

Crispin Torres
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

May 27, 2016



The Transgender Oral History Project of the Upper Midwest will empower individuals to tell their story, while providing students, historians, and the public with a more rich foundation of primary source material about the transgender community. The project is part of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. The archive provides a record of GLBT thought, knowledge and culture for current and future generations and is available to students, researchers and members of the public.

The Transgender Oral History Project will collect up to 400 hours of oral histories involving 200 to 300 individuals over the next three years. Major efforts will be the recruitment of individuals of all ages and experiences, and documenting the work of The Program in Human Sexuality. This project will be led by Andrea Jenkins, poet, writer, and trans-activist. Andrea brings years of experience working in government, non-profits and LGBT organizations. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting project, please contact Andrea.

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1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 Crispin Torres -CT
3
4
5 AJ: Hello.
6 CT: Hello.
7 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project
8 at the University of Minnesota. Today is May 27, 2016. I am here in Minneapolis with Crispin
9 Torres. I'm honored to sit down and talk with you today, Crispin. How are you?
10 CT: I'm very well, thank you.
11 AJ: Super. Can you just introduce yourself? State your name again, how to spell it so that our
12 transcriptionist can make sure we have that accurate. State your gender identity today and your
13 gender assigned at birth and what pronouns do you use?
14 CT: Sure. So my name is Crispin Torres. That's spelled C-r-i-s-p-i-n, last name is T-o-r-r-e-s. Today
15 my gender identity is trans masculine and I was assigned female at birth. What was the last
16 thing – pronouns?
17 AJ: Yeah, pronouns.
18 CT: He, him, and his.
19 AJ: He, him, and his. Great. Awesome. It's interesting that you said, "My gender identity today,"
20 right. Does that mean that it changes over time or it has changed over time? What does that
21 mean to you?
22 CT: I think about gender as something that . . . for everyone, is something that fluctuates on a day or
23 throughout your life. I'm of the mind that gender is something that we experience over a
24 lifetime and that it may not be as fluid for other people as it is for others, but I think that we all
25 have a gender identity and we all have different expressions and different experiences given,
26 pretty much, any given day. I just like to throw that in there to remind folks that trans or not,
27 you have a gender identity.
28 AJ: I love that.
29 CT: News flash to some people.
30 AJ: Because some people don't really think about it in those aspects and they absolutely do have a
31 gender identity, a sexual identity, even though it may be "more mainstream" than people who
32 identify as transgender but they have a gender identity nonetheless. So thanks for that
33 reminder.
34 CT: Sure.

- 1 AJ: So Crispin, just to kind of get our juices flowing a little bit here, can you tell me what is the first
2 thing you remember in life? Just to be clear, it doesn't have to be around your gender identity,
3 though if your first memory was around your gender identity, that's absolutely fine but I just
4 don't want you to think, "I've got to dig for some juicy trans memory."
- 5 CT: Juicy trans memory . . . I have plenty of those for later.
- 6 AJ: Yeah.
- 7 CT: My earliest memory is really of playing with this Fisher Price radio that I had as a kid, it was a
8 little plastic tape recorder that you could stick a tape in and record or you could play back like an
9 actual tape cassette in there. It had a little microphone that you could record stuff or talk into –
10 or play or sing with a tape that was in there. I think that's what it was meant for – it was meant
11 for little five-year-olds to stick a tape in and sing with it. So yeah, that's probably my earliest
12 memory – of sort of just loving that, that was my favorite thing to play with. Taking my
13 brother's cassettes, like Madonna, and play Nine Inch Nails – like all the 1980s ragers and
14 putting them in there and just singing and thinking about music and kind of trying to make my
15 own music at a really early age.
- 16 AJ: Is that right – and you're a musician?
- 17 CT: I am.
- 18 AJ: What instruments do you play?
- 19 CT: I play a whole range of instruments. I'm a multi-instrumentalist. I started out with the
20 saxophone when I was a young child, that was my first instrument.
- 21 AJ: Nice.
- 22 CT: Then I played that all through high school, but I'm really a guitarist. I'm a rock musician so I play
23 bass and drums, guitar, sing.
- 24 AJ: Heavy metal?
- 25 CT: Not heavy metal – punk music.
- 26 AJ: Punk? Wow.
- 27 CT: Yeah.
- 28 AJ: OK.
- 29 CT: The sister of metal.
- 30 AJ: So head-banging punk music or just . . . ?
- 31 CT: Yeah, I've kind of played it all throughout the years that I've been a musician. I've played
32 melodic poppier type of stuff and I've played definitely more head banging mosh pit, breaking
33 the drums down kind of thing. So yeah.
- 34 AJ: So are you in a band?

- 1 CT: Currently I'm working on a new band. My most recent . . . I was in two bands recently. One was
2 like a queer punk rock band, The Recruitment.
- 3 AJ: It was called The Recruitment.
- 4 CT: Yeah. We were taking applications. And then I was in a short-lived queer punk Alanis
5 Morissette cover band.
- 6 AJ: Oh wow.
- 7 CT: So we did all . . .
- 8 AJ: Very specific.
- 9 CT: Very specific. And it was funny because we thought it was kind of a niche market and no one
10 would kind of be interested in that, but it turns out there is a lot of LGBT Alanis Morissette fans
11 out there.
- 12 AJ: Who knew, right?
- 13 CT: Who knew? And it's like a whole sub-community, there's room for everyone.
- 14 AJ: If the music speaks to you, you've got to make it.
- 15 CT: So yeah, I'm kind of re-working something new but those are the two projects I have right now.
- 16 AJ: So you talked about this tape recorder that you recall as a kid. Where did you grow up?
- 17 CT: I grew up in Chicago, Illinois. I was born in Mexico City. My family is from Mexico City and I
18 moved back to Chicago where my mom also grew up, at a very young age, as a baby, so pretty
19 much my whole life I've been in Chicago through and through.
- 20 AJ: Chicago. What was it like growing up in Chicago?
- 21 CT: I loved it. It's not . . . it's not perfect, you know. It's certainly one of the most segregated places
22 I've ever been in all my travels to different places.
- 23 AJ: I grew up in Chicago, I would concur with that assessment.
- 24 CT: Yeah, in a very deep institutional kind of way. I had to unlearn a lot of racism, unlearn a lot of
25 internalized racism in my consciousness building as an adult – because I grew up in Chicago. But
26 because of that it makes folks that are doing anti-racist work and social justice work a little bit
27 more challenged to do that personal work if you're from Chicago and it makes it more powerful
28 when you can have that consciousness and you're really . . . you come from a different
29 perspective. So I don't know, I love Chicago because of that, because I think it's got a grit to it
30 that other cities don't. People say New York has got a grit but I don't think it's got anything on
31 us.
- 32 AJ: Not quite like Chicago.
- 33 CT: Not quite like Chicago. My grandfather was a carpenter so he was working class, like high-skilled
34 labor but definitely working class, and just moved his whole family from Mexico. So there's
35 definitely a really strong work ethic that I grew up with.

- 1 AJ: Very strong.
- 2 CT: Just really diverse, to some degree, but really insular communities of color, really strong sort of
3 representation of South Asian folks, Korean folks, African folks, Mexican people, of course, other
4 Latino people, Puerto Ricans. So there's big sort of communities but there are also sort of . . .
- 5 AJ: Insular.
- 6 CT: Insular, we're really kind of sectioned off, I think, as communities. So yeah, it's been kind of
7 amazing to live there my whole life and kind of see the city evolve and be involved . . . yeah, be
8 involved as a citizen but now also as someone who engages in the civic life of Chicago too – and
9 that has opened up my eyes a lot.
- 10 AJ: Cool.
- 11 CT: Yeah, it's cool. I love Chicago.
- 12 AJ: I want to explore that a little bit more a little later. Did you go to grade school there?
- 13 CT: Yeah, I went to grade school in the city. We grew up on 31st and Pulaski, over in Little Village. I
14 was bussed every day to a school, a magnet school, in Lincoln Park where my mom was a
15 teacher.
- 16 AJ: That's a long ways away.
- 17 CT: Sure is! That would be an hour and a half.
- 18 AJ: That's like an hour or two at least.
- 19 CT: Yeah, an hour and a half commute for a little kid. I remember those bus trips.
- 20 AJ: Did you take public transportation?
- 21 CT: It was a school bus that would come and pick us up. But it was far.
- 22 AJ: So your mom was an educator?
- 23 CT: My mom was a teacher, yeah. She's retired now but she was a principal and an administrator
24 with CPS for 25+ years.
- 25 AJ: And CPS is Chicago Public Schools.
- 26 CT: That's right, Chicago Public Schools – right. So she was a teacher and the schools around us
27 weren't . . . they weren't great, she had actually worked at them and she said, "I don't want you
28 to go to these schools," which is really common in Chicago to be bussed far away – still, to be
29 bussed far away to go to a better school. So . . . yeah.
- 30 AJ: So when you were in grade school did you experience any sort of harassment or bullying or
31 anything?
- 32 CT: Yeah, I would say that when I was in elementary school and junior high I struggled a little bit –
33 not so much because of my gender identity. I definitely was teased. I've always been a husky

- 1 kid and I think that was honestly the harder . . . the struggle as a young person, that's what I got
2 teased for, for sure.
- 3 AJ: Body image and body size.
- 4 CT: Body image – yeah. Especially as someone who was assigned female, that was something that
5 folks were extremely critical of. And then I went to school . . . I went to schools that were
6 actually fairly diverse for Chicago, a good healthy mix of . . . I went to school with Black kids,
7 Asian kids, white kids. It wasn't predominantly white.
- 8 AJ: Or predominantly Latino or . . .
- 9 CT: Right, right – not until I went to high school, then it was a little more homogeneous. But yeah, it
10 was definitely . . . that was kind of my cross to bear as a young person. But then when I got to
11 high school it was a different game. I just sort of . . . I was about to say I came out of my shell,
12 but I was never in a shell. So I think I kind of avoided a lot of teasing just because I've always
13 had a really strong personality and I've always been able to roll things off my back. If people
14 didn't like me, and still to this day, I'm just like, "All right, well screw you."
- 15 AJ: I've got 100 other friends over here.
- 16 CT: Yeah, I've got other friends, I don't need this guy.
- 17 AJ: Well that's good to hear, I'm glad to hear that. When did you begin to notice that your gender
18 may be different from the gender you were assigned at birth?
- 19 CT: I think I always knew. I think I knew that from my earliest memories. It's funny because you
20 asked me what my earliest memory was and most of the memories that I have of first
21 consciousness are of being either connected to being obsessed with music and performance,
22 that was always part of it, or it's about sort of my knowing . . . kind of just my gender queerness,
23 I guess, as a young person – just knowing that I didn't . . . whatever box I was given, and even
24 before I had language to understand that I was being put in a box, just felt . . . I just felt
25 different. I just remember being in sort of like this . . . I had this little sweatsuit that I really
26 liked, it was like a cute little 1980s number. It was a matching sweatsuit.
- 27 AJ: Velour.
- 28 CT: I think it was like all cotton sweatshirt but it was like . . . the top part of it was gray and the arms
29 were red and the little pants were red and it had the little cuffs at the bottom of the sweat pants
30 . . . you know, they'd cup your little legs. But I loved that thing, I must have worn it every day.
31 My mom never policed my clothing, she just always let us wear what we felt comfortable in
32 once we were able to pick our own clothes. She knew that I liked that so I think that she washed
33 it every day so I could wear it every day. I just remember feeling like, "I really like this because I
34 can get dirty in it, it looks really cute, I feel fashionable." I just remember feeling like fabulous,
35 gender fabulous in that.
- 36 AJ: So was it . . . did it feel sort of androgynous or masculinizing to you?
- 37 CT: Yeah, because certainly there was a little bit of pressure from other people, not from my
38 parents but from other people, to wear pink berets or scrunchies were really big when I was a

1 kid too and people were like, “Yeah, wear a scrunchie or wear barrettes.” And I’m like, “No.” I
2 didn’t want to do that and there was something that felt . . . I wasn’t one of those trans folks
3 that was like, “I knew that I was a boy, I wanted to be a boy.” I don’t know that I had the
4 language for that or that I even thought about it that way. I just knew that I liked all the stuff – I
5 had Barbies and I had Ninja Turtles. I liked it all and I kind of felt like . . . yeah, maybe something
6 was kind of . . . I don’t know if I would say androgynous but something that was like gender
7 queer or just something that was more me. I was always drumming to my own drummer. I
8 think that’s what it was about.

9 AJ: And Chicago is . . . one of the things that I remember about growing up in Chicago and still
10 visiting now, it is a very fashion-conscious city and people are deeply into how they look and
11 how they present themselves and labels and all that kind of stuff, so there’s a lot of pressure to
12 be cute and be in fashion.

13 CT: Right, right.

14 AJ: So you kind of always knew something was different, so I don’t know – when did you figure it
15 out?

16 CT: It’s a little complicated because I came out as a gay female when I was 15.

17 AJ: OK, so in high school.

18 CT: In high school, at a pretty young age. I was a sophomore in high school.

19 AJ: And I just want to be sure to clarify, there are no right . . . I don’t have a right answer for you,
20 whatever your story is, is your story.

21 CT: Definitely. I came out at a young age as a gay and queer person, I identified as queer at a very
22 young age. That was still when things were . . . it was pretty political, and it is political still to
23 identify as queer. But at the time it really kind of shocked people to hear that.

24 AJ: That was right on the beginning edge of queer I would imagine.

25 CT: Yeah, there were no Q’s on any of the acronyms . . . people were like, “What?”

26 AJ: But you were literally claiming that label.

27 CT: Yeah. And so I came out as a young person in high school. I had no problem coming out. I just
28 figured out in terms of my sexuality . . . I was just like, “Well something is just different.” I
29 couldn’t figure it out, I was just like, “I just know that I’m not straight. I’m not really sure what’s
30 going on.” Then it’s the 1990s and given the language, I was listening to punk rock and Riot Girl
31 was a big thing, so what was handed to me was a pretty binary understanding of gender and
32 sexuality. So I came out when I thought I was a gay female and then just really active in the
33 LGBT community from that point on.

34 AJ: Did you have a GSA at your school?

35 CT: We had a GSA and I wasn’t part of it. I just didn’t . . . I don’t know, I was just doing my own thing
36 and I really didn’t . . . I didn’t need . . . it was mostly a support group and I didn’t really feel like I
37 needed support. I was just like, “Yeah, I’m super gay.”

- 1 AJ: "And I'm cool with it."
- 2 CT: "I'm so cool with it." And plus I was in theatre and everyone assumed I . . .
- 3 AJ: OK.
- 4 CT: And then . . . yeah, so then I kind of went on through life being involved with LGBT events or I
5 just knew queer people through other music and arts and theatre that I met in the community.
6 My oldest brother is also . . . he's queer, he's a gay and queer identified cis gender person. But
7 he came out to me when I was 13 and really at the cusp of when I was sorting all that out, so it
8 was definitely like another added layer of unpacking all the gender and sexuality pieces. So I
9 was familiar with LGBT issues and engaged in . . .
- 10 AJ: And language.
- 11 CT: And language and engaged in the community. I was really excited about social justice work at
12 the time and so that's when I started getting all my political education. I started connecting the
13 dots with social justice and civil rights movements with LGBT people as well. And so that was
14 very formative for me in terms of how I was starting to understand my gender identity. So I
15 started meeting trans folks, like the first trans person I met was in high school.
- 16 AJ: Really? That's literally one of my questions.
- 17 CT: Yeah, there was a trans person in my high school who I didn't know . . . I didn't know them
18 personally. I met them through some kind of LGBT function I went to at some point but I
19 remember . . . I just remember seeing that person and being . . . they were pretty non-binary,
20 now looking back at it, and I think they're a trans woman now, but I was like, "Wow, there's
21 something about that person," and I couldn't quite figure it out. And something about kind of
22 butch lesbian identity, which is sort of where I was getting pigeon-holed into as a person. I was
23 not vibing with that, that did not . . .
- 24 AJ: That did not resonate with you.
- 25 CT: . . . resonate with me. And everyone would always be like, "Oh, you know, you're lesbian." "Oh,
26 you're butch." Or, "You're a stud." Just something about that didn't feel right for me, it didn't
27 feel like the right kind of way to frame my masculinity. So anyway, I kind of was unpacking all
28 these things through a social justice lens and meeting LGBT people and I went to college and I
29 really started getting even more active with political work and as a young person who was able
30 to vote and then turning 21 and really being able to be independent and engage in the political
31 system on my own. I met lots of different kinds of queer people and I started doing politicized
32 LGBT work and that was when I really started meeting trans people and having them in my
33 community. I was probably 19 . . . 18 or 19 when I started organizing with trans people, sharing
34 space with trans people – yeah.
- 35 AJ: Though you weren't identifying as a trans person at the time.
- 36 CT: No, not at all – not even gender variant or gender queer. That was just not how I thought about
37 myself. I had a lot of unpacking to do. But, yeah, I definitely . . . I spent a lot of time thinking
38 about those issues as well because I knew as somebody who wasn't presented as a feminine
39 person who was assigned female, I knew that those issues impacted me. So I always . . . and at

- 1 the time the trans community and the trans politics were just so different and the stakes were
2 even higher than they are today.
- 3 AJ: I know how different they were, but can you expound on that just a little bit?
- 4 CT: The T was literally not existent. Trans folks were just not part of . . . part of it was that they
5 truthfully were intentionally kept out of spaces because folks really could not see why trans
6 people needed to be part of the LGBTQ community and why they were also siblings to our
7 struggle. People just honestly . . . it's amazing because we still have some of those same
8 conversations today, but it's met with a little bit less hesitation, there's a shred of openness now
9 even in a hard conversation. It's on people's radar whereas when I was a young person,
10 honestly there was so much groundwork to be done around teaching people, just on a basic
11 one-to-one level around trans people. Now the struggle is people not seeing trans people in
12 LGBTQ spaces but at the time it was like getting people to understand that trans people existed
13 period.
- 14 AJ: Right.
- 15 CT: That was a real challenge.
- 16 AJ: And even trans people weren't . . .
- 17 CT: Trans people weren't . . .
- 18 AJ: Visibly or politically active in ways that they are now.
- 19 CT: Engaged – yeah. Because it was . . .
- 20 AJ: Not even close.
- 21 CT: They were just not empowered to be so and the trans folks that I knew who were engaged and
22 who were out, more than half of them were stealth and organizing kind of behind the scenes.
23 And then the other folks were really, I think, trailblazers. They were like, "Fuck this shit," you
24 know.
- 25 AJ: Right.
- 26 CT: "I'm trans, I'm here, you all are going to have to deal with it." I really gravitated toward those
27 people because I love that attitude period about anything, just that attitude that people have
28 about just being like, "Fuck it, who cares." But yeah, I definitely . . . I learned a lot in that time in
29 my life and I ended up dating a trans man when I was in college. We started dating and we were
30 both female identified and he came out to me as trans while we were together.
- 31 AJ: Oh wow.
- 32 CT: And yeah, he started transitioning when we were together.
- 33 AJ: Did you stay in the relationship?
- 34 CT: We stayed in the relationship, yes. And then we separated after that and then years later, then I
35 came out to him.

- 1 AJ: Oh wow.
- 2 CT: So it's sort of . . . yeah, it's sort of wild.
- 3 AJ: Remember that night when I . . . ?
- 4 CT: Right. Oh my gosh. It was kind of wild because we had tons of trans . . . I had a lot of trans
5 friends in college, specifically trans men – like people I grew up with in the queer women's
6 community.
- 7 AJ: Right.
- 8 CT: Or like the lesbian community. And yeah, just all these folks were really starting to come out
9 when I was in college and it was like, "Wow." The culture was changing, the acceptance was
10 changing, people were getting language and support for things. It just made it so much easier
11 for people to kind of do what they needed to do and speak their truth and . . . yeah. So it wasn't
12 until many years later that I even came out as a trans person to all these people who were also
13 trans in my life and queer in my life and gender queer. Folks were like, "OK, we know Crispin,
14 we have to go get lunch now. It took long enough."
- 15 AJ: It took you long enough. So, you have a sibling that's queer and clearly they came out, you said,
16 at 13-years-old.
- 17 CT: And he was probably 24, 23 or 24 at the time.
- 18 AJ: How many siblings do you have?
- 19 CT: I have two. I have two older brothers. I'm the baby by many years – there's eight years between
20 me and my next closest brother and then 11 between my oldest brother.
- 21 AJ: So, like literally they were gone out of the house as you were growing up, you were almost like
22 an only child for a long time.
- 23 CT: They were gone – yeah. Yeah, definitely. I feel like I was an only child.
- 24 AJ: But the point of my comments, like how did your family . . . how did your parents take this news
25 of your brother being queer and then you came out as queer at 15, and I'm assuming . . . I
26 shouldn't assume, did you come out to your parents when you were 15?
- 27 CT: Yes, I did come out to my parents – accidentally, when I was 15. Oh my gosh, that's another story.
28 I only recently came out to my parents as trans.
- 29 AJ: OK.
- 30 CT: Like within the last . . . I would say, less than a year.
- 31 AJ: Really?
- 32 CT: Yeah. And my brother came out to my parents around that same time – a good 15 years ago, 17
33 years ago. So to answer your question, my parents . . . I don't really know. We never told my
34 dad about either my brother or I's sexuality – so we both came out to our mom and we both
35 came out to our other brother. But we never had a conversation with my dad about being gay,

1 he just kind of intuited that from our open talking about it sort of around him. And coming from
2 just a Mexican family, traditional in some ways – we’re Catholic. My mom is a super, super
3 progressive Catholic person and my dad is Catholic but he is also . . . he wasn’t raised super strict
4 Catholic so he also, I think . . . he just doesn’t have like as much of a strong sense of rigid
5 Catholicism as you might expect of someone from his demographic. So I think my mom was just
6 amazing when we came out to her, both me and my brother, with our sexuality. But when I
7 came out as trans, that was just a different struggle.

8 AJ: That was tough.

9 CT: That was a different thing. We’re still working through it, but I told my mom that I was trans
10 right after my dad had kind of a health scare. He had to have a couple emergency surgeries and
11 we weren’t sure if he was going to make it or if it was going to be a long-term complication.
12 And, after that I just got worried and I said, “I don’t want something to happen to either of my
13 parents.” They’re older in age for as young as I am, they’re approaching their 70’s, mid-60’s and
14 early 70’s, so I just thought . . . that was my greatest fear was that my parents would . . . that
15 something would happen to them before I could actually tell my truth to them and be honest. I
16 just couldn’t talk about my life – like my life is organizing trans work, trans activism. All my
17 friends are trans or gender queer and so it was hard to . . . I felt like I was holding back so much
18 from them. Yeah, so I came out to my mom soon after my dad recovered from a bunch of
19 different medical issues. She didn’t take it very well. She wasn’t in a good place, but there was
20 too much at stake for me – I just had to tell her. It’s like breaking up with someone – there’s no
21 good time to come out, you’ve just got to rip the Band-Aid. So I told her just before I had my
22 name legally changed. People had already been calling me Crispin for a couple years at that
23 point and it was just getting bizarre and I finally told her. I said, “I want to give you an option to
24 opt out of this name,” is basically what I told her. “You’re my mom and you named me and if
25 you want me to call myself something else I will.” She wasn’t ready at the time . . . I don’t know,
26 I haven’t talked to her recently. Now she knows that I changed it and she is very aware that
27 other people call me different things. She doesn’t use my given name anymore, she calls me
28 Crispy, which is hilarious.

29 AJ: Crispy?

30 CT: Crispy. She just thinks it’s funny to call me Crispy Cream.

31 AJ: So she’s finding some humor in it.

32 CT: Yeah, she’s come a long way. But when I first told her she was like, “I don’t understand. You
33 can change your gender, you can do whatever you need to do with your life and your body,
34 you’re your own person, you’re an adult, but your name – that’s sacred, I don’t know why you
35 would change that. I don’t understand what your name has to do with your gender.” I just
36 straight up said, “Mom, if I’m a boy, why would I want a girl’s name?” My given name was
37 extremely feminine – super feminine.

38 AJ: Senorita.

39 CT: Right. This doesn’t really suit me so well. So yeah, that was a little bit of a learning curve and
40 she wasn’t really ready to offer any alternative names. It’s also . . . it’s my grandfather’s name.

- 1 AJ: So Crispin. That was going to be one of my questions – how did you come to this name? So it's
2 a family name.
- 3 CT: A family name, yeah.
- 4 AJ: So Crispin.
- 5 CT: Crispin is my grandfather's name. Creespeen is how Spanish folks say it. So that was his name,
6 my dad's father who I never met. I'm told I'm very similar to him. He passed away long before I
7 was born, he passed away pretty young. I don't know, I just wanted my old name . . . my given
8 name also started with a "C" and so I kind of wanted to keep my initials.
- 9 AJ: Keep some continuity.
- 10 CT: Yeah. I wanted a family name, I didn't want like a random willy-nilly kind of thing, it was
11 important to me – family and culture and all that is important to me.
- 12 AJ: So Skylar wasn't calling out to you?
- 13 CT: No Brian Torres – no. Josh Torres, just didn't have the same ring to it. So yeah, that's kind of
14 where the name comes from. It's interesting, some people call me Creespeen if they speak
15 Spanish and other people call me Crispin. But, I take whatever – that's fine, just so long as it's
16 not my given name.
- 17 AJ: That's an interesting story, a fascinating story, in that your mom had less of an issue with sort of
18 these really serious and sort of non-reversible body changes but was very uncomfortable with
19 the name. But, as you said to her, this was a very deliberate choice that you made. Parents do
20 take a lot of time to come up with a name for their child and . . .
- 21 CT: I think, like in retrospect, the name thing was really about her . . . changing your name or asking
22 people to call you something different implicates them in your transition.
- 23 AJ: Yes.
- 24 CT: I think that piece, that part of it, that was the part that she could not reckon with at the time.
- 25 AJ: So, "I don't want to have anything to do with this . . .".
- 26 CT: Correct, right. It's sort of like my sexuality was something she didn't have to understand or
27 engage. It's like that was . . . there was a clear boundary there. She was like, "Well, you love
28 who you love and sleep with who you sleep with, I don't care – that doesn't have anything to do
29 with how I love you or whether or not you're my daughter." But me saying, "I am your son and
30 my name is Crispin is like re-shifting the way people think about you." And it's that piece, that
31 piece of calling people in to be part of your process, because you have to – as a trans person you
32 have to ask people to participate in your transition if they want to be part of your life. And if
33 they don't, a lot of people will say, "You don't have to be part of my life."
- 34 AJ: Right.
- 35 CT: And that's kind of the scary part of it and I think that for her it was not an option to not be a part
36 of my life. My mom is like the most devastatingly selfless mom – she would throw herself over

- 1 the coals for us, any of us. She's the sweetest person. So I think for her that's what was hard,
2 because she was like, "You are my child and this is how I see you." But she was never going to
3 disown us but I think she had to eventually figure out how she was going to work it through. I
4 put my foot down, I was like, "Well those are the options, I'm never going to disown you but this
5 is going to make things weird." Like, "Don't make it weird mom." The turning point for us was
6 when I had my top surgery and she just . . . I straight up just told her . . . I didn't want to go into
7 surgery without telling my parents that that's where I was going and I was going to Cleveland
8 and I lived in Chicago and so I was going with friends and they were driving me out there and
9 going to a hospital. I just didn't want to do . . . especially since my dad just had a hospital scare.
10 I didn't want them to be worried and so I just called her like a month before I went and I was
11 just like, "Listen, I'm going to have breast removal basically." I didn't want to go into detail but I
12 was like, "I'm getting my breasts removed mom." And she was like, "Oh, OK." And she kind of
13 sat there on the phone, all quiet for a second, and she was like, "All right, well." And this was
14 after I told her I was going with friends, my insurance was covering it, anything extra I had saved
15 up for. I basically told her my plan and she said, "Well, it sounds like you've put a lot of thought
16 into this, you're an adult, anything I can do to support you I'll do." And so I told her . . . she
17 immediately said, "Do you want us to go with you?"
- 18 AJ: Wow.
- 19 CT: Yeah, and I was like, "No, I don't think that's good," because I didn't want her to be stressing me
20 out – I didn't need the anxiety.
- 21 AJ: No.
- 22 CT: So they offered to come and yeah, I just told them, "If you could help me when I come back that
23 would be amazing." So that was the tide shifter for us. I think she saw the seriousness of my
24 transition, it wasn't flippant. It's not just something where I was like, "You know, I'm just going
25 to go by Crispin today." It's like a whole life change that I obviously spent lots of time thinking
26 about, a lot of sleepless nights unpacking my gender and my relationships and my sexuality. I
27 think finally my mom was able to see that it was like, "OK, you're going under the knife for this,
28 this is real."
- 29 AJ: This is real.
- 30 CT: So yeah, that's been kind of . . . that's been great. And as a result I've let my family, in general,
31 into . . .
- 32 AJ: Your broader family.
- 33 CT: Yeah, into sort of the fold of my life and not being scared to invite them to spaces where I know
34 there are going to be other trans people or meet other people who are going to call me Crispin
35 and use he pronouns – I just do that so they can see that sort of modeled behavior and see that
36 everyone else is fine, people are calling me Crispin and my head is not going to explode.
- 37 AJ: Exactly – and I have good friends who love me. I think that's one of the things that parents
38 worry about too is like everybody is going to be out to kill my kid and they're going to be lonely
39 for the rest of their lives because nobody else understands this.

- 1 CT: Right.
- 2 AJ: So how is your broader family, your extended family, with your transition?
- 3 CT: They don't really know . . . like, they know, but no one has really talked about it. My mom . . .
- 4 AJ: You look pretty masculine.
- 5 CT: That's what I'm going for.
- 6 AJ: Crispy – can I call you Crispy?
- 7 CT: I love being called Crisp and Crispy – just FYI. My close friends call me Crisp. So there . . . it's
8 weird, it's really weird, because I'm close to a couple of my cousins who are sort of like sibling
9 cousins.
- 10 AJ: Yeah, I know them well.
- 11 CT: We grew up in the same neighborhood and we're just real tight. So, they've known for a long
12 time and I think we're at the point, all of us, where we're just tired of having to pretend it's not
13 a thing. I do look different . . . I just look different from what I used to look and I sound
14 different, from what I used to sound like. People obviously notice that and whatever they've
15 sorted out about it doesn't really matter, it's just sort of . . . there was a time when I would not
16 bind when I was with my family or whatever, try to look more feminine or talk higher, and I'm
17 just like, "I can't," It takes so much energy to build up this wall and try and pretend – they
18 obviously know, they know. We haven't had a conversation about it but part of it is . . .
- 19 AJ: But you still get invited to barbeques and . . .
- 20 CT: Yeah.
- 21 AJ: Weddings . . . I don't know, does your family do quinceaneras and those kinds of things?
- 22 CT: Yeah, there are huge parties – lots of big parties all the time. That's the thing about specifically .
23 . . . I think Latino culture . . . I don't want to be too monolithic because . . .
- 24 AJ: No.
- 25 CT: It's like a multinational, multiethnic kind of identity but I think by and large I can speak to my
26 experience as a Mexican person, I think our culture is so oriented around family . . . there is
27 nothing more important in this world than your family to Mexican folks. So the thought of
28 alienating someone for being trans or being gay or queer . . . it's fairly uncommon. There
29 actually are studies about this now that a couple of different organizations have done studies
30 about family acceptance in Latino communities, and they suggest that Latino communities and
31 Latino people in general, are more accepting of their LGBT children than their white
32 counterparts. So I sort of always like to remind people that that is the case because it's sort of
33 counteracting that racist mentality of, "White people are the only people that accept their LGBT
34 children and they're PFLAG moms."
- 35 AJ: Actually they're the least accepting in many instances.

- 1 CT: Yeah, in many instances and there is just that core . . . it's always a journey, especially for trans
2 people and their families, but I think there is a different sense of obligation to your family and
3 your blood, there is just a different understanding of what that means. I'm grateful because I
4 know that even if it may not always be like a big letter that I write them or one-on-ones that I
5 have with lots of family, they're going to love me and accept me no matter what – and be
6 ridiculous no matter what, be totally out of control. And that doesn't matter whether or not I'm
7 trans.
- 8 AJ: So you've talked a lot about medical interventions and I appreciate it. Did you pursue hormone
9 therapy?
- 10 CT: Yes, I am pursuing it. I'm in pursuit. Yeah, I've been on testosterone for three years now,
11 almost four years at a really, really low dose – just consistently for three years.
- 12 AJ: Please understand, to the extent that you feel comfortable – you don't have to answer this is
13 you don't want to or you can reframe the answer or question as it were, but do you have any
14 thoughts or ideas about any further surgery at all?
- 15 CT: I have . . . so I had top surgery . . . so I'm on hormones and I had top surgery this past March, so
16 I'm really . . .
- 17 AJ: Yeah, pretty recent – still recuperating and not thinking about nothing else right now.
- 18 CT: Yeah, those scares are still healing. That was amazing though, that was like a life changing thing
19 for me.
- 20 AJ: Really?
- 21 CT: Yeah, that was top on my list. For me, I had top surgery and sort of . . . some people talk about .
22 . . . like Buck Angel talks about how he had top surgery and it unlocked his male identity and
23 nothing else mattered after that. I don't feel like more male because . . . I just don't think about
24 myself like that. I'm not like, "I feel more like a man." It's just not . . . that's not my truth. But
25 yeah, it did change my sense of comfort and it feels good to be in my skin in that way. The
26 femininity attached with that part of my body never felt good to me. I never had a lot of
27 feelings of extreme dysphoria, body dysphoria, but I definitely knew that that was just . . . it
28 didn't belong on me. It's like wearing the wrong shirt or something – this is not working for me.
29 And so, yeah I don't know. I don't think too much about bottom surgery just because . . . like I
30 said, I'm super comfortable in my skin in terms of . . . yeah, sexually and all that stuff. It just
31 doesn't . . . I've never had a problem feeling connected to that part of my body, which is totally
32 fine. There are some things about being a trans person – you could obsess for days and days
33 about, "Oh well, I wish that I didn't have these wide hips," or, "I wish I was a little bit taller."
34 Things that in your mind are more feminine – or also on the opposite side, that you could obsess
35 over. And for me, those little pieces of femininity . . . for instance, I'm a shorter guy, I'm an
36 average height female-sized person, but I'm a pretty short little guy. I do wish I was a little taller
37 sometimes but then at least it reminds me that I came from a female experience. That, to me, is
38 so important. Letting go completely of my female, feminine roots is something I never want to
39 do. It's just sort of like acknowledging that we live in a patriarchal society, we live in a
40 misogynist society and I am proud of having those female qualities, of those feminine qualities,

1 and then it's just part of my history, it's part of the legacy of what makes being trans so amazing.
2 To me, I wouldn't want to have been born a cis person – honestly. I wouldn't have wanted to
3 have been born a cis man, it's not how I think about my trans-ness. I am trans, I am so proud of
4 being trans. We transverse, we travel the binary, we break it down and we're asking other
5 people to break it down. And so to me, I don't fucking need . . . I don't need thinner hips or
6 whatever. Sometimes you get caught in that spiral of body image or trends, passing-ness or
7 aesthetic or whatever you want to call it. But I think by and large I'm just so happy to be able to
8 live the truth that I have so it's like . . . with regard to surgery, I don't really think too much
9 about bottom surgery or anything but I'm also like . . . I feel like I hold the right to change my
10 mind about that at any given time.

11 AJ: You absolutely do.

12 CT: And I think that's another myth too about trans people that folks often times think, "Well, you
13 want a penis and you want top surgery, what do you want?" It's like a menu and I'm like, "No,
14 it's not really how . . ." You're just living in your skin and you're like seeing how your body
15 changes on hormones and seeing how your sexuality changes and how your body interacts with
16 other people's bodies . . . it's always different, it's a journey.

17 AJ: Love and relationships. Are you in a relationship now?

18 CT: I am.

19 AJ: What is your sexual orientation and who are you involved with at this point?

20 CT: Sure. So I identify as a queer and gay man – trans man. But I am partnered with a cis-gendered
21 female identified person and I've been with her for almost four years.

22 AJ: So the people watching this tape are confused right now and they're like, "What the fuck is
23 going on here with Crispin?"

24 CT: I can break it down.

25 AJ: So break it down.

26 CT: So I . . . yeah, so it sort of . . . I guess I'm always leading it with, "It's complicated," but it's
27 actually not complicated, it's just . . .

28 AJ: It's just Crispin.

29 CT: It's just me. But yeah, I mostly have dated female-identified people throughout my life, but
30 again I think I kind of grew up in . . . and all of us do, grow up in a culture where you're gay or
31 you're straight and you're trans or you're not and none of that made sense for me – ever. I think
32 I've always been attracted to men but I've always been . . . because I was seen as a butch
33 lesbian, pushed into thinking that that was the only option. In fact, not only was I just a lesbian
34 but I had to also only be attracted to feminine people, feminine women specifically.

35 AJ: So you couldn't be attracted to masculinity – women and men.

36 CT: Couldn't be attracted to masculinity – just period. Masculinity was not something I was
37 attracted to, which is also super heterosexist or whatever. So I kind of . . . just unpacking my

- 1 gender has kind of allowed me to be a masculine person with just a . . . like a queer masculinity.
2 Once I realized that I have a queer masculinity and that feels good to me and that's my truth,
3 then it allowed me to sort of feel more empowered in acknowledging that I am attracted to
4 men. So yeah, I identify as gay and queer because I feel mostly attracted to, primarily attracted
5 to, masculine of center people and masculine of center men. And again, just queer masculinity
6 – for me, that's sort of my key of attraction. And my partner, I would also say, is a queerly
7 masculine person even though she's a cis-gendered female identified person. I don't know – I
8 just sort of love the queer butch energy. I don't know – I love it, I just love a non-traditional kind
9 of gender-explorative person who has got those sort of masculine qualities. But yeah, that's
10 why I say gay . . . and I also grew up in gay male culture because I had an older brother who is
11 gay and I just, at the time, when I was starting to be in the LGBT community it was mostly gay
12 men and then a few queer women and a few trans people, but mostly gay men. And so I really
13 kind of grew up identifying with parts of that culture and parts of it are really toxic too.
- 14 AJ: *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* kind of world.
- 15 CT: Yeah. So I don't know. That's what informs kind of who I am and who I'm attracted to, but . . .
16 yeah.
- 17 AJ: I've got to make sure I get that polka-dot . . .
- 18 CT: Oh, the little square.
- 19 AJ: Square pocket in the frame. That's awesome though, and it really does speak to sort of the
20 complexity of transgender identity and how, I think, it opens us up once we really, as you stated,
21 come to the acceptance that, you know, I'm not a woman, I'm not a man and I am a trans
22 person. Right?
- 23 CT: Yeah.
- 24 AJ: And that you're OK with being a transgender person.
- 25 CT: Yeah.
- 26 AJ: That's pretty incredible. So, you didn't really . . . you haven't experienced beyond what
27 everybody on the planet experiences with dating – like a hard time with relationships because of
28 your trans identity?
- 29 CT: You know, it's been . . . not so much. I have been with . . . I think whether I identified as a non-
30 cis person, let's just say that, in that part of my life I've been fortunate to be with partners who
31 are very understanding about that, very open. I have, I will say, engaging with the gay male
32 community, that has been horrible.
- 33 AJ: Really?
- 34 CT: There's a lot of transphobia and a lot of general sort of misogyny in the gay male community,
35 specifically when talking about sex and bodies. And so it's a very binary-limiting community in
36 that way and so that has been challenging. Even from just sort of a homosocial, homoerotic
37 kind of way of engaging with other gay men has been . . . it's been not easy, it's not been easy.
- 38 AJ: And something that you're interested in pursuing.

- 1 CT: Yeah, definitely. Those spaces are important to me and, like I said, I've always felt like that is
2 home, that is a space that I . . . it's not necessarily somewhere I am all the time, but that's . . .
3 again, queer masculinity and masculinity that lives outside of sort of that expectation is
4 something that I identify with and I'm a part of. So it's sort of like . . . both socially and sexually,
5 but it's sort of like it's not the most open, I would say, culture to trans people period – I
6 wouldn't even say trans man, just to trans people period. It's really challenging.
- 7 AJ: No. I've experienced that personally myself. Tell me about your work life. You work in the
8 LGBT community, if you will.
- 9 CT: I do, I do.
- 10 AJ: How has being trans affected your professional life?
- 11 CT: Oh, it's changed it just so much. I've been doing LGBT advocacy/organizing for a long time and
12 before that I was an educator. I was a teacher in CPS and I've also taught college courses. But
13 always been sort of involved in LGBT organizing work in addition to, or with . . . in conjunction
14 with whatever role I was in. It's just been hard . . . we're just at a time in the movement when
15 trans people are . . . people want trans people at everything, like you need to fill the trans seat
16 at everything.
- 17 AJ: Exactly. Let me just stay out of this – you talk.
- 18 CT: Yeah, it's exhausting. And not to say that some of that doesn't come from a good place, but
19 there definitely is this urgency to talk include trans people and to think about trans issues
20 because they feel like they have to. And organizations and people in the movement work are so
21 scared of getting things wrong and doing things wrong, who aren't trans, and it makes it hard to
22 find where the authenticity is coming from. It really puts you on glass, it makes you feel like
23 you're like, "No other trans people are here, well I guess I've got to stay." And so a lot of times
24 you sit through meetings and convenings and whatever where you're the only trans person in
25 the room and it is awful. It's not because . . . you know that there's not other trans people, it's
26 because no one else thought before, ahead of time, to invite trans people to the table – or
27 you're the only trans person of color. So it's just sort of . . . it's hard, it's really taxing
28 emotionally.
- 29 AJ: And many times I find myself the only person of color in many spaces as well.
- 30 CT: Oh exactly – definitely. But yeah, emotionally I think that's what has changed about my job, just
31 the emotional labor of being a trans person in national movement organizing is just exhausting.
- 32 AJ: Do you mind stating . . . I'm sorry if I cut you off.
- 33 CT: No, no, no.
- 34 AJ: Do you mind stating where you work? Are you comfortable with that?
- 35 CT: That's fine. I work at Lambda Legal.
- 36 AJ: So they're probably not going to fire you for being a trans person.

1 CT: I hope not, it's going to be awkward . . . it's going to be an awkward case to file. It really is any
2 LGBT org, and I say national because that's my experience, but people on the ground experience
3 this too. My job is to really talk to people about the work they're doing on the ground too in
4 smaller organizations. The same dynamics are there. There is an urgency to include trans
5 people without the homework, without the back work of understanding how to talk to trans
6 people, how to authentically just welcome trans people, how to build community and trust with
7 us before you just plop us in for a speaking gig for 10 minutes – whatever. It's hard. I've
8 actually had a lot of really productive and challenging conversations with people across the
9 movement and even in other organizations where folks have just said, "Well, what are we doing
10 wrong? What can we do to fix it?" I've had difficult conversations and being like, "Well, it's
11 going to take a long time, it's going to take a while because right now there is no trust with any
12 of these organizations with the larger trans movement." The organizations that have some of
13 that trust are the trans organizations and then the distrust that those ones have are because
14 they're white organizations.

15 AJ: Yes.

16 CT: So, yeah . . . we're at a crux in the movement, I think. We were just talking about this earlier
17 where the movement is . . . the people my age, again, where I grew up being fed this rhetoric
18 from the Clinton administration about how everyone is equal, everyone fits in diversity,
19 multiculturalism – all that stuff was kind of popping out when I was a young person, at the same
20 time when LGBT young people were starting to be more visible and more accepted in schools.
21 And also being empowered and starting to be mentored by people who had survived other
22 challenges and really starting to see that other people were thriving and getting that
23 mentorship. And now we're all of age where we're like we have this race consciousness and
24 being like - oh wait, we still live in this super racist society, super misogynist society, super
25 transphobic society and now we have to engage and we have to push back and we're
26 empowered to push back because our elders taught us how to do that.

27 AJ: Right.

28 CT: So it's sort of . . . it's a beautiful moment but it's also on the heels of marriage and on the heels
29 of other more mainstream gay and lesbian efforts. The trans movement is really starting to
30 break off into its own thing and . . . yeah, it's a very strange time to be doing the kind of work
31 that I do because of that.

32 AJ: Yeah. So, OK – let's just dive a little deeper into that. So what is the relationship between the L,
33 the G, and the B, politically and socially, even I guess?

34 CT: I think . . . I don't know that I have an answer to that question. I think we are . . . our histories
35 are inherently tied, right? From my perspective, trans people, gender non-conforming people,
36 people of color built the LGBT movement. We threw the first brick – literally.

37 AJ: Literally. You're referring to Stonewall, the Compton riots . . .

38 CT: Compton, yeah. We began the fight, the literal fight and because of white supremacy and
39 capitalism and patriarchy, white gay men were the ones, by and large – and also white lesbians,
40 were the ones that were enfranchised to take that baton and build the infrastructure for what

1 we know today is the LGBT movement, the enfranchised LGBT movement. So our histories are
2 intertwined. The way that we are in community together – it's there. The way that we actually
3 share community together or build community together is not there. LGBTQ folks don't welcome
4 trans folks into the larger, broader conversation. And like I said, I think there's efforts that are
5 well-intentioned efforts mostly, I think, to get trans folks into those spaces, but like I said,
6 there's a lot of pain in our community and a lot of hurt from years of feeling marginalized by
7 people we thought were the only people we could trust. It's going to be years, I think, to rebuild
8 . . . and also just build, period, that kind of relationship. And there are also . . . people always
9 say, "Well, I don't get it, how does the T fit in? If gender and sexuality are two different things,
10 why are they intertwined?" It's sort of like, again, we have a shared history of being
11 marginalized for an identity, right? These are identity politics. We also share a struggle with
12 people of color – with Black folks, with Latino folks, with people of different abilities. We all are
13 folks that have experiences that don't fit within this mainstream culture and so it's like yes, of
14 course, our histories and our experiences are tied together. And, of course, every trans person
15 has a sexuality and every LGBTQ person has a gender identity, which is . . . people just forget that.
16 We're in the struggle together because of that.

17 AJ: And not to mention that the broader population, or the broader society, conflates gender
18 identity and sexual orientation and so consequently gay and lesbian people are sort of lumped
19 into trans and trans people are lumped into LGBT by sort of default, almost.

20 CT: Right. And we can do both/and, that's what I always . . . I just don't see why we can't do . . . we
21 can celebrate each history . . . and we also lump gay and lesbians together but those
22 communities too also have completely separate struggles and, in a lot of times, just like us and
23 the LGBTQ community . . .

24 AJ: Clashes.

25 CT: There were clashes and struggles within those sects, so sort of . . . I find it insulting when people
26 are like, "Well I don't get it, why trans people?" Well, do you think lesbians weren't
27 marginalized? Do you think Black lesbians weren't marginalized in the struggle? Do you think
28 bi-sexual don't also have . . . people have their own stuff going on and it seems . . . it's just basic.
29 It's people being so basic about like . . . like we have a rainbow, a breadth, of LGBTQIA people,
30 but we also . . . we have our individual issues. I know that it's hard for people to put those two
31 things together but . . . I don't know, that's what makes it so awesome to be a queer and trans
32 person.

33 AJ: Pretty fricking awesome.

34 CT: Yeah, it's great.

35 AJ: Man, so you sort of alluded to this a little bit earlier, but trans identity, transgender people,
36 gender non-conforming people have become more visible than at any point in time in my
37 lifetime with the most famous transgender person in the entire world now being Caitlyn Jenner.
38 Everybody knows Cait and, of course, there's Laverne Cox and Janet Mock and Chaz Bono and all
39 of these sort of celebrities, but on the flip side of that, now, trans communities are under attack
40 legislatively around bathroom and sort of protected spaces kinds of issues. I hear stories from
41 all around the world about these struggles. So there's this visibility around trans people and I

- 1 guess my question is what are thoughts about that? Is that a good thing? Is that more
2 challenging than it's worth? What do you think the impetus for that is?
- 3 CT: I think . . . well, I think the visibility is amazing. I think we need to be visible.
- 4 AJ: Sure.
- 5 CT: The world does not know that it needs trans people yet. We're amazing. When I go out and
6 speak about these issues, I always tell people . . . I'm like there are trans people at the places
7 that you work, there are trans people serving you coffee, there are trans people cleaning your
8 car – we're everywhere. And so, the world has not yet figured out that it needs us to thrive, it
9 needs us to understand the diversity, the beauty of gender.
- 10 AJ: And humanity, I would say.
- 11 CT: And the humanity of gender and just the humanity of people. I think that that visibility . . . the
12 evolution, the journey of visibility, it comes at a cost and we see it with every marginalized
13 group but trans people are at higher risk now in a lot of ways because of how visible we are. I
14 think that that will . . . I know that that will change. I know that there will be a day when we
15 aren't living this sort of . . . living in fear, many of us are living in fear a lot – especially depending
16 on where you live in the world. But I think . . . but yeah, I think that that visibility is necessary.
17 It's like we have to be bold and kind of push ourselves forward. And the impetus behind all of it
18 I just think it's incremental. I don't know if we can pin it back to a particular point in time, but
19 everything is a ripple effect. It's like Laverne Cox coming out and these legislative efforts, just
20 the more people that come out, the more people that are talking about trans issues, the more
21 laws we change, the more policies we change, the more advocacy that we're creating – we're
22 just going to see more trans people. Even if we're . . . we are creating a safer world for trans
23 people, slowly but surely – but like right now it doesn't feel so safe because of the anti-
24 bathroom stuff, specifically, but for trans people that stuff is old news, that stuff is like . . . we've
25 been getting harassed and policed in bathrooms without your fucking laws.
- 26 AJ: Exactly.
- 27 CT: It's like . . . people are like, "We're all on alert now." I've been on alert.
- 28 AJ: Exactly.
- 29 CT: I'm ready – anytime I've got to be, I'm ready. But yeah, I think that that's the cost but I do think
30 that there's . . . it's a snowball effect. More trans people coming out, more trans people
31 meeting other trans people – getting networks, stuff like this project, stuff like . . . whatever.
32 Trans 100 or MCTE's project, or anything that is happening – even a tiny little social group at an
33 LGBT Center, that stuff didn't exist when I was a young person and I'm young. You know – 15 or
34 20 years ago, that was not a thing.
- 35 AJ: Right, "When I was your age." Oh boy, wow. What do you think the agenda for trans people
36 should be going forward, Crispin?
- 37 CT: Trans people need to be bold, trans people are already bold. Our agenda should be to continue
38 empowering ourselves and mentoring and trusting each other and not looking for help and
39 support from other people as the first option. I think some of the best strategies that we have

1 right now are that trans, specifically trans people of color, I think, are working really hard to
2 build their own support system in a way that is above and beyond the white folks. I think
3 there's a different sense of community amongst trans people of color. I think there's a different
4 thirst and need to keep that family and to keep the trust – even when we hurt each other,
5 because we do. I think that should be on our agenda. The other thing on our agenda should be
6 to be more compassionate to each other as trans people. I think our biggest challenge as trans
7 people in the movement, and just individually, is that we don't see each other and that we don't
8 forgive each other. I think we . . . like I said, we hurt each other. This movement work is messy,
9 it's super personal, the stakes are really high, people are literally dying. So it's understandable
10 that we would get riled up and furious and alienate each other – and that's natural. I think
11 that's political work, that's movement work, that's identity work, but I think we really need to
12 make space for each other, be compassionate, be forgiving, and be patient because we're not
13 going to win all these fights, we're not going to win them all today, we're going to win them all
14 tomorrow. We will win in the end, but we're not going to do that unless we have each other's
15 trust, unless we have each other in community. For me, that would be number one on the
16 agenda.

17 AJ: Wow. Is there anything that you want to share that I didn't ask you about?

18 CT: I would say that my hair has a huge amount to do with my trans identity.

19 AJ: You know what? I'm looking at the camera and your hair looks amazing.

20 CT: Thank you.

21 AJ: I can't wait for you to see this video because your hair is just killing it, son.

22 CT: It's like I started working on a pompadour, working on how to craft a pompadour, at the same
23 time I was like, "Hmmm, something . . . I think I might be a little trans."

24 AJ: Wow.

25 CT: But I also just love talking about pompadours so . . . I'm being a little facetious, but I also . . .

26 AJ: I'm thrilled to hear you talking about the pompadour.

27 CT: It's transformative hair, it's transformative hair.

28 AJ: Wow, thank you so much for being willing to sit down and share so much of your personal story.

29 CT: Totally.

30 AJ: Your professional life – and the ways that you've been inspired and the ways that you inspire
31 others. It's deeply appreciated.

32 CT: Definitely – thank you.

33 AJ: Until we meet again, my friend.

34 CT: Yes. Great.