

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

TIFFANY MILES

Interviewer: Grace Ramsay

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Transcribed by Jamie Magyar

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Grace Ramsay: Alright. Hello, my name is Grace, and I will be having a conversation with Tiffany for the New York City Trans Oral History Project, in collaboration with the New York Public Library's Community Oral History Project. This is an oral history project centered on the experiences of trans-identifying people. It is April 29, 2017, and this is being recorded at SAGE [Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders] Midtown. Hi, Tiffany.

Tiffany Miles: Hello.

Ramsay: So, um, let me put the recorder somewhere it will catch you. There we go. And, um, I'd love to know a little of about—bit about where you're from.

Miles: Let's see... I'm from, uh—my—I was born at, uh, Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital in Florence, Alabama, uh, on January 17, 1985.

Ramsay: Um, did you stay in Alabama?

Miles: I lived in Alabama for 32 years—most of my life.

Ramsay: So, um, are there any experiences growing up that you remember particularly strongly?

Miles: Uh, my first very strong, uh, memory—not particularly a very good one, but, uh, one that a lot of people ask me about—is, uh, the scar on my right foot. Uh, it's my very most—one of my most vivid memories. Uh, that was actually done, uh—let's say July or August of 1988. My father accidentally ran over my foot with a lawnmower. I didn't feel a thing, but yeah, a lot of people have the same reaction you just gave me—like, "Ow! [sharp inhale]." I do remember I had to relearn how to walk because of that accident.

Ramsay: Um, so, did you—what part of your family did you grow up with? Who was in your family besides you?

Miles: Let's see, uh... At that particular point in time, it was my mom and my dad. I have, uh, two younger siblings—uh, both my brothers—Matthew and Cody are their names. And, uh, during my childhood, we lived right across the driveway from my paternal grandparents. And then, up in the main town of Haleyville, which is my hometown, uh, was my maternal grandparents. I had, uh, my—let's see, my uncle—my paternal uncle lived at home with his parents, and then I had a maternal aunt and uncle that, uh—they lived in Haleyville for a while before moving to a neighboring town called Hamilton, and I have a couple of cousins with them. Other than that, I

have cousins all over the place. A lot of them live in Arkansas. Some live in Georgia, some—one or two live in California. Uh, none live as far north as New York City.

Ramsay: Were you, um, friendly with your cousins, growing up, that were nearby?

Miles: Ehh, on and off. A lot of them kinda went their own separate ways. A lot of them kind of conformed to their parents' beliefs. Uh, I imagine by now, a lot of them that don't know about me have found out and are probably spitting neutrons about me right now.

Ramsay: And so what was your town like growing up? Can you describe it?

Miles: The town of Haleyville, Alabama is a—is the largest town in the Winston County of Alabama—uh, not the county seat, but it's still the largest town. Around—a population of around 4,000, maybe just under that. Uh, it's grown a little bit since I was a child, but let's just say it's a town that's very politicky. Uh, a lot of the—especially back then—a lot of the city council and the mayor, especially, they were business owners in town and hated when big businesses started rolling in, and it's part of why Haleyville stagnated, and a lot of the people I knew had just up and fled the town. The only people that are staying behind is, um, people over the age of 50 and, uh, a lot of the young that are Southern bumpkins, as the term goes.

Ramsay: Um, what was your impression of the town growing up? Was—did you know any of that when you were young?

Miles: It's deeply religious. Uh, you can't go, uh, two blocks without seeing a church. Uh, in particular, Southern Baptist is the predominant, uh, religion of Winston County. Uh, a church on every street corner. Like, uh, I didn't believe this at first but, uh, let's say the county of Winston County has like, a population of, let's say, 6,000 people total, most of them living in Haleyville. There's about 200 churches in the entire county, half of them in Haleyville alone.

Ramsay: Was your family religious?

Miles: Yes, uh, especially my paternal—my paternal grandparents—both sets of my grandparents, but especially my paternal grandparents. My paternal grandfather was a Southern Baptist preacher, uh, for many years, who also worked as a local mailman. And of course, I was also a churchgoer back then, because this was like, long before I ever got right with myself. Just about everybody went to church. Those who didn't go to church were pretty much declared heathens, stuff like that.

Ramsay: So, you mentioned earlier, in the training, that you love science fiction—Star Trek, particularly.

Miles: Yes.

Ramsay: Um, when did that start?

Miles: Very young. I was pretty much a science fiction fan right out of the womb. Uh, it started with Star Trek, but I also enjoyed Star Wars, as well. Uh, then later in my life, I got into Battlestar Galactica and, uh, Babylon 5 and all that stuff. Uh, but still, Star Trek remains the—the first love, uh, followed closely by Star Wars.

Ramsay: Was there anyone else in your life who shared that interest?

Miles: Uh, my mother and my maternal grandfather—uh, as well as both my brothers. They enjoyed it, too. Uh, my father was a little on-and-off about it. Sometimes he would be, sometimes he wouldn't.

Ramsay: Were you closer with your mother because of that, or...?

Miles: Ehh... I might be a little on the fence on that on that, because, uh, my parents divorced, uh, when I was in elementary school, so it was basically, uh, a lot of bouncing in between them as I was growing up. Uh, for a while I was—say, after the divorce, I was living—we were living with my—our dad, and then the house we were living in, uh, burnt to the ground, complete loss. That was like, late fall of '94.

Ramsay: How old were you?

Miles: I was in fourth grade, so that was a—between the ages of ten and eleven, I would say, and that's just—nah, give or take a year. And then, uh, we had to move in with my—well, our mother in Russellville, so you can imagine the—the wounds, especially right after their divorce. And then once we moved to Russellville, uh, and got settled living in our new environment, uh, my mom and dad had split ways again. Uh, my father moved into an apartment with some buddies of his from work, and my mother got an apartment of her own, and we ended up staying with our mom, uh, for the better part of the year. And then it was especially hard on her, because she worked as a—uh, as a deboner in a chicken plant—overnights. So, especially during the summer school break, uh, me and my brothers, we'd be home a—we'd be home not alone, but, uh, our mother would be asleep all day, because she'd worked all night, leaving us to our own devices. And then

basically, the only person that would be there with us at night, when we were sleeping, was our father, and it got too much of a strain on her, so at her encouragement, we ended up moving in with our father after his roommates had moved out and got places of their own. So, we lived with our father for, I'd say, about a good three years, until some—until an incident, uh, happened—uh, I don't want to go into that, if we can't—but, uh, it forced us to move out of our father's and move back in with our mother. And I remained—I stayed with my mom for—until about halfway through my senior year of high school. Then, uh, we had a falling out, and I ended up moving in with my grandparents—my paternal grandparents.

Ramsay: And where were they located?

Miles: Uh, in Haleyville, Alabama.

Ramsay: So, back to your—where you were born.

Miles: Back to my original hometown.

Ramsay: Yeah. So, what was, um—what was high school like, moving back and forth, and...?

Miles: Well, I did junior high school at a small town—in a small town called Lynn. Uh, yeah. During my seventh grade year of, uh, junior high school—uh, I started in a little school called Belgreen, in Franklin County. It was a little podunk town between, uh, Russellville and Red Bay, and, uh, my father had made the decision to buy a trailer—a new house for us to move into—and he made the decision to move it back onto the original property where the first house was, that burned down back in '94. Uh, so we moved in there. And, of course, I wanted to go back to my first school, of Haleyville—of Haleyville, but, uh, there was no school bus that ran down the road that we lived on. So, uh, he—but instead, we ended up going to Lynn, which was about six miles from our house, and a bus for that school ran right in front of our house. So, it was a matter of convenience for him to go to a smaller school that didn't have as much as Haleyville did. Uh, so—but I did a couple of years at, uh, Lynn High, and then when bad business went down at my—at my father's, we ended up moving in with our mother, and I returned into Haleyville High and actually finished where I started school in the first place. I was just happy to graduate high school with, uh, my original group of friends—the people I knew from when I was a child.

Ramsay: Yeah, I was going to ask about your friends, and what were they like?

Miles: Uh, I had a pretty big spectrum of friends. Uh, most of them have well moved on. I haven't kept touch with most of them since we graduated. Uh, a few hung around, but most of them just

scattered in the winds. Uh, a lot of them were pretty well nice. Uh, a lot of them were also pretty religious, especially because of the town. One of my friends was actually the daughter of the high school principal, so you can imagine that. Uh, the odd thing was, most of my friends were female, uh, at the time. I didn't have very many male friends. A lot of them, uh, took it up to pick on me, so the girls kind of took in—I guess from my point of view, they kind of took pity on me and, uh, brought me under their wing. And I was actually friends with a lot of cheerleaders, despite the fact that I was—I was this chubby, overweight guy—even, pardon me for using the term—who had more book sense than street smarts, and I was hanging around the cool kids—uh, like, all the cheerleaders, but not the football team, though. I wasn't around them. I was around all the cheerleaders, uh, well until I graduated. Most of my friends were—ended up on the cheerleading squad, so that was definitely a unique experience.

Ramsay: Yeah. Could you tell that you were a part of the cool kids? Was...?

Miles: Uh, I could tell very quickly that I was getting in with the popular crowd, even though I, uh, by all intents and purposes, did not belong in the popular crowd, but I like to think that my—uh, my brain and my association with the—the few that basically took me under their wing to get me away from the bullies, as it were—to get into the popular crowd.

Ramsay: Yeah. Um, so what did you do after you graduated high school, and was that different from what other folks did where you're from?

Miles: Uh, that depends on who you ask. My graduating class in high school was actually some of the smartest people, uh, the town had ever seen. We were also the smallest class. The class before us, class of 2002, had like, 120 students that graduated. The class behind us, class of 24—class of 2004, excuse me—uh, had like, 140 students. My class was a class of 91, uh, so we were the smallest class in recent history. Uh, there were so many of us in the class with the same GPA that they had to drag it out to X amount of decimal places just to rank us. A lot of us had 3.9's, including yours truly, so they had to drag it out so far just to place us. I ended up placing 11 out of 91. Uh, and that's how they determined the valedictorian and salutatorian, was they had to drag it out so many decimal place, because we had like, three with 4.0's. So, a lot—but anyway, a lot of us—we all went off to, uh, community college, or full-on colleges and universities. A few of my friends, uh, had—were sick and tired of school, so they went—you know, they went into the workforce or just moved onto bigger and better things. I went to, uh, commun—I started with community college, uh, when I originally thought I was going to be an engineer. And then I did a—I did a—I tried to do about a year at a university level, but I fell into depression and realized that that's not what I wanted to do. I ended up dropping out of college and became a sales clerk at a retail store in my hometown for seven and a half years, until they gave me the boot back in

2014. And then I made the decision, in early 2015, to go back to school and finish my Associate's Degree. And then, uh, I moved to—moved back to the university setting to become a mathematics teacher. And then that's when I came—when I came out about myself, back in 2016, but that's another story altogether. I imagine we'll get to that in just a little bit.

Ramsay: Yeah, just in a little. Um, and so you finished community col—you finished—you got your degree in mathematics education in Alabama? Is that true?

Miles: No. Uh, I did not finish, uh, my Bachelor's Degree.

Ramsay: Okay.

Miles: I was on my way doing that when I came out, and with the environment that Alabama's in, uh, I just decided to leave it behind for the time being until I get my life sorted out.

Ramsay: Absolutely. What—are you open to sharing what some of that experience has been like for you?

Miles: I am. Uh, where would you like me to start on that one?

Ramsay: Wherever you feel comfortable. I mean, some people talk about coming out as a moment, as something else—I just want to hear your understanding.

Miles: Okay. Well, uh, I knew something was different about me, uh, starting at around the age of 13, uh, after I had had my first girlfriend, uh, back in junior high school. We had—we'd parted ways, because she moved—she moved away, and I was left at Lynn High. The summer after that—I was 13 years old—I knew something was different. I couldn't quite put my finger on it at the time, but I found myself gravitating towards women's clothing. And of course, like any young boy at the time, uh, they—they go through—they rummage through their mother's, uh, private things, and I did that for—in secret for a little—for a little bit, but then I immediately shelved it, because I was a big churchgoer at the time. I—another part of my brain was like, "This is wrong. You shouldn't be doing this." Like, it just shut that down, put a stop to it. Uh, and it didn't resurface until I was in my senior year, when I finally, uh, started realizing that me being male was no longer right, that I was female. But instead of, uh, coming out about it, like most people do nowadays—especially given the fact that most of my family were super-ultra-conservative Christian fundamentalists—I chose to run and hide. Uh, I ended up leaving—moving out of my mother's. Uh, as I mentioned earlier, I had a falling out with her. That was over money. That's just what triggered me moving out. The true reason is because she was a—she was a little more

liberal than most of the rest of my family was, and, uh, she would've been more willing to listen to it and entertain it, and help me come to terms with it, whereas the rest of the family would not be—especially my grandparents, whose opinion really mattered to me at the time. Uh, now I don't give two craps what they think, but back then, I did, and so I ran to their household, where I was able to suppress it for 13 years, until, uh, last year, when I was like—I was faced with one of two possibilities. I was faced with my life ending by my own hand, or I was just going to wither away in front of my game console, and I just couldn't take it anymore. I think the hardest part was coming out to myself, at first, and finally admit it—just let it all out, and then it just went from there.

Ramsay: So, what were the next steps you took after you came out to yourself?

Miles: Uh, the—after I came out to myself, my first step was I started, uh—I started buying, uh, women's underwear. I started with the panties, of course, and then it just started building from there. And of course, I had to keep it all secret, because I didn't want my grandparents finding out. I was afraid they'd show me the hatch right then and there, and I wouldn't have been ready for it. So, I kept it to myself for as long as I could, but by the end of April, uh, I had finally told another—I told two people that I could trust. I told, uh, my middle brother, Matthew, and his, uh, common-law wife—uh, her name is, uh—her name's Liz—uh, though she prefers to go by the name Byron, because she is a closeted trans man, uh, who lives in the mother-in-law loft of her ultra-conservative parents' house in Hamilton, Alabama. And then after that, it started getting a little easier to come out to people. I then came out to my advisor at the university. I started talking to a counselor on campus. I talked to another one of my friends. I think the hardest person I came out to was my—was my mother. She seemed to take it alright, but I could tell she was struggling with it, and even before I moved away from Alabama and came to New York City, uh, she just wanted to distance herself from me as much as she could, even though now, to hear her talk about it, she's like, "We're not upset with you over your—over your choices," and I'm thinking, "You think this was a choice? This was not a choice. This was life or death." But now she wants to reconnect, now that I'm 2000 miles away. Rest of the family—my father was indifferent over it, um, but towards the end, was trying to encourage me to put everything back into the closet to basically close Pandora's Box, if you will, just to please everybody else, because living in my—living in the, uh, Miles household down in Alabama was like liv—was a lot like living in the Soviet Union—uh, service to the state before service to the self—with my grandmother being like—acting like the Josef Stalin of the family, uh, where everything revolved around her. What she spewed was law, essentially.

Ramsay: So what, um, steps did you take to leaving? Because that seems—is that true, that that was kind of the next step, or was there more in between I'm missing?

Miles: After I had my falling out with my grandparents back in June of last year, over our definitions of family loyalty, I moved out of my grandparents' and moved in with my father—uh, who was, of course, indifferent at the time, because it was—as a matter of fact, it was that day that I came out to him as a trans woman, and he—he just said, “It is what it is.” That’s how I knew he was mainly indifferent. Basically, he didn’t want to get involved in it. He just wanted to live and let it be. I lived with my father and stepmother for roughly five months, and I actually left twice. The first time I left, I—I actually set out on foot. I, uh, just packed what I could and left, and I stayed with my brother and sister-in-law for a few days, and then when they were encouraging me to go back to living with my father and stepmother, on the terms of “survival,” as they put it, I just couldn’t take it. I left a—I left a goodbye note and set out on foot. I ended up—I walked what seemed like for miles, until I was picked up by a nice gentleman that took me all the way to Russellville—I was in Hamilton at the time. And, uh, after he dropped me off, I stayed at a local Walmart for a little while, gathered a few things, and then started walking north, heading towards, uh, Florence, essentially. And then a lady and her two companions, uh, picked me up just outside of Littleville, Alabama, which was a good—I’d say five to ten miles north of, uh, Russellville—and, uh, took me all the way to Florence, uh, where I ended up at another Walmart, where I bought some, uh, food rations—uh, and stayed around there, because I was tired, for a few hours, and then set out at about three in the morning. The next, uh—the next three hours, I actually walked fifteen miles from Florence to a small little town whose name escapes me right now, and I stayed at a McDonald’s for a couple of hours and then turned north, towards the Tennessee border. I ended up going all the way to Nashville—uh, half of it on foot, half of it, uh, by being picked up on the side of the road by people. And then, uh, when I couldn’t take it anymore, I just—I called my father to come and get me, ended up moving back—going back home for two weeks, where I had had enough of their bullcrap, again, and then I set out and never returned. I ended up moving in with my cousin in Tuscaloosa in—uh, at the end of October, uh, just a few days before Halloween. I stayed with her for about a month, until she kicked me off her couch, because she was incredibly territorial, and then I moved in with a little—with a family in Montgomery, Alabama. I stayed there until the end of January, where I found myself, uh, crawling into the same situation that I was in when I left my dad and stepmother’s house. I was either just going—I was just becoming a recluse again, either crawling into their son’s, uh, Playstation 4, or just sequestering myself in my room, not speaking to anybody. So, the mother—the lady of the household gave me a choice: either pack up and get out of her house, uh, by the end of the day, or if I packed my stuff up very quickly, she would pay for me a ticket to come to New York City, to get me out of the state. I had my stuff packed within the hour. She bought me the first bus ticket to come to New York, and that’s how I arrived here at the end of January of this year.

Ramsay: And since, what have you been up to?

Miles: Mainly just, uh, finally getting right with myself—being more comfortable, especially, going out as who I am, rather than worrying about what every Tom, Dick, and Harry thinks. Uh, I've—I'm in a better position right now than I was when I left Alabama. Since Alabama's a red state, especially when it was still under the Obama administration, they never expanded Medicaid, so I had no health insurance. My last job down there, they actually fired me because I came out as a trans woman—not by the management, by the owner—which is perfectly legal for them to do down there in Alabama. Ever since, it was hard—it was very difficult to find any work, because nobody wanted to hire a “queer,” as they put it down there—which, every time I heard it, that just made my blood boil—excuse me—but, uh, here, I've got Medicaid. I'm now on—I'm now on hormone therapy. I'm finally becoming the person that I always saw in my mind and in the mirror, versus what my ultra-conservative grandparents—what their image of me should've been. So, I feel much better since I'm here getting right with myself, versus living in their supposed “ideal” life.

Ramsay: Yeah, and what kind of community have you found here? We're in SAGE right now, so, um...

Miles: I'd say, uh, I've found a—I've made quite a few friends, uh, especially at the shelter that I'm staying at now. Uh, when I first came to New York, I really didn't know anybody at all. Uh, I'm—I stayed at a drop-in center here in Midtown, uh, for about a month and a half, but got tired of that, because I had to take everything of mine with me, and it was nothing but chairs like these to sleep in every night. Uh, but mainly, for the first month or so, I was hanging around the, uh, LGBT community center down on 13th Street. Uh, got to know a few people there—uh, not many, but a few. Now I stay at the HELP Women's Center in—uh, out in Brooklyn, and, uh, I'm one of the handful of, uh, trans women that are there, but I've met some very cool people, uh, who were very accepting of me, uh, regardless of the fact that I still have a... But, uh, let's just say if anybody messed with me, they're messing with them and, uh, basically, watch out, because hell's coming five steps behind them, and you don't want to get mowed under.

Ramsay: Um, and what has it been like to be seen here? Do you feel more visible as a trans person?

Miles: I do. I feel more comfortable, a little more open, more at ease, at peace—and I've just run out of adjectives.

Ramsay: Um, and then I'm also wondering if, growing up in a red state, did you have any role models? Did you have anyone, you know, kind of leading the way for you to understand transness, or was it all on you?

Miles: It was all on me. Uh, I can count on one hand how many people I knew personally that were trans. One, and that wasn't me. Uh, it was actually—she was actually a friend of mine from junior high school. Uh, back then, uh, she was—she had not come out as a trans woman. She was, uh—she was gay—she was a gay man at the time, uh, who went by the name of Ray. And then, uh, the only odd encounter I ever had with her was when I was working a job in 2006. I was between semesters at university, during my first college career, and, uh, I was working at a call center in Winfield, Alabama. And, uh, all I know was, uh, I was in the restroom. Uh, of course, there was only two restrooms at the time, a men's restroom and a women's restroom, and, uh—like I said—and this is long before I ever came out. Uh, I was, uh—I had just finished washing my hands and was drying them when, uh, a woman walks right past me in the men's room and goes straight for a stall, and is standing at the toilet, and I'm like—I just had—I had to do a double take. I'm like, "Is that a woman walking past?" but then I decided to put it out of my mind at the moment, and then as I was walking back to my workstation, uh, I was like, "Wait a minute, that person's face looked familiar. Why do I know that face?" But I—I'm like, "Nah, couldn't have been." I thought it was somebody else that's just—that looked just like him. It wasn't until I reconnected with her and told her that exact story that she told me that that was her. I'm like—and my jaw was dropped to the floor, and I'm like, "That was you?" And then when she found out about—when I came out to her about myself, uh, we reconnected because my stepmother was working at a, uh, gas station in, uh, Natural Bridge, Alabama at the time. And now, her name is Raleigh and, uh, she was a regular customer at that gas station, and my stepmother had told Raleigh about me—did not give a name, but then I had an impromptu phone call with her, arranged by my stepmother. And, uh, we got to talking and, uh, I had told her who I was, and she's like, "Oh my god! You're my friend from junior high school!" I'm like, "That's me," because we had the same friends when I was in—I was in junior high school. She was in high school at the time, but we had the same group we'd run around with, and we went to church together, uh, when we were in high school, so that's how we knew each other.

Ramsay: So, now—

Miles: But that was after my—after I had come out that I reconnected with her, but she was the only—

Ramsay: Right, right. Are you still in touch?

Miles: Uh, sporadically. Uh, she's going through some problems of her own. Uh, she's—she's married to her husband and, uh, he has bipolar disorder, so they're—they kind of retreat to the sticks, as it were. Uh, plus she has a bit of anxiety around people, so she's one of those that kind of hates people but works in a retail environment, so she tries to stay out of sight as much as possible, but every now and then, she'll contact me, usually by—either by text message or Facebook Messenger, whichever one she tends to find me on.

Ramsay: Yeah. So, now that you're in New York, um, have you built more of a community around other trans people?

Miles: A little. Uh, not much. Uh, right now, the main ones that I have contact with, other than the, uh, fine people of my theatre group, there's, uh, my girlfriend Zoey, uh, who is also a—a trans woman. She's a trans woman from Chile. We actually met about—I'd say about a month, month and a half ago. Uh, she had just left her college career out in Long Island and did not know where to turn. I ended up, uh, taking her to the—I was staying at the drop-in center here in Midtown at the time, and I took her there with me so she could have a place to go for the night, and we just—we bonded from that point on, and, uh, we—for a long time, we were inseparable. Uh, but now she has her own place in Brooklyn, and I actually am living, uh, within two miles of her place, so it's not that hard for me to just get up—get up and go walk to her apartment. And then there's my friend Layla, who—who... Now, she's also a—she was—had a similar situation that I was in, where she didn't come out until later in life. Uh, she's about ten years older than I am, so she's a recent come-out, too, just like I am, though I'm a bit ahead of the curve, as it were, since I'm on hormone therapy. She's still deciding whether to go through it or not—through the hormone therapy, or just remain a—and I hate the term—"crossdresser," for the time being. But, uh—but she found me one day at the, uh—at the community center down on 13th, and I was—I was in tears, essentially, because I was alone. Nobody wanted to talk to me, despite me just—I was just sitting there, uh, looking at stuff on my phone, and everybody would just walk right past me, and I just stayed looking around at all the—the people who were happy, and it drove me to tears, this depression, because I felt so isolated and alone, even in a crowd. And then she found me standing there with tears running down the side of my face, and she came up and introduced herself, and asked me, "What's wrong?" and started talking to me. I think she became the first real friend that I made up here, and we talk regularly—we've talked regularly ever since, either in person or, uh, on Facebook, or if I—if I'm out of data, we message each other back and forth.

Ramsay: Yeah. And who else are you close with here?

Miles: Uh, right now, they're—let's see, right now, they're the primary two. Uh, there's a couple people, like, I talk to at the, uh, shelter that I stay at right now. Uh, they're both cis women. Uh,

their names are, uh, Tanisha and, uh, Evie, are their names. Uh, Evie's a 50-year-old, uh, Puerto Rican woman with an attitude to match, who sort of reminded me of my maternal aunt back home, and we've kind of become, uh, big sister, little sister—uh, her being the big sister, me being the little sister. She—she's kind of like, become my guardian, as it were. And then, uh, Tanisha really took a shine to me, because—and she is a trans ally, uh, for more than one reason. Main—her main reason for being a trans ally is not only because of me, but, uh, she has a daughter named, uh, Chrissie, who used to be her son, so she's been through it with somebody in her family—and very close to her in her family—so she kind of sees me as a—a return to that, uh, nurturing somebody who's transitioning—uh, and well on their way into transition.

Ramsay: Um, how do you see yourself in this moment of the LGBTQ moment—the movement and all that?

Miles: Ehh, I don't really quite know how to answer that, because usually, I'm not the activist type. I'm the—kind of like the one that's kind of hanging back in the background, uh, just trying to—uh, right now, I'm just trying to sur—I'm just trying to just get through day-to-day and not—uh, I know it's important that we stay the course, as it were, but right now, I'm just trying to live day-to-day and trying not to get involved in the politics of it. I've had enough politics from home to last a lifetime, and especially with the fact that most of my—pretty much, I'd say, about a good 99% of the family's all Republicans, and they would rather see our community burn than, uh, to get acceptance. And it just kills me that that happens, but then again, most of our family's in their senior years, so good luck getting them to change their minds. But for the moment, I'm just trying to—just making it from day to day.

Ramsay: Yeah. And what do you—what is your day to day like?

Miles: Mainly I'm just, uh, trying to find work—uh, just progressing as best I can. Right now the main things are, I'm trying to find work, I'm trying to get public assistance, and I'm trying to get my name changed—which, that one is well on its way right now, because, uh, I have a law firm that's representing me pro bono and, uh, getting my name changed. They've ordered my birth certificate. It's here. I should be hearing something as early as next week about maybe getting everything finally started in the courts. And I've tried public assistance, but, uh, they denied me because I didn't have a birth certificate, and either my family back home had the birth certificate and were lying to me about it so they—because they probably sniffed out what I was going to do with it, and they were holding it hostage, essentially—or they lost it somewhere. I don't know, and not having the money to be able to afford to order it myself was a very sharp pain in the butt, which is why it's ha—it's taken me so long just to order a single document, because it's hard to do when you don't have money. And finding a job, it's been really difficult, because finding a job

in New York's so much different than it is down in Alabama. Like, uh, I've—I still—I find it strange that, uh, just to even get a pedestrian job, they still want a resume, and like, back home, we don't even need resumes just for a pedestrian job—uh, just for like—like, see a “help wanted” sign on a storefront window. Back home you just walk in, like, say “Hey, I saw your ‘help wanted’ sign. I want an application,” and that's it. You just—you just fill out the application and that's it. They don't need a resume. The only jobs that needed resumes back home were, uh, if you were going for those, uh, hoity-toity, high-paying corporate jobs. Uh, usually if you were just going to like, work in a retail store or work at a gas station, all you had to do was fill out an application and that was it, but here, it's so much different. Uh, you have to not only fill out an application, but you gotta have a resume to go with it—resume, cover letter, and all that stuff—and they want you to go to the job in professional dress, whereas back home, for a pedestrian job, you just go in in a t-shirt and a pair of blue jeans, and that's it. Uh, but it's also been difficult with having to put my legal name on, uh, applications, and when they see the application, they see a male name and then I come in dressed as a female and, uh, half the time, they're like, “Oh? Like, did I miss something here?” Yeah, and that's only a handful of times. Most of the time, they've made it to where it's more, uh, trans-friendly applications, but there's still a lot of applications that are—that are still sticking with the gender binary, and that's—makes it very difficult, especially when you have—when you're still having to use a masculine, uh, legal name to apply for jobs.

Ramsay: Yeah. And so, in this moment of transition, of your life, um, what are you holding onto that's helping you move through it?

Miles: My love of science fiction, and I'll tell you why. Uh, science fiction—I was gravitated to it, first of all, because of all of the pretty lights and everything when I was a kid, but it's really what drove me to becoming more of an intellectual, versus somebody that's more into athletics. Uh, it drove me to science and math, versus being a jock, as it were, and it drove me to doing very well—but especially with coming out as a trans woman, uh, seeing science fiction—especially Star Trek, for that matter—uh, it presented to me the possibilities of being in a, uh—in a society that's—that's free and open, and doesn't care what's between your legs, or what color your skin is, or, uh—or however you are, from wherever you are—where everybody can just come together and, uh, just be people rather than just seeing gender or race or anything like that. Not to mention the technology, on top of that. That's just icing on the cake, you know?

Ramsay: Yeah. Well, that was really beautiful. Um, that—this is feeling like we're kind of heading towards the end, so if there's anything you wanted to fill in, if you'd thought of anything while talking about your life, now would be a great time.

Miles: Uh, nothing I can think of off the top of my head.

Ramsay: Yeah. Great. Well, thank you. If there's anything else you want to add, um...

Miles: Live long and prosper.

Ramsay: Perfect.