society. You can meet gay people at Starbucks. You don't have to go to the gay community center and gay people are more visibly identifiable. You can find somebody with purple hair.

Interviewer: That's gay.

Interviewee: Yeah. I think that it should be illegal for straight people to have purple hair.

Interviewer: Purple specifically or color?

Interviewee: Just any color for real.

Interviewer: Wow. I second that.

Interviewee: _____, but that's my truth.

Interviewer: I love the ways you've been identifying queer, not queer, woman, not woman, femme, not femme. To a certain point and extent, I don't know if these labels matter, but also they matter a whole lot.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Another label that we also talked about in class was queer joy. I wanted to ask you the same question I asked Ocean Vuong during that Zoom meeting, which by the way, he totally shut me down, but it's fine. I'll talk about that after. How do you express your queer and I think also trans joy? I wanted to ask you about those two things?

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: I think that's – yeah.

Interviewee: I'm giving you the same Osha Vaughn shut down answer. Let me have some thought on that. I – one thing is by not experiencing shame. Nobody can make me feel ashamed of the queer and happy life that I'm living. I think another thing is sticking up for myself. My queer joy bubble can be burst by somebody misgendering me, but if I stick up for myself and I'm like, "Actually my pronouns are she/her" or I'm like, "Fuck you," or something, as long as I do something to take back my power in that moment, then I'm able to retain my joy. That's my first reaction, but queer joy also looks like a lot of different things in my life. It occurs in a lot of different settings, but it's definitely something that happens every day. I'm always happy and fulfilled by how gay, queer, trans I am and my life is. I don't have to make any compromises about that.

Interviewer: That's so powerful.

Interviewee: There are some spaces that I choose not to disclose some aspects of myself or I put on a half of a costume, disguise. I –

Interviewer: Like queer coat switching.

Interviewee: Kind of. Sometimes in some spaces I care more about passing as a woman, being perceived as a cis woman than other spaces. Sometimes I'm – or most times I don't really care about that. Sometimes it's safer for me to be perceived that way and that's still being genuine to myself.

Interviewer: I wanna clarify something. I think I wasn't exactly sure and you might have touched on this before, but the difference between

queer and trans. And if there is a difference is there a difference in queer joy versus trans joy? Maybe how does passing fit into that or not fit into that?

Interviewee: My first reaction to that was gonna be queer is more sexuality than gender and trans is more a gender, but queer can definitely be – gender queer is a gender. But trans is exclusively a gender thing. You can be transgender without being queer. You can be a binary transgender person who's like, "I just wanna pass. Go to work." There are people like that that I know and maybe they're queer on the DL, but they're not – maybe their sex is queer.

Interviewer: Sexist queer?

Interviewee: Sex is queer.

Interviewer: Oh, sex is queer. I was like sex what?

Interviewee: Maybe their sex is queer. That's also a big place where queer joy happens for me is when I'm having sex or how I'm having sex.

Interviewer: I'm still – I have a little bit of confusion.

Interviewee: About what?

Interviewer: I think it's 'cause I just don't know, but being trans and queer, what does that mean, trans and not queer?

Interviewee: Being queer is being nonnormative and some people are trans to be normative, but just in a different expression. There are trans people who are normal like, "We just wanna live normal lives just as the other gender." I'm not like that at all, but there are people who are like that.

Interviewer: What does normal mean, passing?

Interviewee: You'd have to ask that person, but yeah. Probably passing is a part of it.

Interviewer: I see. Queer is nonnormative in the context of a culture. It's just everything that's not. You can have queer joy in music. You can have queer papers, queer spaces, queer sex, queer food, queer everything. It's a whole world that just doesn't have as much space physically.

Interviewee: Yeah. Physically. Ideologically we have more space.

- Interviewer:* Really?
- Interviewee:* 'Cause normative is a smaller box than everything else.
- Interviewer:* Right. That's cool.
- Interviewee:* That's how we win. It's everything being outside of that box is us. The box is so small. Everybody feels confined by the box. Some people just like lying that they don't feel confined.
- Interviewer:* So you think everyone is queer?
- Interviewee:* A little bit.
- Interviewer:* They're just lying.
- Interviewee:* I wouldn't give them the credit. It takes bravery to be queer. It takes bravery to have that expression.
- Interviewer:* So is that what sets queer and not queer?
- Interviewee:* And it takes introspection to have that identity. To realize that the box itself is uncomfortable you have to think about it.
- Interviewer:* It's that thought that I also care a lot about and I think that's what stops me from wanting to occupy anything but a queer space. Just knowing that you've thought about it as much as I have and that you're also a little bit scared and you're also a little bit like fuck it enough to claim queer, be claimed by queer.
- Interviewee:* And that's a good thing. It's a good thing to think about. I can't – there's no joy left for me in the box. All of my joy is outside of the box and in queer.
- Interviewer:* Nothing?
- Interviewee:* Maybe a little bit. Maybe there's a little bit in the box of woman where it's I can pretend to be a normative woman and get joy out of that in a temporary basis.
- Interviewer:* Like Starbucks?
- Interviewee:* More like when a man opens the door for me or something.
- Interviewer:* So small.

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- Interviewee:* Yeah, but that's within the box of if I was being queer about it, I'd be like, "You think my arms don't work. I can't open a door by myself," but it's nice. It's nice.
- Interviewer:* I would be overjoyed if a woman held up open a door for me rather than a man.
- Interviewee:* -- Sometimes. What's something that's a part of your queer expression?
- Interviewer:* Tables turned. Queer part of my expression?
- Interviewee:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* Good question.
- Interviewee:* How do you express your queerness externally so that other people know that you're queer or gay or whatever?
- Interviewer:* Yeah. I had long hair all my life. I shaved it in October of 2021. I don't know. Last October. Sorry. The years are bad. I never – I took so much for granted until that point. I realized I also realized how much of my thinking about expression and identity was also within that box, not the way I expressed it maybe, but the way of thinking about expression, about identity.
- Interviewee:* You weren't challenging yourself enough before you shaved your hair?
- Interviewer:* I don't know if I would have – yes. Maybe I needed to be challenged, but also I didn't need to be challenged.
- Interviewee:* But it was challenging after you shaved your hair?
- Interviewer:* It was quite challenging. Yeah.
- Interviewee:* What was challenging?
- Interviewer:* Well, for one –
- Interviewee:* Letting go of the box itself or being in the box?
- Interviewer:* I think the change itself, the process of – it felt like growing pains. I think specifically waking up, looking in the mirror and having my hair look different than the day before and every day not knowing

what the hell to do with it. Then that spiraling into a conversation in my head about what is my gender identity. It was so apparent, the ease that I had before and just – maybe privilege. Maybe it is privilege. Just waking up and being like, "Yep. That's good. I don't have to think about it."

Interviewee: I guess are you saying putting more effort into your presentation, it snowballed after shaving your hair or are you talking about before you shaved your hair you weren't taken for being cis and you took that for granted? What are you saying?

Interviewer: It all snowballs into one.

Interviewee: Both of those things.

Interviewer: Yeah, because it's like when I shaved my head it was such a gut reaction. It was so physical. I could see it and I don't know what to do with it. And there's so many things in my head going back and forth like what does this mean for identity? What does this mean for queerness? What does this mean for what I'm going to wear today? So it span everything. That's why I say maybe I didn't need – maybe I could have done it in layers. I didn't have to chop the whole thing off at once.

Interviewee: I think it was good.

Interviewer: Thanks.

Interviewee: If it's your first reaction for how you express your queerness it has to be a good thing, right?

Interviewer: Well, no. Definitely not my first way of expressing my queerness.

Interviewee: No, but I asked you how do you express or just what's a part of your queer expression and you were like immediately, "my hair."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So I think it's good for that reason if you went to it immediately.

Interviewer: That's something that's interesting. It actually still changes every day. So something I am grateful for that I've learned maybe how many months later, a bunch of months later, over half a year later since shaving my head is oh, queerness is – from the very external point of my head is shaved to oh, now I really, really better identify with my nonbinary identity.

Interviewee: That's good.

Interviewer: I keep that huge distance between the two questions always in me every day. I think that was uncomfortable because I didn't have to think about it. Before I was super narrow. Now it's been stretched like this and I have gotten used to it.

Interviewee: Now you don't have to think about it.

Interviewer: Well, now I care about thinking about it.

Interviewee: That's good.

Interviewer: I think now I know definitely the back of my head is flat.

Interviewee: Flat?

Interviewer: Flat. It's flat and I think I really like having short hair compared to when I used to really care for my long hair. It's also something that I think connected me with my racial identity and my culture, my Korean culture and my family. But something about my short haired expression feels really good for my gender and sexual identity. That's how I express my queerness outwardly.

Interviewee: Good.

Interviewer: Thanks for throwing it back to me. How do you? I guess that – I want that to be our wrap up.

Interviewee: Okay. I just like expressing my femininity through – I guess –

Interviewer: It's the kneepads. It's the helmet.

Interviewee: It's the kneepads. That's where my feminism is. No. I love lash – I love going to beauty supply and getting new lashes. That's such a simple joy and pleasure for me is – it makes such a difference, just eyeliner too, make-up.

Interviewer: How you get your lashes done?

Interviewee: Huh?

Interviewer: How do you get your lashes done?

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- Interviewee:* Oh, I just go to the fucking beauty supply and I pick lashes and I cut them in half and I throw them on my eyeballs and it makes such a huge difference. It's just the power that I have when I bat my eyelashes is through the roof.
- Interviewer:* Wow. Is that where your femme power lies?
- Interviewee:* Yes. Yes. I think make-up is a big part of my expression, but I also think there's maybe an emotional aspect of my gender expression where it's wearing my heart on my sleeve and being really honest about my emotions and just –
- Interviewer:* Soft power.
- Interviewee:* Yeah. Soft power. There's also – I guess another thing is my leather jacket is another –
- Interviewer:* Staple.
- Interviewee:* – where my gender lies.
- Interviewer:* Is it long or short?
- Interviewee:* What do you mean? Is it a vest?
- Interviewer:* No. Is it a trench coat or is it a short –
- Interviewee:* Oh, no. It's short. It's short.
- Interviewer:* Like a short and tight or loose?
- Interviewee:* It's tight. Yeah. It makes my posture taller. I'm – I feel – it's armor. Sometimes usually it's part of my femme expression, but sometimes it's a more butch expression. These things are fluid, but I think yeah. Lashes is my final answer. I love lashes. I love the beauty supply.
- Interviewer:* Which beauty supply?
- Interviewee:* Beauty Lane on Greenmount is my favorite one because it's the beauty supply that's closest to where I used to live. There's a bunch of beauty supplies right on there on Green Mount, but there's only one beauty supply in the neighborhood where I live now because it's hella white, but that beauty supply has weird hours. They're called Melonated Beauty Supply.

Interviewer: And it's white?

Interviewee: The area is white, but that place is black owned. No. That would be fucked up.

Interviewer: I was like...

Interviewee: That would be really fucked up. No. They – yeah. So I'm – I go there sometimes too, but they have lashes at CVS too.

Interviewer: Queer. CVS is queer.

Interviewee: CVS is queer for that.

Interviewer: Yeah. You heard it here first.

Interviewee: Yes. It's a problem though. I have a million lashes in my bathroom all on – stuck to the wall.

Interviewer: Not the wall.

Interviewee: It's like literally in a –.

Interviewer: Is it patterned?

Interviewee: Yeah. It's just like all in a straight line.

Interviewer: Wow. A mural.

Interviewee: Like a million just little spiders on the wall. I guess what I'm saying with that is I don't need any new lashes, but it brings me a lot of gender euphoria to get them. So I just keep doing it.

Interviewer: That's all that matters.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Thanks so much for sharing this space with me.

Interviewee: Yeah. I'm glad what we talked about. I especially enjoyed talking about femme. I think it's hidden. Not many people understand what it is to be femme or what it means and it's something that's very valuable to me.

Interviewer: I appreciate it. Thanks.

[End of Audio]