

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

JACKSON REDDY

Interviewer: Tashan Lovemore

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Tashan Lovemore: Hello, my name is Tashan Lovemore, and I will be having a conversation with Jackson Reddy 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 May 29th, 2019 and this is being recorded at Mid-Manhattan Library. Jackson, we're so happy to have you here. The New York City Trans Oral History Project is a community archive of transgender resistance, resilience, and survival of New York City. Black Trans TV's goal is to share the narrative of people who love, like, look like us. The interview will be a collaboration between Black Trans TV with the New York Public Library and highlight the brilliant oral history of black trans folks of experience. Can you please start with your name and your pronouns...

Jackson Reddy: My name is Jackson Reddy, and I prefer the pronouns they, them. I also sometimes go by he, him.

Lovemore: Okay good. Did you grow up in New York?

Reddy: I did not grow up in New York, but I was born in New York though. I was born upstate in Albany.

Lovemore: Okay. Well, if you didn't grow up in New York, where did you grow up?

Reddy: I grew up all around. I like to say I grew up all around los Estados Unidos. So um I was born in upstate New York, that is where both of my parents are from and where their families ended up, you know, black people migrated from the south-north so previously both sides of my family being from up north, they were both from the south. So I think they came probably during the great migration up to New York and kind of settled there. So my parents were both from the same -- Albany and Troy are like sister kind of towns. Albany is the capital, Troy is right next door. My mom was born in Troy. My dad was born in Albany.

Lovemore: What's your relationship like with your family?

Reddy: That is -- That is more complicated than where am I from. I'm not even done answering where I'm from yet or where I grew up, because that's just where I was born. Um, and I grew up moving so we moved around a lot. So we lived on the West Coast, my brother was born out in Sacramento. My mother, her way of sort of responding to her circumstances was to move, right? So like she would get triggered, or shit would go down and she would pack us up and she would move us. We moved literally across the United States. We lived in Cali, we lived in Texas, moved back to New York for a while, and then we settled in Philly when I was about ten. So I mostly grew

up in Philly, but I only lived there until I went to college. So the place I actually spent the most time was in Chicago, I moved into Chicago when I was eighteen and I had lived there for thirteen years before I left. So that's the place I've lived the longest ever. So, Philly and Chicago are like my hometowns. You know, I feel like I grew up in both of those places.

Lovemore: That's dope though. How did you like that growing up? As far as like...

Reddy: It was traumatic. [Laugh]

Lovemore: I was going to ask you though, how was it like growing up in all of those different places?

Reddy: It was traumatic. It was only traumatic though because of the circumstances. So you know, I have a lot of appreciation for it now. You know, now that I look back I realize, you know, when we talk about America or the United States, what I think about as the United States is influenced by getting to see how big it was and how it changed at a very young age. Right? So I really have a lot of appreciation for that now because what I realize is that people are living. When we say "I'm American," people are living in completely different places and don't really actually have that same mental or physical framework. Some people have literally never left the place that they were born. You know the state that they were born. There's no judgment but it definitely does change your perspective, when you're very young too, to see like "Oh, when I say I'm American, it means I'm all of these things, as opposed to this one area or this one thing."

Lovemore: I completely agree.

Reddy: But the situation was always like shit hit the fan. So I think that was always the hard part. It was very unsettling. I never -- You know -- I still have trust issues. You know? It kinda felt like the rug was always being pulled out from underneath us. So that part was hard. Um, but you know, the experience now as an adult, I can look back on and extract the value. You know?

Lovemore: Yeah. You mentioned your brother. You only have one sibling?

Reddy: I have multiple siblings. I have one brother where we grew up together. You know. So, both of my parents have other children. So I have multiple siblings. But when I talk about my brother, I'm talking about Kiontay who is my younger brother, and that is the person that I grew up with.

Lovemore: What's your relationship with your brother now?

Reddy: It's good, it's good. It's actually just recently turned a corner. I think there's a process -- I know there's a process of grief and mourning that happens when someone comes out as trans, especially to their family or to anyone that's close to them. And so, that process I think looks different for everybody so I feel like he was doing a lot of grieving and mourning, and there was tension I think for a minute. But I know there was only tension because he was really fighting to love me. Ultimately, so it was like he, I think, everyone has to grieve, I get it, you know, I had to grieve too. So we just turned a corner. Honestly, our relationship with our mother. Because I don't talk to our family actually. So he's the only person I talk to currently. You know, for a while he was like "why aren't you talking to anybody? Why don't you tell them why you're not talking to them? Et cetera, et cetera et cetera." And I had to explain a few things, one being that like for me, the silence was self-care because my relationship with my family is toxic, and that quite frankly, it hurt me too to not have the spoons to be able to like show up and just be like "la da! Here I am!" You know, like it hurts me too that it feels like "ugh I really don't have it in me." And also, like no one else is responsible for aftercare, and no one else actually knows what that looks like. You know? And so, whatever happens, I have to show up ready to be responsible for my aftercare and I'm also not there yet. Also, don't have the spoons for it yet. And so, it's not fun for me either. It's not fun to be traumatized, it's not fun to think -- to feel triggered by your family. [Laughter] You know what I mean? I had to break this down for him though because he didn't get it. He's like "why didn't you just come out?" You know? And I'm like you don't get it. Then he turned his own corner with repressing a lot of what happened to us as children. He sent me a message like "yo, I like broke through basically and realized how much I have repressed and I really wasn't understanding where you were coming from until I had this moment and now I get where you're coming from." Because there's just a lot of stuff in our family that is unresolved and unfortunately, there are adults that are not able to show up and be accountable, also. So it's a lot of gaslighting which leads to conflict. It's like, well, you're adults, we're all adults now. I can't make you come to the table and take accountability, you know. And if you're not going to do that, then we really don't actually have much to talk about [Laughter]. Silence is an underutilized tool for resolving conflict. Motherfuckers could sit down and be quiet, and be peaceful, and realize it's okay; we actually don't have to agree, we don't have to. If we're not, then we're not. There's no way of forcing that understanding. It feels like it's a much more peaceful act to say I'm going to be quiet and I'm going to take care of myself. I'll let you take care of yourself. And honestly, I feel like if everyone's actually doing that then I'm not worried about anything. Because that's what I said to him. I said "I'm not talking to anybody, but also, I'm not worried. Why are people worried? I'm taking care of myself." I feel like yo, when the conversations need to be had, I have faith that they will be had. You know? But I have no worries about it because I know what I'm doing and I'm doing my best to take very good care of myself. And if everyone's doing the same thing then we should all be alright. So our relationship has turned a corner since he has sort

of had his own breakthrough about “oh, yeah, this relationship is toxic, and these are the ways in which it is toxic, and now I understand why Jackson is reserved. [Laughter]. Conservative.”

Lovemore: When you say younger, how much younger is he than you?

Reddy: Five and a half years.

Lovemore: What about your father? You didn't mention your dad.

Reddy: “You know, it's a tough relationship, so I'll back it all the way up [breaking noise]. So my parents always had a complicated relationship. Like I was born into conflict with the two of them, and I don't even know the levels of conflict, you know, but growing up it was always like “that nigga ain't shit,” and then he would just be ghost most of the time. There were together for like probably off and on for the first five years of my life, and then when I was about five and a half, right after when my brother was born, maybe I was like six. This was after my brother was born. He was young though; he was like a baby-baby, and they were actually splitting up while my mother was pregnant. So, you know, by the time he was born though, there was a big break and we were in California. We had moved from New York to California and my father's parents, my grandparents, had moved out there. So his dad went out there, all of his brothers and his family went out there, and my mom came out there too. We left and went back to the East Coast. That was when they were like broken-broken. Then it was back and forth across the United States of America, you know what I mean? [Laughter] It was a lot of like -- this was back in the day when before cell phones, you know? So it was a lot of collect calls to curse people out. You know what I mean? [Wheezing]. Like going over to somebody else's house because you ain't have a phone so you had to go over to your homie's house to call a nigga to curse him out. [Laughter] It was like that kind of shit that would happen. So that was their relationship growing up. And then later in my life, I was on a crusade to really put my family back together. Because what I did remember from being a kid was that we did have this family dynamic. It was me, it was my cousins, it was my dad, and all his brothers, and my aunts. It was everybody all together, all the time. So, I missed that, and as a kid, you can't advocate for yourself in the same way. So when they split up; their beef became my beef, but it was never my beef. I was just in the middle of it so when I was in my mid-twenties, shortly after I started practicing Buddhism, one of the things I really wanted to break through with my Buddhist practice was I really wanted to build this bridge in my family again. And I did it. I reconnected with them after eighteen years. I mean, I hadn't seen, and that was the other thing. I had beef because I was like “nobody called me, nobody checked on us.” The thing is my dad tried to not fuck with my mom because she's crazy, but I'm like yo, you left me with a nigga that you didn't even want to be with. And what do you think she was doing to me? [Laughter] You know what I mean? Like my whole family. And I love my mother, I have so

much appreciation for her, even though we have a really tense relationship right now, but at the same time, I was like “damn, y’all didn’t even check on me. Y’all knew this nigga was crazy.” [Laughter] And then, they’d let her just tell them whatever and they would believe it. No one ever really checked on us so I had mad beef with everybody, but I was like I’m down to squash it. You know, there’s another generation, my cousins are having kids. Let’s just try to put this shit back together. And then, so I did that. It happened. My brother was always sort of on the sidelines like “whatever.” He was like “whatever” [Laughter]. He is a Jackson, true, true. But that’s also my brother. He was like “agh, whatever, me first” always. In a good way though. For real. It was like y’all are cool, but we didn’t grow up together. I don’t really know you. He was a baby. So that was the other thing; I was five and a half, six years old when that split happened. He was literally an infant, so he was like “I never knew y’all, y’all never knew me, like it’s whatever. You know? I just never had a dad growing up and that was my life.” He didn’t have a memory of things being more cohesive. Ever. Even though they were always kind of shaky. Anyway, he met them. There was people he hadn’t met yet because he was a baby. You know, so I connected, we reconnected, we had a couple of family.

Lovemore: That must have been beautiful though.

Reddy: It was. It was absolutely beautiful. I was in a Renaissance in terms of my family revolution in my life. I was like “wow,” you know? I was really, really happy, proud, just like “wow, black people are out there doing the work, we’re putting our families back together, but then... Damn. Then I had the worst PTSD I’ve ever had. This is two and a half years ago. So I didn’t know I had PTSD, I’ve had it my whole life. And it makes sense now. Also, my mom struggles with alcoholism; it’s like, you know, abuser. Now looking back, my whole family struggles with some type of addiction. There are the extreme cases with the uncles that were strung out growing up and then there’s everybody drinks every day. You can tell they’re medicating to numb. They’re not medicating even to be. And I’m not making judgments, it’s just the type of thing that’s happening is like abusive, basically. Like that’s the problem. The problem is actually not the substances, it’s the abuse part. Right? So, my mom, my whole family struggles with abuse, but... growing up, child of an alcoholic, I’ve seen some shit. Anyway, seen some crazy things. I had PTSD, and I didn’t realize I had it. I’m sure I’ve had it my whole life. Now I can recognize “oh, that was probably PTSD.” Now I can look back and see it, but at the time I had no idea what was happening. And I had never had anything like this happen to me in my life, but I recalled memories of sexual abuse that I’d had as a child. And it was really difficult because my whole life, seeing therapists, or just trying to deal with my issues growing up, being poor, black, and raised by a single mother who is also struggling from being abused by her parents, and et cetera, et cetera. You know, people would always say “were you sexually abused?” I always demonstrated the signs of someone who

had been sexually abused and I would always say “if it happened, I literally have no memory of it.

Lovemore: You blocked it out?

Reddy: I don't remember it. You know? And then we would move on. Because I'd be like “I literally don't. Nah, I don't think so.” And so, this was the first time where -- and it came back like memories. It was painful. It was really painful. And it was hard. And I just broke down. And that was when I really started to unpack my identity, too. So it was like I had this knot of trauma that I had to unravel, and as I unraveled that, then I started to really be able to ask myself questions about what made me feel good. And believe that my answer was important because that's another part of trauma, is like I was raised to be told what I felt was not valid. Didn't even count. What feelings, right? So yeah, they came back. My memory was always fragmented, and it still is. I always realized, like my childhood. I know we moved around a lot, but how come I can't remember whole chunks of things and I'm like “well, probably because you were five. Like your memory is not that” -- you know what I mean? Your attention span is already short and then y'all were always moving and like you were always in and out. Even when you were in one place, we would live in so many different houses and you know, et cetera, et cetera. I always had that feeling of something's missing. There's a big piece that I, you know. What sucked was that once I put that piece in, all the other pieces fit. I was like “okay, everything else makes sense now.” In a way that felt comforting because at least I could trace a line.

Lovemore: To pinpoint something significant.

Reddy: Yeah, whereas before it was just like “what's going on here? Why am I always like this?” So that was hard. I think my family took it as, now they're like “oh, it's because you're trans.” I was like “that's not why I stopped talking to y'all. I stopped talking to y'all because I realized I can't trust y'all. Because if what I remember is correct, [Laughter] and I'm pretty sure it is, y'all were negligent. Maybe I don't remember all the specific details of what happened, but what I do know is that y'all were negligent. That somebody wasn't taking care of me. And that that's how that shit went down. You know, that I was left alone, and that I was left with people who, from what y'all have told me, you should have never trusted them.

Lovemore: Yeah, that's deep then.

Reddy: Right. So I think my split with my mom is like, I remember my mom saying to me about my aunt. So I have an aunt who was adopted by my grandparents on my paternal side, my paternal grandparents. I had seen this when I put my father's side of the family back together. I

was like I had seen her, and my mom was like “I’m glad she’s doing okay.” And I was like “you know she’s had some health problems.” She’s like well it’s amazing she’s even alive because of the way they treat her in that house, and I’m like what do you mean? She was like they used to do all kinds of shit to her, they used to like not buy her clothes, and like not feed her, and like you know what I mean? Just let her walk around however stinky, whatever. They used to molest her, and she used the word molest. Now mind you, my mom is an alcoholic though. I’m like, sometimes she just be saying shit, and it’s not accurate. But I remembered that sticking out like that’s a huge accusation to make.

Lovemore: That is, and to say it so casually.

Reddy: Right, and I’m like oh, so you knew these niggas wasn’t shit though. You knew they wasn’t shit and you still left me with them. You would leave me with them for long periods of time. You knew that’s what was going down at my grandparents’ house, how did you ever leave me with anybody from that family? Including my father. I’m not even going to get into why were you into this relationship. That’s a whole other thing. Look, I’ve got a fucked-up family too, so I don’t want someone looking at me like “uh” [Laughter]. You know what I mean? But I’m like, “but definitely why would you ever leave me alone? Left me alone for long stretches of time.” I’m sure she was like nineteen, she was like “fuck it, whatever somebody going to watch this little nigga like I’ma go out. I’ma do me.” I get it, but that is the negligence that happens when someone is not ready to be responsible to be a parent. So that, there it is. I think I just, I was like I can’t. I can’t. Plus all of the other shit. You know so it’s like this incident, plus like my whole life. And you know, my mother and I had these moments where I’ve asked her to be accountable and she hasn’t shown up. And I sort of was like “whatever.” Like, it is what it is. I did the thing where I was like “that’s still my mom, I still love her, like I’m still going to send her fifty dollars when she needs it. I’m still going to blah blah blah.” You know, and after that, I was like no, I come first now for sure -- I come first now for sure and for a while. And that’s why I’m not talking to y’all. Cause this is still self-care. This is still aftercare from what happened to me when I was four and five.

Lovemore: This is your healing.

Reddy: So I’m not talking to you. [Laughter] And I don’t know when I’m going to talk to you again honestly. You know, I had no plans, no agenda -- except to take care of myself, and as long as the little kid inside of me is still like I don’t want to talk, I’m not making the motherfucker say nothing to nobody. [Laughter]

Lovemore: I respect that.

Reddy: Because that -- they have every right. It's like, I have every right to take all of the time that I need. So that's my situation with my family. I'm like I don't really fuck with them like that. I talk to my brother, and that's about it for right now. And I do have hope for the future, but I'm like-

Lovemore: In the present moment, this is where you are.

Reddy: This is where it is. On this here record.

Lovemore: I'm gonna change it a little bit. Um, what does queer mean to you?

Reddy: Wow that was [whistles].

Lovemore: Yeah, it was. [Laughter]

Reddy: You know, I'm -- that is -- it's evolving. I really have to -- go back and take some more time with it, with that word specifically. Because for a while, I -- what I thought it meant was honestly a-- a conscious, you know, deconstructing of colonial ideas basically. And, even the reclamation of a word that was used to oppress someone I think is a breaking down of these structures. Right, so to be consciously living in a way that breaks down these systems and knowing that gender and sexuality are two huge systems that they -- that people are controlled by... and oppressed by. But, mostly I'm like I just need to go back because I need to -- because there's always the personal meaning too. So I feel like I know academically, and I know philosophically what queer means to me, but I-- I need to go back and revisit what it means to me personally. Because I think it is also easy to get caught up in rhetoric, and once again like I was saying earlier, everyone thinks they're saying-- everyone says the same words and thinks they're saying the same thing.

Lovemore: True, because I also struggle with the word "queer." So I understand like -- I been trying to figure out where that fits for me personally as well. So I get that, I get that.

Reddy: So yeah, I'm in a place with it now where it's like I really want to -- I probably just need to go back and reclaim it for myself. And it is tied to resistance. Because it is what you know -- the word queer started to come from what I understand historically -- started to come back into vernacular amongst LGBTQ people, after -- I'm blanking on people's names. I'm gonna generalize and say there was a group that during the AIDS epidemic did a lot of work -- resistance work, movement work, activist work around supporting people who were diagnosed with HIV and AIDS, and also there was also a group that sprang out of that group, that called themselves the Queer

something something, and it was in resistance to people who were being attacked for being queer, who also were dealing with HIV and AIDS, and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So you know, I think, definitely, it feels like there is resistance always in just sort of being like yes. [Laughter] Yes and? You know what I mean? Even if it is what they're trying to threaten you is negativity, it's like, yes. I'm going to claim it, and I'm going to throw it right back at you. So yeah, that's where I'm at with that.

Lovemore: Okay, what does visibility look like to you?

Reddy: Hmm, that's a good one. You know, I feel like visibility is about showing up in the secular world actually. Because we all got personal lives... and I'm never like, no one needs to -- no one needs to be visible, but I understand that it helps. I understand how it helps. And I feel like the cost is low, but the value is great. Because... it's a way of just being able to in the secular world identify like "that's my tribe." You know what I mean? It's like it's why indigenous people put -- have certain markings. Or whatever. Cause you're like "okay, are you tribe?" You know what I mean? And if you're not tribe it doesn't mean you're an enemy, but you're not tribe.

Lovemore: [Laughter] it's a perfect example, it's a perfect example.

Reddy: So you know... it's like that's what it is.

Lovemore: It's not that I'm lost, it's that -- I got you. I like what you're saying.

Reddy: So when I think about visibility, I am thinking about it in a secular way, how do I show up in the world, how do I show up in society, how do I show up in civilization? Because in my home, or I'm in my -- you know what I mean. You don't see me, you don't know me. So, it is only about how I decide to show up to others. You know? So yeah.

Lovemore: What is community or who is community for you?

Reddy: That's a good question too... Community are people who -- I mean, in a general term, people who share the same values. As one -- Mr. Kanye West would say, [Laughter] "if you on good shit you make good shit, and if you make good shit, you on good shit." So community are people who are vibrating at the same frequency, and the people who you can also like, move along with. People who have the same -- they value the same thing. They find... what's another word for value? What's another word for value?

Lovemore: I'm drawing a blank, I'm listening to you.

Reddy: I always use the word value. [Laughter] I'm thinking out loud, I'm talking to myself too.

Lovemore: No, it's a good word. We can use value. Because since going off of that--

Reddy: I guess derive meaning? Deriving meaning from similar things, and same things. And then it's also the people who you have had experiences with, right? Because I feel like it's possible to have community that you haven't met yet. To like have tribe out in the world that you haven't met. You migrate towards each other because you are after the same thing. I feel like that's always the case for me. It's like I showed up at this place and that person showed up at that place because we were both -- we both saw value in something similar and that's how we met each other. So that's one, you know. But we didn't know that until that moment. And then there's the community that's like these are the people who I've traversed time with, [laughter] who we, with intention, orbit around each other in the same circle. You know, when I think about community I think about people like Shayna Matteski. Like that's my community. It's someone who - it's like we know that we're family, there's nothing, that's it.

Lovemore: That's what it is.

Reddy: [Laughter] that's it. You know?

Lovemore: No questions.

Reddy: Right.

Lovemore: So since you're talking about family, have you created your chosen family? And what does it look like?

Reddy: I'm always creating my chosen family. And I think it's gotten bigger and it's gotten smaller and as I transition and as I move forward in life, you know, I think my relationship to people changes. But I feel like the people I fuck with, I always fuck with. Like, I still rock with them. And I think it's different. Some people-- I have friends where it's like we literally don't talk to each other for years at a time, but when we see each other, you would swear we just talked on the phone yesterday. And then there's people I talk to every single day. But the relationship is still like that's my-- I choose you. Shit goes down [Laughter], you know? I chose you to be in my orbit. So I've started to do it, and I continue to do it. I think it's always-- I feel fortunate that it's always growing. But as I get older, I notice it grows a little slower. [Laughter] There are less and less people on the inside-inside.

Lovemore: The circle's kind of tight.

Reddy: Right. [Laughter] And that's, again, self-care. I feel like the people who can respect my boundaries are honestly the people who are my community and my chosen family. It's the people who can respect and honor what I need to do for myself are the people--- And always, Oprah just said "the people who want you to be your best," okay? So people who are like I want you to do what you need to do. Even if sometimes I'm not going to see you as much, whatever. But people who can be like, alright I'm going to show up for you doing you... and vice versa. I feel like I'm the community for people who are like-- I can show up for you doing you. It goes both ways, community isn't just like one-sided.

Lovemore: One-way, yeah. What is your occupation, calling, walk of life? It doesn't have to mean, you know, what you get paid to do.

Reddy: Right. Right now, I always tell people I'm an artist and an educator. I mean, I think those two things will always be true about me. So it feels like, alright if I say those two things, and whatever else happens... [Laughter] It is going to fall somewhere in those two lines. And I just graduated from grad school so I--

Lovemore: Congratulations.

Reddy: Thank you. So like literally today- literally today, I did not walk for graduation, but I did graduate. It was like, right here.

Lovemore: That's amazing, I'm really happy for you.

Reddy: Thank you. And I got-- my master's is in education. So [laughter] it's in education and theatre. It's literally art and education. And I don't know-- I do know what I'm going to do next, but I don't know how it's going to roll out -- How it's going to go. I'm being conservative for a reason because like, I actually don't have any problem failing, or whatever people think about as failure, but also-- I'm like sometimes misfortune comes from the mouth. So sometimes I just be talking, like what? What was I? I don't even know. Nevermind. [Laughter].

Lovemore: You got to catch yourself because you're right. The tongue. You have to be careful what you say, what you speak out loud. You're right, you have to stop yourself; "you know what, I didn't say that."

Reddy: That's right. I don't know exactly what's going to happen next, but I do have lots of ideas. I definitely am looking forward to getting back to making art. I identify as an artist.

Lovemore: Making art... elaborate more, what do you make?

Reddy: You know, what I'm really curious about is what happens when I don't know what that means. [Laughter] Because I know what it used to mean for me, and it's meant different things at different points in my life. You know it used to mean writing, it used to mean being in a play or doing a show or auditioning. It used to mean... movement, dance... So it's like it's changed. And so, I'm looking forward to getting back into a space where I don't know what it means and I really just let myself create and I see what comes out. It might be painting, it might be a lot of things. I know I'm definitely doing a lot of writing, so I feel like writing is a thing that I've been doing and I'm going to continue to do... and I do stand-up, and I had -- I took a break from stand-up because I was in grad school... and I was about to not be in grad school if I didn't take a break. I took a break from everything actually. I was teaching full time, I was doing a lot.

Lovemore: Yeah, you were doing classes.

Reddy: Yeah, I was doing a lot. Yeah, I mean grad school, you're -- you know. You have-- well it depends on your degree. But it's like oftentimes there is work, and there is class. So for me as an educator, my work was in the classroom [laughter]. That was part of my program. I had to teach at some point. So I was like teaching full time and going to classes at night, and living my life, and writing these papers, and then like also in my personal life like, we had two people die in our family. Like very close. Like Jameela's sister died in August and then her dad, who was dying the whole time -- he had cancer the whole time like died in March. Literally, it's not even been a whole year between those two deaths. So it has been a lot. In January, I stopped working. [Laughter] Because I was like I need to go to grad school and I need to go to grad school. And I was fortunate enough -- you know, we're all fortunate enough that we were in a place where financially we could afford to do that. And then, it also was like-- it made sense because then her dad got really, really sick, and it was all hands on deck for-- for a couple months there. I was going back and forth. So I haven't been-- I say all that to say I have no actual occupation, I'm technically unemployed right now. And so happy about it. [Laughter]

Lovemore: You have to enjoy this moment in time.

Reddy: Looking forward to the summer, where I'm going to go-- so on Saturday, I'm going up to Vermont to learn how to like basically build up my own homestead. I have a friend who has a home, and you know, a homestead is like, not a farm, but is a farm. But it's like a personal farm.

Because there are lots of different types of farms. Anyway, but it's like this is her own personal farm. So she grows her own food. She grows her own herbs for medicine, she raises chickens. Yeah, so she's going to-- she's changing over her flock of chickens so a big part of it is I'm going to learn how she likes-- how she's doing that, and then, also, I'm going to go back in the fall and learn how to harvest chickens, which is you know; it's the end of their life. So they're older-- she's like "I love my chickens, but they're older and you know, we don't waste nothing. So we're not just-- we don't just let them die, we kill them and then we eat them. That's how it goes down. And now she's got baby chicks, so she just put the baby chicks. This is their second night or third night in the coop. So they just started sleeping outside, so she's like "you're going to watch how I integrate them into the main flock, and then I'm going to start to harvest the main flock basically." So I'm going to go up there. It's bi-season, so I'm going in the beginning of the summer season so I can see the planning, and then I'm going to go back in the fall so I can see the harvest and turn the beds over and get them ready for the next season as well. So yeah, those are things I'm working on. I love food. I have a huge passion for food and I really--

Lovemore: What do you love about food? What do you...

Reddy: Wait, I'm like... Is that a real question? [Laughter]

Lovemore: No. I should say what's your favorite food?

Reddy: Love about food? Like, food is life.

Lovemore: It is! No, you need food to survive; what's your favorite food?

Reddy: I'm going to go with tacos because I will always eat a taco. I will always eat anything on a corn to-- corn tortillas are actually my favorite food, and I will eat anything on top of them. [Laughter]

Lovemore: And you make everything that you eat, basically. I mean, not all the time, but you like to chef it up in the kitchen.

Reddy: Yeah, I cook all the time. I mean, and I like to eat out in New York-- I'm fortunate. I always forget I've lived in great food cities where I actually want to go out and get the food. Because some places I realize people are like "oh yeah, things shut down and then there's nothing to eat." And I'm like "oh yeah, sometimes you don't have an option." Like you either eat what's in your house or you hungry because there's no place-- because you don't want to go eat if you don't want to eat fast food or whatever. So, New York, I feel like it's nice sometimes that I can be like

“I’m tired. I don’t feel like cooking and I really do trust the people that cook in the kitchen down,” you know what I mean? Even sometimes at the Chinese place, I’m like “yo I know that’s a family, I see them together. I see they kids going to school, you know? [Laughter] Like, I don’t know them, but I trust their kitchen and their food is good. And I want to eat it.” Win win win, [Laughter] but I do love to cook and for me, food is life. And food is like-- it’s just another way to tell stories actually too. I feel like there’s so much culture and history and information in food. I feel like that’s where I really get into it and like, okay, you know it’s a way of communicating and expressing yourself and telling a story, just like saying a poem or doing whatever. And then stand-up-- I’m ready to talk some shit, I’m ready to talk mad shit this year I feel like. I have nothing to lose.

Lovemore: When did you start stand-up?

Reddy: Right now. [Laughter] You said when did I start or when do?

Lovemore: Yeah, when did you start?

Reddy: I started stand-up in Chicago. One of my best, dearest friends, Niall Darling, and who was my roommate at the time was doing-- was into comedy, kept doing stand-up and was just like-- kept being like “you should come to open mic. You should come to open mic.” And I was like “I don’t know... No, I should.” At this point, I had studied acting. So my undergrad degree-- I had gotten the Bachelor of Fine Art. That’s what they tell you the F is for. [Laughter]

Lovemore: I could tell you the F is for.

Reddy: Bachelor of Fucking Art. In acting, in theatre. So I was a performer, but I had never done stand up. Anyway, so I went out one night. The first night I went out I didn’t actually get to go up on stage because our roommate-- Arturo, who had just graduated from Yale’s graduate program in acting got into a bike accident-- like a massive, huge accident. So that was my first-- that was my intro to stand up. It was like my life on fire. [Laughter]. Like in real-time. But then I eventually went back, and I was like “okay, I can do this.” But it was-- it still is lots of bros, lots of bros, lots of bros. So you know, I always have to take my time with it and I see it more as a place for me to also work on my craft and generate material. I don’t know that I’m like a stand-- I’m not pigeonholing myself is all I’m saying. I can’t wait to do some bigger gigs, can’t wait to have some larger audiences... but also it’s like I’m not like “I’m a stand-up comedian and that’s my thing.” And it’s cool, some people are like that. But um, that was my intro. And then as I started to transition, it was also like I stopped acting as much because acting is still very like siloed, and it’s getting better, ah ba ba ba. [Laughter] But still very siloed. Not just binary, siloed. It’s like tight,

tight, tight, tight, tight, tight, tight. You know? [Laughter] So, I was just like I can't keep up, and also don't know where I fit in, but I know that I can make my own. I can tell my-- I'm the act. So if I keep doing stand-up, like I can perform all the time, and I don't never have to be nobody's type except my own. And then people can see me, and they can decide, like "okay, that person would be great for this, et cetera et cetera." So for me, it's a way to put myself out there and be seen, and maybe I'll discover what my type is. Or maybe I'll create a type because I feel like that is the new; that's the new-new. It's like people are putting themselves out there and everyone is looking for something new. And now we have platforms where people can see what you're doing and what you're about.

Lovemore: I love your stand-up, when you did it at the pull up last year.

Reddy: Yeah, that was an interesting show [Laughter].

Lovemore: Did media play a part in your self-expression? Or does media play a part in your self-expression?

Reddy: Yeah. I mean, I feel like it used to play more of a-- I mean it does play because it exists, right? Either you're using it, or you're not using it, but either way, most people don't have a choice other than to make a choice about it. You know, if you're like-- here we are in los Estados Unidos, either you see it and engage or see it and don't engage. But either way, you made your choice. So, yes. [Laughter] I feel like-- and in both ways, sometimes it's like I use media as a way to express myself to the world, to put myself into the world. Sometimes I use media as a way to take things in. Growing up, I think it was always difficult because I didn't see myself in media, and I think that is actually part of what propelled me to want to be someone who created things. Because I wanted to see myself and I knew I existed. And I'm like if I exist, then other people like me exist, you know? So why is this so unbalanced? Part of what interested me as an artist was always about being able to create that balance... and art is also the way that I am able to make sense of the world. So there's also that. But you know, the media is... media is one thing, media is like its own thing. And then there's like how people use, and interact with, and consume it. You know? It definitely plays a part in-- was it my expression? My self-expression, yeah. And as I get older I'm able to use it as more of a tool, rather than be... overcome by it. Yeah... but I watch it too. And you got to watch it. You gotta watch what is being put out here just so you can be aware. It is the matrix because you got to remember that it is the matrix, but like not get sucked into it. But it is important. You do have to know what is going on. Know what's happening in the tunnels. [Laughter]

Lovemore: You have to find balance with it.

Reddy: I think it can be-- that's exactly it. It is useful and it is meaningful and that is why-- that's why I'm mindful of it...

Lovemore: Who would you say influenced you? Or influences you? Currently, or influenced you in the past?

Reddy: There's been so many influences. Can you be more specific? Like influenced me as an artist or as--

Lovemore: Yeah, as an artist.

Reddy: Okay... I have lots of influences... I like so many different people. You know, the first thing that came to my head was all of the nineties R&B. [Laughter] All nineties-- Nineties R&B. Black people making music in the nineties. Like oh my goodness, Brandy [Norwood], Monica [Denise Arnold], Aaliyah [Dana Haughton], the Fugees. Yeah, music-- I think music is a big influence in like... I feel like-- when people are like "you're trapped on a deserted island and what's one album? And I'm like the Fugees' first album was-- that was one of the first times I remember being like "I am an artist," because I felt that album. You know?

Lovemore: It's a soul album, that's why. I can understand.

Reddy: Yes, and I was young. I remember being like I'm so young, but this makes perfect sense to me. You know, and like then I remember my mom being like-- my mom is listening to this and it makes perfect sense to her. I saw the connection of like, intergenerationally how something can talk to everybody and how art can be universal. So I feel like-- all of the music that came out during that decade... I was also born in '84, so that was my decade and I feel like all the music-- was always like heavily influenced by music. I remember I had whatever those magazines were, that we used to get that were just posters basically. [Laughter]

Lovemore: I know "Write On." I used to sell posters, that's why I know "Write On," "B?" Something like that?

Reddy: Yes! I used to buy those and that was up all over-- up all over my room.

Lovemore: I was a hustler. I was selling them to the kids at my school.

Reddy: And Shakespeare. Strangely enough, I was introduced to Shakespeare when I was in like the fourth grade, and then it kind of-- the idea of heightened language. That was my first introduction to it, but I remember just always being like "oh yeah, there's a... there's an art to art. [Laughter]. That's what Shakespeare helped teach me. And then there's like, I got introduced that fourth grade and it was-- you always had to do some kind of Shakespeare unit, throughout all of the... So I felt like heightened, classical language actually, yeah; it was a huge influence even though I have my feelings about that now. But that type of writing... poetry... the idea of verse... melody... being introduced to those ideas as an artist is just... Again, there's an art to being an artist, and let me figure out what is my process. I remember I started writing when I was in like the fifth or sixth grade.

Lovemore: So when you say writing, you write music? You write songs?

Reddy: I just write. First and foremost, I write stream of consciousness writing, poetry... I'm starting to write songs, I just started to write songs. Someone asked me like a few months ago now. They were like "what's something you've always wanted to do and never done?" And I was like "actually, I've always wanted to make a rap album; I've always wanted to do like a hip-hop album. I got these bars." [Laughter]

Lovemore: Word? Word? Got these bars? I want to hear this. Seriously.

Reddy: I got these bars. I was like "yeah I got some bars," you know. But yeah, poetry, and I've just started writing plays. I'm writing two plays right now... And then, I feel like stand-up is writing, so I feel like I wrote all of my stand-up. Even though sometimes it was just me talking, oftentimes it was not. [Laughter] It was like I had done the talking beforehand and I had composed it, and then you got to, kind of like, DJ. Being on stand-up is like you got the song, but you got to [screeching noise], because otherwise, they're like, "we could've just played the album." So you got to freaky-freaky. [Laughter]

Lovemore: I like the sound effects. [Noise]

Reddy: Clearly music, it's always... I think in music. [Laughter]

Lovemore: I hear that. I can tell. [Noise and laughter]. I hear that... You've lived a lot of places. Which area or which place honors language the best for you?

Reddy: Honors language the best... I mean New York, come on.

Lovemore: But you also lived in Chicago...

Reddy: That's true, but I'm like language? Like this is-- I mean in terms of the United States, cause also I haven't left the United States but, um... I feel like yeah. Because it's like-- here it's like every language, and it's every language spoken by black people. You can go to LA and there's lots of French people there, but you come to New York and it's lots of people speaking French who are black. [Laughter] You know? So it's like there's a difference. There are people speaking Spanish who are black, you know so it's like you get almost every-- you get almost every language and you get black people speaking every language, which to me is like "yeah, that's... that's it for me." But the coast... The coast in general because they're coast. So you get people coming in from everywhere, but I feel like, in places I've lived, New York has been like-- the sound of New York is just an amalgamation of voices speaking in different languages. That's so cool. It's so unique.

Lovemore: I love that. What do you feel is the biggest threat -- I'm changing it a little bit. What do you feel is the biggest threat to black folks? Or black folks of trans experience?

Reddy: You know, I saw that. I saw that. I was like "damn, what is the biggest threat..." Because I'm like damn, there are like... there are like the environmental threats, and then there's the internal threat; I'm like which one is bigger? You know? [Wheeze]

Lovemore: Yeah, I know. We're going to think to you, at this moment, right now.

Reddy: I feel like it always has to be whatever is inside. I feel like the internal negativity, the internal doubt, the internal fear. I feel like that's always... because that determines whether or not you win or lose in a crucial moment. Definitely. And the winning and the losing is not about what happens, it's about how you feel. Right? So you're keeping your own record, so you only gotta answer to you. Nobody else has to answer to you at the end of the day. You got to answer to you at the end of the day. You know what I mean? So you gotta look at yourself and be like "this is how I felt about it." [Laughter] So, I think you have the inner, the inner, the inner negativity is really the biggest threat. Because it comes out to, also, like that's how you respond to things, that's also-- I think doubting ourselves, not valuing ourselves, not taking care of ourselves... Those are the biggest threats... And then, you know, all the other bullshit.

Lovemore: [Laughter] All the outside, all the outside things.

Reddy: In the environment. But you know, the reality of humanity is like the environment has always been trying to kill us. And not to take away from what is actually happening, but just to

say like okay, yeah, I would've been like "aw, all the shit that's happening is the biggest threat." But it's like no, the environment has always been trying to kill us. Always, right? You know, so the biggest threat really is what's happening on-- in the internal world, and it's the biggest threat because it's also the thing that like if we break through it, is the biggest help-- it's that thing that is going to propel us the furthest. So it's like, it's that same energy, but the inverse of it. So, that's why to me, that's the bigger, if I have to pick the biggest one... But the environment is always trying to kill us. It's like... you can take that as a fact of life if you want to. [Laughter] That's how I try to look at it.

Lovemore: What is your favorite thing about being black?

Reddy: My favorite thing... it's like I want it to be like being immortal! [Laughter]

Lovemore: That's a fact too. [Laughter]

Reddy: Hello? Yeah I mean I think it is-- Honestly, if I had to become academic about it, I would say [Laughter] it is the fact that I am able to identify, trace a line back to... what I would feel like is my original self. And that I have the actual proof in this lifetime that I was that nigga in the temples in Egypt, you know what I mean? Like, it was me. [Laughter] Those are my people... like legit. The beginning of civilization. The fact that in this lifetime I can say I know I am of African descent and I know that this is where my people came from actually. I feel like it's a huge privilege. It is a privilege that white people have had for a very long time, and their shit is intact. So I'm like, "all we know is that we black" and that's most of what we know anyway. But it's like "oh yeah," that is actually a huge-- that is a huge benefit to us. To know, and to know with accuracy. We might not know all the nuances, but we know we can look back and be like "that's where we came from."

Lovemore: Word. What is your favorite thing about being a person of trans experience?

Reddy: Being a person of trans experience? [Laughter] Once again, what, do you know what it's like to be? I feel like being unbound, being unlimited, and really being able to live a life and walk a path that-- where I can say, that is my path. You know, it's not an idea; it's not philosophical. Like for real, for real, I can transverse. You know? I can change, I can move, I can-- I got shades, I got hues, I got... spectrums. I am unlimited.

Lovemore: Absolutely... we touched on it-- not really, we didn't touch on it. What does family look like to you, future planning? Development.

Reddy: Yeah, you know, I really do want a small cozy family. Honestly... I'm like-- my partner and I constantly go through this back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. [Laughter] Because I'm very nonmonogamous, but I'm not actually very polyamorous. I actually-- in my ideal scenario, mostly because like... I'm kind of introverted, and I wasn't always. I used to not be, but I've realized I'm drained now. Maybe this-- and I feel like this is one of the things that people were like "I went on T and all of these things changed," and I have a friend whose name is T, and we constantly have this conversation where we're like, you know, we always want to point at something, and be like it's because of this... So there are moments where I'll be like, because of the T, then I'm like maybe it's your life. [Laughter]

Lovemore: I do the same thing. I feel you!

Reddy: You know you talk about being aggy, and I'm like yeah; some people are like "oh, well maybe it's because I'm on testosterone. And I'm like "maybe it's just because you're aggravated." [Laughter]

Lovemore: Maybe it's that. No seriously, sometimes it's figured out.

Reddy: But I think the fact that we do that process is important. But you know, I... I do have-- I guess my vision is like yeah, I want a smaller closer knit. Because energetically, it's like I am more introverted, and I need more time to recharge, and being around lots of people is actually exhausting for me, now. And it used to not be. It used to be more energizing, but now, it's just not. And it might change again, but right now, when I look for it, I'm like actually, I don't want a whole bunch of [inaudible] running around my house. You know what I mean? [Laughter] I want to know that you're coming home... And sometimes, I admit it; I'm just a control freak. Or maybe this is just my way of trying to stay safe, but also there's preferences. I feel like future planning. It's like I could imagine having a smaller family, and then the extended family, the homies... I always want a community. I always want people to come-- to be coming over to house, I want family meals... I definitely want to have those moments as experiences, but I feel like my day to day life-- the people that I guess you could call my family, would be like the niggas I live with every day. It's like, my partner and my kids... And maybe some animals... and everyone else on occasion basis only. By invite only. [Laughter] Like, first of all, you already know you have to travel to get to me because you already know I'm going to be up in the woods somewhere where you can't see me, can't find me, nowhere I'm at. With my farm, oh and my fresh water supply. Okay? Don't get it twisted. [Laughter] And like yes, but I do want the homies like ten to fifteen minutes away. Like, up the road. There's Lovemore's farm over there; AYE!

Lovemore: I need a farm, so yes.

Reddy: Right, so yeah. [Laughter].

Lovemore: Okay, so what does legacy mean to you and how are you laying bricks down today to build it?

Reddy: I mean, I think legacy is day to day. It's moment to moment. It's like it's right here. This is my legacy. It's the time that I share with people. Because I feel like that's all you really have... If watching people die for the last year has taught me anything, it's that this is the moment-- Now is forever. It's not like I'm like there is no future, but it's about coming into the present and being like your legacy is literally what you're doing right now with-- with your life. You know, what you choose to do moment to moment, how you choose to be with people. And I think for me, more broadly, my legacy is about-- is about people; is about connecting to people. I have so much faith in humanity, actually... and so, I feel like I'm so righteous because of that, actually. That's where it comes from. People have called me judgmental, and blah blah blah. Yeah. I mean, I have judgments, hell yeah. I'm a human being. [Laughter] Like, what the hell? You know it's like, when people say that-- I'm like people say that like this is a bad thing. I'm like, at least I'm discerning, I'm discerning... But it's because, I do believe-- I believe so much in humanity and I also have so much faith in us. And I'm like we gotta just like there's just some shit we gotta do. Shit's about to hit the fan y'all. So you believe in the sanctity of humanity, or you don't. I don't believe in the sanctity of humanity over everything else because I is inclusive... of the environment and of the world, but at the same time, it's like yeah, I focus on people because that's who I am. [Laughter]. I am people. I feel like my legacy is definitely about humanity and our potential-- that's the other thing. People are so limited and I'm like, damn, you know? I'm not joking when I say when I say my favorite thing about being trans is being trans. It really is because I'm like-- I understand what it means to-- to actually manifest unlimited potential. And I know that if I can do it, then everyone else has the same. So we could really be on some real cool shit. You know what I'm saying? If people could get over-- get out. Y'all get out, y'all get out of your boxes. [Laughter] If you could get out of these boxes! We could really be out here floating. Levitating, we could handle the basics of the-- I could use my time for something valuable... like orgasms. You know? [Laughter]

Lovemore: I would prefer to do that-- to experience that a lot more.

Reddy: Instead of trying to figure out fucking hunger. Why are we trying to figure out how to feed people? We live on a Earth. We live on a Earth! We won by living on an Earth. We don't-- we should not be trying to figure out how we going to feed people, hm. I don't know, there are like these massive oceans, and like, there's all this land. [Laughter] What do you know?

Lovemore: Especially when we waste so much things... so much food too. You know what I'm saying? So I hear you on that.

Reddy: So what's really going on... yeah, it's like, legacy is really about the present moment I think.

Lovemore: Okay, um when do you feel the most alive and joyful? What are you doing and who are you with?

Reddy: Feel the most alive and joyful when I'm dancing with the homies. Or even by myself actually. But yeah, when I'm moving, when I'm dancing. When I'm playing the taiko drums, I play taiko drums. I'm a member of a Buddhist organization called Soka Gakkai International and... I play taiko with them. It's like the drums, but then it's also a fake base activity. It's like we're all Buddhists and we're all there because we are connected through this practice of Buddhism. But, in Buddhism, it's like nothing is separate, right? So ultimately, it's like us showing up to play the drums is also about us showing up to break through whatever obstacles we have going on in our personal lives, whatever obstacles are going on in society, you know? It's not just like oh, we're in a cool group, we're in a cool musical group. It is a cool musical group, but also, it's a cool musical group full of people who are determined to be their best selves. And that's what I've loved about being in this organization. I feel like I grew up in this organization because I started practicing when I was twenty-three. So it's like I was still-- I was a kid. [Laughter] And now I'm thirty-five. So you know, I feel like it is-- I've met so many different types of people at so many different places in their lives, and everybody there is still aiming for the next thing. Nobody is settling. No one's like "oh I got a nice house, I got a car, I got kids, whatever, I'm good." Everyone is like, "no, what else can I do? Like my shit's good? Good, now maybe I can go out in society and contribute more to society. Oh, now I'm contributing to society? Maybe I can"-- you know? Like everybody-- young, old, rich, poor. Everyone is striving to be their best. I feel, you know, my most alive when I'm playing with them because it's like-- it's the integrated. Cause and effect. I'm making this cause, I'm doing-- I'm being physical, I'm playing music, I'm doing something I love doing, and I'm also doing it for myself to break through my own stuff, and I'm also doing it with people doing the same thing. And together we're determined to help other people be able to do the same thing in their lives. And that feels powerful so...

Lovemore: I was going to ask you, but you already answered that question. If time, money, or energy were not a factor, what would you go after if you knew it would succeed?

Reddy: Sleep! [Laughter] Nigga, what? I would use all my energy to go back to bed. You know I'm a Taurus.

Lovemore: True, and you love to sleep, y'all love y'all slumber.

Reddy: What would I go if time, energy and what was the last one?

Lovemore: If time, money or energy were not a factor, what would you go after if you knew it would succeed?

Reddy: I mean, I'd probably would do things like try to climb Mt. Everest actually. Like, I would probably put my time and my energy into training actually. Yeah. I like extreme environments. Survival is my calling, like I was born in a trap. So I'm like "I've been at it for a minute now!" And for a while, those survival instincts were not adequately placed in a situation that made sense. So I would be walking into situations where people wanted to support me with a survivor mentality unnecessarily. Not unnecessarily, but like what do I do with this energy? Because this is what I-- this is how I was raised. I trained my mind to be this kind of a person so now what do I do with it? So now it's like yeah I like to do things like hike and do extreme, and I like extreme environments because you got to survive in them. It's not just about being there and taking pretty pictures and seeing something cool, it's like you got to survive that shit first. So, you know, and I'm not like-- I don't know, there are some people who I feel like would describe themselves as extreme. I guess I don't necessarily feel like I would need to be extreme; that's why I would spend all of my time training for it. You know? I would spend the rest of my life training to climb Everest.

Lovemore: Yeah, you're going to need the training.

Reddy: Exactly. [Laughter] So yeah, I'd definitely go after like, remote places-- places people don't get to often, like-- yeah. I would do the training to scuba dive all the way down. I would do that kind of shit. I might still do it! [Laughter]

Lovemore: I mean, you still have time, you still have time.

Reddy: Exactly.

Lovemore: A few more questions, just to give you a little heads up. What do you hope for in the future for people who live, look, and love-- live, look, love and express themselves like you?

Reddy: Aw, so much joy. Joy and healing, ooh. So much healing, you know? So much healing. Honestly. I have this conversation with myself all the time, and sometimes I have it with other people too where I'm like "am I ever going to feel healed?" And what I've learned and realized is

that healing is a journey. It is not a destination, but I want it to be a destination, actually. I have a vision for a future for people who are not born broken, who are not born into a world where they have to enact this process of healing because they're hurt, because they're traumatized. So that it's not about healing, it's just living. Like what we call healing should really just be life. You know? It's healing because of all the things that are happening around us. And so, I envision a future of health. Of being able to step into a world where they're not constantly or right away trying to undo what is being done. It's-- yeah. Enough is enough. The Earth is utopia if we want it to be. We could literally be chilling. It is the Garden of Eden, whatever. I don't even like Christian philosophy, but whatever. You know what I mean? Like whatever-- however you need to idealize it to understand that it is this precious thing and that we could be chilling in it. [Laughter] That's what my point is.

Lovemore: Any advice for your younger self?

Reddy: How young? [Laughter]

Lovemore: You're thirty-five now? Let's say twenty-year-old Jackson.

Reddy: Oh wow, twenty-year-old Jackson-- well, I wasn't Jackson at twenty. But my twenty-year-old self, I'd probably say like... find a trade. [Laughter]. You know what I mean? Because my twenty-year-old self was in college and thinking that-- and just was focused on wanting to be an artist and didn't understand the art of being an artist, even though it's in the game that I was really coming out into. And also, I got into a college, try to tell these youngsters, I got into a college at a time where shit was hitting the fan in the US. it was 2006, it was right when the housing market started to crash, Wall Street started to crash, Bush was still in office, this is pre-Obama, there were no-- the first smartphone was just out. There were no app jobs. So we didn't have shit coming out of college.

Lovemore: You have a really good memory talking about something like this. [Laughter]

Reddy: Because I remember this shit because I lived through it. And when I was going through it, people were like "wah wah wah", and I was like, listen, you don't understand; we're out here. I look back and it's amazing we survived. [Laughter] I don't know how I did it, you know? I have no idea how I did it. And I was an artist, at that. I feel like I would be like yo, just know that the hustle is about to be so for real and like, you're going to be an artist no matter what, but like-- get your square so that you're not constantly having to be thrown around. But that's what your twenties are for. I was moving around all over the place. I was here, I was there, I was-- you know. So I don't regret that time, but I look at people who are younger than me now and who have a bit

more of a support system and I didn't. Maybe that would be the advice, is like, really, legitimize, like find a real support system. I didn't even know what support looked like when I was twenty. You know? I had never had it. Go to therapy. Go to therapy and stay in therapy. I went to therapy and didn't stay in it. Stay in therapy. Stay in therapy, and if you don't like your therapist, then stay with that one until you find another one. And you treat it like all of your other shitty relationships, okay? [Laughter] But, keep going. Get acupuncture, focus on healing, and keep dancing. Keep dancing, for sure. Keep dancing. Drink less.

Lovemore: Drink less?

Reddy: Drink less alcohol. I survived, but I didn't need to drink that much. [Laughter] Yup.

Lovemore: That's what the twenties are for. You learn, you learn. Um, and you know how we do it, Black Trans TV. Five things you love about yourself Jackson.

Reddy: Yes! Five things. I love my sense of humor, I love my authenticity, I love my candor, I love my skin, I love... where am I at? Four? Am I at four? I love my food.

Lovemore: You did say that. Well, thank you, Jackson. Is there anything else-- any last words you'd like to? It's in the archive so...

Reddy: Um, yeah. No last words. I'm so happy this is an archive... Like this is a huge deal. It's a big deal because as a trans person growing up, whatever... Still growing up, I look back and I'm angry sometimes actually at the shit that I don't know. I'm like, damn, how is it not possible that people weren't talking about Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera? They were human rights activists, and they didn't have shit either. And there was no glory. You know what I mean? They weren't even human rights people like "ooh yay." Like, MLK, X, people were like-- they at least had fans. But Marsha P.? Sylvia? They have nobody.

Lovemore: This is more like recent history for us now, we're just-- a lot of folks are just learning about this now in 2019. Almost fifty-something years later.

Reddy: I'm like, wow, and this was going down when all kinds of other things were going down, and that's the other part. But nobody-- But where was it? I didn't see it. So I'm like wow, it's huge that they're doing this and that there's an archive now. That people can literally just like be-- go online, whatever, and hear these stories is incredible. So I'm grateful, thank you.

Lovemore: No, thank you for being with us and for sharing your story with the New York Trans-- the New York City Trans Oral History Project. It's kind of long, but yes. Thank you for sharing your time with us and I loved having your story shared with us, thank you.