

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

JEAUX HENRY

Interviewer: Sir Knight

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Transcribed by Grace Leitner (volunteer)

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Sir Knight: Hello, my name is Sir Knight and I will be having a conversation with Jeaux—

Jeaux Henry: Well hey, what's going on y'all.

Knight: 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 around the experiences of the trans-identifying people. It is May 22, 2019, and this is being recorded at Mid-Manhattan Library. Jeaux, we're just so happy to have you here. Um, the New York City Trans Oral Project is a community archive of transgender resilience, resistance, and survival in New York City. Black Trans TV's goal is to share the narratives of people who love, live, and look like us. This interview will be a collaboration between Black Trans TV and the New York Public Library to highlight the brilliant oral history of black folk's trans experience. So, can you please start with your name and your pronouns.

Henry: Yeah. Absolutely, my name is Jeaux, and my pronouns are they/them/theirs for anyone not black, and bruh/fam for those who are.

Knight: Sounds good. So, I just wanted to start with, what visibility looks like to you and why it's important, especially as a black trans individual.

Henry: Good question. I think, essentially what I think about visibility, I think about what I went through as a youth, and how I didn't know that there were people like me, who looked like me, and thought the way that I did, for a very very long time and it, it created a barrier between me and my identity. I couldn't really pierce through the wall that was just heteronormativity, and also it was hard for me to actually visualize what my future could look like and what my future could be. So when I think about visibility now, and the work that I do, it's really important to be able to provide that opportunity for people to see themselves at a really early age, so they can grow up and be who they feel that they are inside, and not necessarily what other people tell them that they should be.

Knight: Great. Um, how was baby Jeaux? Can you describe baby Jeaux so we can see it with you, and experience how baby Jeaux was feeling navigating gender and sexuality and all that stuff. So just take me down a road. [Laughter]

Henry: For sure, baby Jeaux was essentially was... a kid with a headful of hair, twisty braids or twists in, um... at a very early age an ability to distinctively decide what they wanted for themselves. For a long time, I mean for as long as I can remember, specifically, I've always been queer, I've always been just a different kind of kid. I wasn't really into, like, boys at a really young age, I was always kind of really just on my own path, doing my own thing, mostly identifying in ways that the boys were identifying. Wanting to play ball, and do all the things that the boys, the little boys did. And so, obviously, because of that, my parents and my great grandparents, who were the ones raising me, were directly combating that, trying to steer me in the right path of what it meant to be a little girl when I never really identified as such. So I think, essentially, from

my early ages to my teenage years, it was essentially me just trying to resist, um, essentially completely and always had been me resisting whatever my parents were saying, whatever society was saying, whatever my teachers were saying, about what I could and could not do. As I got into my teenage years, or even like just preteen or whatever like twelve, thirteen...you know, fourteen, I remember just being very confused as to why I had to do the things that I was told I had to do. I remember stuffing clothes inside of my backpack, I remember, I remember even as early as like fourth grade, identifying when I, I remember this day, it was a brand new school, I switched schools a lot, so this was a brand new school. I had a fresh outfit: fresh pair of jeans, fresh T-shirt, my dad had just bought me some Jordans. So essentially, I looked...I did not look like a girl. Nothing about me was feminine presenting, I had my hair in individual braids, so I kinda looked like Lil' Bow Wow, and so a lot of people, when I came, I remember coming to the school, all the the girls turned their head, this is life in fourth grade I will never forget, and they looked at me, and I remember someone saying "Ooh he fine, that's Lil' Bow Wow," and I felt so proud, I felt so excited, I felt like wow they think I'm Lil' Bow Wow, I could definitely pull this off. And so I did, for like a whole week I never went to the bathrooms with the girls, I just kinda stuck, like just "I don't need to go to the bathroom," or if it was my turn I would just go. I was taking chances, and risks, and going to the boy's bathroom and just going into the stall, um, and it wasn't until...I had them call me, I forgot what they had them call me, I feel like it was Jordan or something like that, and I asked my teacher if they could call me Jordan, but because this is the south, it didn't last long. Eventually my teachers told my mother I was passing, for a little boy, [laughter], and that I was like, telling girls I was a little boy, and I definitely got it for that, my mother was not happy, was not pleased. Ever since that moment, she was always just checking me, checking my clothes, checking what I was wearing. And so it wasn't until I got into my teenage years, where, my mother didn't really have the energy at that point, I had a lot of siblings, so I was able to kind of get away with a lot more. Um, in my earlier years, and then as I got into like high school high school, like 10th grade, 11th grade, that's when I really started breaking out and just really doing my own thing. Myspace was available at that point, so I was seeing a whole bunch of different people who looked like me, I was seeing like, femmes and femme women like, coming through and like, hitting me up and being interested in what I was doing and they really thought I was cute, and like, that was like a whole, I would spend so much, because of that, because I didn't really experience that in my reality, in my immediate reality, I would spend at least ten hours a day on Myspace. All of my time was dedicated to the internet, connecting with people who looked like me, seeing that ohh I was, I thought that, now at this point I thought that I was Juelz Santana! I thought, I thought that I was some G [Gangster], I thought, that I was wearing my long tees, I was wearing my bandana, and my mother was, you can imagine her like melt, like her face just like melting anytime I came downstairs ready to go to school. So, yeah it was a lot of me just, her resisting, checking my backpack, "No you can't wear that," "No you can't do that," "Why are you dressing like this," "What are you doing," "Are you gay," I don't know. It was a lot of, like, "I don't know." But then it got to a point I remember, on my 15th birthday, I realized that I was. And the first person I told was my father, because he was my biological father, he was the person I was the most disconnected to, so I didn't actually care what he thought either way. The crazy thing is, I told him I was gay, and he, well yeah it sounds like "I'm gay," because that's just what you say, "I'm gay." And he just took a step back, and he was like, "Well you know...your

grandmother's gay too." And I was like "What?" I didn't have no clue! No clue, no clue, whatsoever. And I was like "What?" He's like "Yeah." I was like—

Knight: Like, why didn't y'all tell me?

Henry: Like, why didn't y'all tell me? That would have changed everything! Going back to visibility like, that would have changed, the dynamic of what thoughts I had, I respected my grandmother immensely, so that would have changed the whole dynamic of who I thought I was, what I could do, what I could be.

Knight: Are you close with your grandmother now?

Henry: Well she passed but I, I was close to her. Not as close as I wanted to be, but definitely close to her. And after I came out, she kinda took me under her wing, and introduced me to all of her dyke friends, and like...we was all sitting on the porch drinking beers. It was really, it was a really good experience. But, so yeah, as I got a little bit older, into my 17-18, I dropped out of school when I was...um, in 11th grade, so I was probably 17 at that point, a full fledged dyke, couldn't tell me nothing, rainbow shirts, rainbow belt, rainbow hat, rainbow sneakers [laughter], rainbow everything. Talking to any girl that looked at me like, I was feeling myself. My mother didn't know what to do, she was just, you know, I ended up dropping out of school and just really...from there, I went to Job Corps, which is like, it could be a vocational training program, it's a government initiated program for people who want to go, young kids and young adults who want to go and get their GED [General Education Development] or high school diploma and/or trade, so I went down there. Dykes, everywhere. Gay people everywhere. Without abandon, everyone was doing whatever they wanted to do. Because their parents weren't there, it was an extremely eye-opening experience for me, that's when I had my first official girlfriend, for real for real, and it made me realize I never wanted to go back to what I was doing before, pretending or trying to fight, I knew that, after that moment, I was 17 when I was down there, I told myself when I was 18 I was gonna move out, I was gonna do whatever I wanted to do, I was not gonna go back living in my mother's house, and so ever since... I graduated, did my thing, got my own apartment and I've been dyking ever since! I've been doing my own thing, doing what I want, and I think essentially my whole childhood has been me resisting, doing exactly what I wanted to do, finding out more information about how I can be my best me, my truest me, and even now into my late 20's we still at em, we still doing that.

Knight: Yeah, so resistance. That was, literally about to ask about that so that was a perfect segue. So, do you feel like, you were called to do the work you're doing now. Right? Like I know you created Black Boi Complex, right, and I truly believe that that platform, we'll have you tell people more about that, that platform is an act of resistance.

Henry: Yeah.

Knight: So, could you tell us more about Black Boi Complex, and how you came to get to that point. Right? Cause you dropped out of school, went to Job Corps, how did you get to Black Boi Complex and what is Black Boi Complex?

Henry: Alright, word. Yeah, I'll say how I got to Black Boi Complex first, because that kind of shaped what Black Boi Complex was. So, I mean, essentially all my life, well not all my life, so after I moved out I joined, I wanted to get more into the community. I grew up in Atlanta, by the way, just to provide a little bit more context, which is honestly, the black gay Mecca. That's where you go when you want black and gay. Gay and Lesbian, it's not necessarily the most queer-friendly place, trans-friendly place, but people are there, people are doing their thing and living, and when it comes time to celebrate every Sunday, everyone's at Piedmont Park, we're all one, we're doing our thing, having a good time. I kinda just went headfirst into the community, that was really something that resonated with me, it felt more like my family than my family felt like my family, I continued to do that, I joined, um, I joined like a house, and...from there I realized that I had a passion for getting my people together, putting on events, things that they would enjoy, providing safe spaces, I was one of the, as someone who moved out when they were 18, I was one of the only people in my age group who had their own apartment. Everyone was at my house all the time, I was always feeding people. So I was always gathering people in community. As I, when I left Atlanta, moved to New Jersey, it was me just trying to figure things out, early 20's, so that kind of was a blur, dating all kinds of people, but then as I, in my mid-twenties I moved to Boston, and that's when I really felt that first hit. That's when I felt the hit of racism, that's when I felt the hit of just feeling like I didn't see a space for myself, Boston was one of the worst and best things that have ever happened to my life. It provided a breakthrough for me to realize exactly what I wanted, and what I didn't want. So when I was in Boston, it was extremely white spaces everywhere, even the black spaces that we specifically said work for black people, or that specifically were for black people, were still somehow penetrated by whiteness, and it didn't make me, it made me feel unsafe. Specifically coming from Atlanta, where everyone's black all around me, I don't even go to school with white people, to Jersey where it's a little bit multicultural but if I don't want to be around white people I kinda don't have to be, then going from Boston where like, that's it, there's just no way to escape... [laughter]. There's no way to escape whiteness, and its oppressive hold. And like, even white people who want to do real good, still like sometimes...um...

Knight: Penetrate.

Henry: Penetrate, that's essentially what it is. They put themselves in positions to where, they're like helping but they're not helping because they're there, so it was really, it was really hard for me to deal with. So, I was seeing a whole bunch of spaces, specifically lesbian spaces. If they were black, they were like lesbian spaces...and gay men spaces, and like queer spaces but that's where all the white people were, so I was thinking well, I want a space that's for me. I want a space where I can find some bros, where I can like hang out and kick it and talk about my experiences, that are specifically only for black people. And this was around the time where Instagram was like blowing up, and I started to seek that, through Instagram. And I remember...thinking like well what if I just create a space? What if I create a virtual space where people can come and talk?

What if I make it Instagram, and I just go and try to find anyone who looks like me, because I was also going through, my gender identity was switching, I was finding out that I actually didn't feel like a woman, I didn't really identify as a woman, and I was seeing myself as...on a different part of the spectrum now and, dealing with a whole bunch of issues that I wasn't really getting answers to my questions, and I remember Bklyn Boihood, even when I used to live in Jersey, was always a safe space for me. I remember that's where I found a lot of different people who looked like me, acted like me, dressed like me, liked the same music I liked, back when listening to Little Dragon was weird. [Laughter] Stuff like that, I saw people who looked like me but I wasn't seeing that anywhere, I was like Bklyn Boihood is dope, but it's not specifically black people. And that's cool, that's their lane, but I think I wanna make something kinda like what Bklyn Boihood has but only for black people, and I remember that being the beginning. And so now, we're like two, three years later, Black Boi Complex is now a really great opportunity for people to come together in spaces and community specifically black masculine of center folks. But we accept, masculinity is a spectrum. You can sit anywhere on masculinity, but specifically for people who present their masculinity, on a day to day basis, because we share very specific experiences. So yeah, I just call it a virtual safe space, where black masculine of center LGBTQAI folks can go and like, be free, be vulnerable, be authentic, talk, be amongst community, essentially just find freedom. So that's what Black Boi Complex is.

Knight: I love it. And didn't you actually start as a WhatsApp text group, when you were searching for people?

Henry: Actually, the WhatsApp came later, because someone said "Oh, I saw on twitter that, people were forming groups," and I was like, well, how can we come together and make sure that WhatsApp, that we can communicate together as a community? So, that's why I created the WhatsApp.

Knight: Gotcha. Because I just remembered that, not really sure where that came from.

Henry: Yeah, that came after. It's still there, it's still going, you know how WhatsApp goes sometimes. It just goes dead, and sometimes it's live! I don't know.

Knight: For sure, for sure. Um, speaking of Black Boi Complex, what does legacy mean to you, and how are you laying bricks down today, in order to build, create that legacy? Right? So where do you see Black Boi complex perhaps in like five, ten, fifteen, twenty years, if it continues or is it just a starting point for you to branch off into something else?

Henry: Wow, that's a good question. I think about that, like, that's the question that keeps me up at night. Because I think about legacy a lot and what legacy means to me, specifically even like, the legacy that I was left with, being my great grandfather's great grandchild, and having all these, you know, having the estate and all this art that he left me, I think about what that means and how I'm set up for life, in a way, and I really want, when I think about legacy for myself I really want to be able to do that for other people, I want to be able to set the children up, to set people up who aren't children, and just might need a little bit of help or access, I want to set

them up for life! I want to provide them opportunities, I want to...to be able to give back, in a way that is substantial and sustainable for years and years and years.

Knight: I love that answer, that's a good answer. I feel the same way, that's why [laughter] Black Trans TV, it's a lot of work, a lot of energy, so how do you find balance with the work and self care?

Henry: What's that? To be honest, it's what's that, I don't know. I'm still working on it, I feel like I jumped into Black Boi Complex before I jumped into self care, and what that really meant for me and what that looked like. So my first year with Black Boi Complex, was, I mean officially with Black Boi Complex on the books as something that people can go to, was really shaky for me, was really a shaky space. Essentially because I felt like I wasn't doing enough, and there, people weren't hitting me up, and social media can really twist your mind and make you feel a little worthless, essentially it was like a really dark time for me. But now, when it comes to self care, and Black Boi Complex and how I find the balance, I'm figuring that out and I'm sharing as I go, I think that's part of the journey of my vulnerability and being able to be authentic about me just sometimes not having time, sometimes not having space. I was actually just thinking on the way here, of all the things I need to do, and I told myself you know what Jeux, you need to put time on your calendar to make time for yourself. So that's essentially what I'm going to do as soon as I leave here, so I can finish my yard work and do what I have to do, yard work is self care for me. Also like, I try not to lean on my partner as much, as a femme, I don't want to be the type of person to just continuously dump, so just talking to my friends, and eating really good food right now. Any time that I can now, I'm just like man I need to center myself, and spend time with myself, and if that means I need to cook myself a meal, if that means I need to call a friend up, then that's what I'll do.

Knight: We're gonna take it another route, we're gonna talk about the community as a whole. Right? So black trans women are dying at an alarming rate, this week we had the murder of three more black trans women, how are you feeling about that? And I know that you don't identify as someone that is femme or femme-presenting, but being that people don't always see you as masc, right, masculine, so they see you in a feminine body, how are you feeling with that juxtaposition of identity, where it's like "I know who I am, I'm masculine," people might not read me as that, women that are, um, black and trans are being murdered, how does that work for Jeux? How are you healing and navigating this moment?

Henry: That's a good question. I...the first thing that I ever feel when I hear about black people in general, but specifically black trans women, because every...woman of trans experience that I know is absolutely, positively, phenomenally brilliant, it's like they have this angelic, and I don't want to, obviously I want to represent and respect the fact that they are human, but they also have this otherworldly thing about them that is just so special and should be preserved and honored, so when that life gets taken away from us, I feel incredibly heartbroken. Extremely angry, I literally just be thinking like "well, that means I need to get my gun license!" Which is on the works, I need to start busting back, I'm ready to die, I'm ready to go to jail for my sisters, I'm ready to go, let's go to war. And I don't know where to start, like where do I start with that? You

know, obviously with Black Boi Complex I tried, I share information and I try not to share too many things because I can understand that can be triggering for some place, for some people, and even specifically for me sharing black death is really hard. But I do try to keep people in the know, and also send people if they want more resources to the people who have them. But essentially, it's just well what do I do? I mean, essentially for me... I don't know how... and this might sound weird, but I don't know how to protect black trans women but I do know how to help them in their lives now. And I know who to give my money to, I know who to make sure has proper housing. That's important. I also always like to extend my home to black trans women, who might need a safe space, I keep it a buck. That's just what it is, I've got an extra spare bedroom, let's get you on your feet, let's do what we gotta do. And that's just how I am essentially with anything, so just as a resource for people, but essentially I get heartbroken, I get sad. When it comes to me, specifically, I have definitely been the victim of quite a few hate crimes when it comes to people and masculine folks, specifically cis men, black cis men, trying to attack me or attacking me, and dehumanizing me in a multitude of ways, specifically because... essentially they think that I'm their property. Because they think that I'm a woman. So, it's hard, like, dealing with that, knowing that they think that I'm a woman, and how dare I betray them, by being a dyke, and looking and being and loving the way that I do. And so I don't even like, and this is why I go by the word dyke, is because no one sees me any other way. I haven't begun transitioning, I'm really not interested in transitioning in a medical way. I don't have top surgery yet, so when people see me they see woman, some people even see me as femme depending on how I'm dressing and how I'm talking. Yeah, they talk to me, it feels weird having to navigate that type of space, because I don't identify as femme, I don't identify as woman, but because black cis men and cis men in general and society sees me as such, it's hard for me to be like, they see me as their property. Essentially, black women, whether they be women of trans experience or black cis women, is America's property, is America's bitch, America's dog. And so when I still experience, I'm still experiencing those things, it's really hard for me to feel like I have the power to fight back, that I have, sometimes I don't even have the energy to do that. But then when I step into my masculinity, and I assert myself, like "Hey don't talk to me like that," or like "Hey, I don't identify as that, it's not miss it's not ma'am it's not lady, it's none of that, you can just call me Jeux," I feel like I'm taking a little bit of power back, but right now it just... I'm just sad. I'm just sad, and I don't know what to do, besides give my money, share what I can, and love on the black women that are alive.

Knight: I resonate with that completely. Because I don't know what to do to stop them from being murdered, but...I know, they're so brilliant, they're magical and they deserve to live—

Henry: Yeah.

Knight: —But in that moment, I can't protect them, but I can help them thrive while they're living. So I think that's all that we can do, on top of checking when it comes to making jokes. You know, slurring, "Oh, well, that looks like a man," you know, calling them out of gender pronouns, purposely...no, that's not who we, you ain't doing that around me. So I think that's, the work never stops, we can't sleep, and that's just what it is. If I have to lose sleep, if I can't eat because a black trans woman needs resources, then that's just what it is. I always question, who and what

is the biggest threat to black people, and also to black trans queer folks, right? For me, I'm always thinking about white supremacy, the patriarchy, black cis men, but black cis men, their masculinity is a product of the patriarchy, product of white supremacy. But what do you feel, I guess, is the biggest threat and could you just tell me your thoughts on that?

Henry: Well I think it depends on where I am. It depends on where I am. If I'm in Manhattan, then it's gonna be a white man. I would say, to be real, if we're gonna be real real, the biggest threat is white women. Because they walk around with this cape on, that they're doing something and they're saving people, and white women hold a lot of keys, a lot of money, a lot of power, obviously not as much as white men, but if white women, if literally, if white women were to stop with the bullshit, stop aligning with patriarchy, start holding their white men accountable, a lot would be changed. Like if they decided that today, tomorrow would be a whole new day. I'm not expecting, to be fair I'm not expecting any man to save me, when it comes to my safety, but I think white women right now are the biggest threat because they're pretending. They're faking. At least I know where white men stand! Shit, like at least I know what's going on with them, like at least I know they want me dead! But white women, they'll sit there with they pink pussy hats, and they fist up in the air, and deadass be writing and putting laws into place that are trying to kill me. So, I think essentially, world wide right now my threat is white women, and then my next threat is anyone who aligns with white women. And then, I would say, essentially on my day to day? My next threat would be the black men, the black cis men, because that is, that's who I see all the time. Those are who I've had all my hateful interactions with, those are who have publicly, loudly, said they want to shoot me in the face, that they would want to kill me, that they want to hurt me, things like that, it's always been black men. So I think it depends on where I'm at, and what I'm looking at and the scope of where the threat is, but...yeah.

Knight: Yeah, I completely agree, I never really thought about it like that. That is a pretty crucial element to, I guess, the livelihood and the wellness of black folks in general, it's not even a trans thing it's just in general. What do you hope for, in the future, for people who live, look, and love, and express themselves like we do, and what are some things that perhaps we should implement as a people? I think sometimes, being pro-black is always amazing, it's necessary, white people need to be pro-black as well. But, what can we do collectively as a human race to move forward into a better production. So that's a two part question, so we can start with what do you hope for in the future, for people like you, like us?

Henry: I would hope for more money. [Laughs] I would hope for more money, I think black queer trans folks need more money. We need more opportunities. I mean, if you think about just between 2017 and 2019 alone, think about how much, how better the world got, because we became more visible? Just imagine all the, like if you think about your favorite shows, if you think about your favorite music, if you think about your favorite people, your favorite fashions, your favorite food, if you think about all of your favorite things, it's black queer trans folks or queer trans folks of color, who are out here doing the damn thing, changing the narrative, changing the game, changing the world. So I would say opportunities with money involved, in those opportunities, so that we can continue to share those opportunities, because we give back. We don't just take take take, that's not how our community rolls. Obviously you definitely have

certain people who might, but as a whole? We doing it for the people, we doing it for the community, and you can see that, you see it. So I would say that, but when I think about just in general, how we can help the human race? I think it's really important to just let kids be themselves, and encourage them to be their truest most authentic self, and not to hide anything about themselves from anybody, and just to do good, and be good, to themselves and therefore other people. If we just continue on that path, if we start getting on that path and begin moving forward in that direction, I really think that the world would be a better place. People would be more authentic and real, and people wouldn't feel like they need to hide, and people would be more happy. Every step that they take would be a step of love, because they've learned to love themselves. I feel like parents need to do better, you need to get on the ball, get to it! We have children to raise. [Laughter]

Knight: Speaking about children, you're just like perfect. I really enjoy this interview, because you just segue into everything. I'm like "OK, I don't really have to do nothing!" So, what advice would you give to your younger self, or what is something that you've learned that you are grateful for?

Henry: That feeling that I had, that feeling...I'm gonna speak to you little Jeux. That feeling that you have, deep down inside, that makes you feel like you don't belong, that makes you feel like you aren't really worth anything, that thing that your mother keeps pointing out, the thing that your father keeps pointing out, that your nanna's trying to solve, that you're going to therapy for, the thing that you were...put into institutions for, the reason why your mother wants to get you out, is the reason why you're just so great. So powerful, so loving, you have been through it. You've been through it, and that's ok, just keep pushing, keep moving forward. I know that it sounds real corny and cheesy, but there is really so much else, just a bigger world on the other side. You just have to make it to that other side. Just know that there is another side, and once you get to that on top, you're able to see over that, the world is just so much brighter, so bigger, so beautiful, so much bolder, and it's all for you. It's all for you.

Knight: It's all for you, baby Jeux.

Henry: It's all yours, man.

Knight: And then, I guess, what advice would you give to someone who perhaps just came across this oral trans archive, and they're like wow, Jeux's really inspiring me and I just want to know one thing that I can take from them, from this interview, one thing that you want them to remember, from your experience, your life and your journey.

Henry: Authenticity is your superpower. It's your superpower, it's the strongest thing that you could ever be, no matter what, whether you're feeling like you're bad inside, whether you feeling like you good inside, whether you feel like you twisted, whether you feel like people understand you or don't, authenticity is your number one superpower, can't nobody take that away from you. Ain't no Kryptonite for that.

Knight: That's true, that's true. And, back to babies, back to babies. We're staying on that baby, young, youthful vibe. So what does family look like, what does it feel like? Now, in the future, you planning to pair it, what does that look like for you?

Henry: I think about that all the time, I think about that all the time. Um, [inaudible] I'm a realist, I know that kids have to be born for the planet to continue, I also know that there's children out there who need a home to go to, so I think if anything I'm more on that route. I don't see it right now, for children, and like...but I do want to be able to give back, I think that's really where family starts, wanting to be there for somebody else is the very beginning of a family, whether it be willing to be there for someone else that you create, someone else that you love, someone else that you're thinking about, I want to be there for so many people, to the people I want to be somebody that somebody can depend on, and if you have depended on me, if you've needed me for anything, if I was there for you, and vice versa? Then you're my family, and I think chosen family's really important in that way. And I love my family, my bio family, they're the shit, I appreciate them for going through it with me, we're definitely on the other side now, life is good. And to my partner, I love her very much, Black Boi Complex would not be where it was if I didn't have the support and her love to guide me through my darkest times, trying to get this up and going. But yeah, family is just anyone, anyone who's been real with me, and anyone who's given me a shoulder, that's it. That's all I can ask for, honestly.

Knight: So no kids.

Henry: I don't know, I don't know man. [Laughs]

Knight: Alright, that's cool. But how are things in terms of dating, and love life? I know you have a partner, how are you navigating that, especially I know that, past couple years you've been navigating your actual gender identity, so how did it all come to be? Because I know you've been with your partner for a few...

Henry: Yeah, we're going on our third year in June. Woo, chout (Check it out). Love, to be fair, for a very long time I didn't believe in love, I didn't think that love was real. Especially love that includes longevity and unconditional acceptance, because that I believe in, unconditional acceptance not unconditional love, and so that was really hard for me, just trying to navigate that. And so when my girl, when she slid in my DMs (Direct Messages), I wasn't really ready for any of that, I really wasn't. So, now, being that she lives in a different state from me, it's really hard. Especially with this, I'm so busy, I'm just so so very busy, sometimes I feel like I'm not enough for her. I feel like sometimes I could be doing way more to show her love, show her appreciation. And I think honestly, we even had, over the weekend, the past weekend, had a really intense conversation about where our relationship was going, about what we were actually contributing to each other, and how we can elevate each other to move forward, to actually be together in a partnership. Because, people be calling, I feel like queer, gay people we call our partners our partners but they don't really be partnering with us, and I think that it's really important to have a partner: someone I can lean on, someone I can depend on, someone who, I call my girl my 180, like literally the other half of me. And so, I think it's really important...as I'm

a whole, a half is a whole, anyway! [laughter] but I think it's really important to have that type of foundation. So right now, currently I'm really navigating, specifically with my gender identity, we've had a few issues with like, sexual experiences, and me feeling like, especially with me having all of my parts on my body that I came out this planet, came out my mother's womb with, it's been super hard trying to navigating having super big, extra large, double drippe ditties, [laughter], yeah I said it. It's been super hard man. Because like, but also like scared to bind, because I feel like I, can I even breathe? I don't know, people freaking me out. So, just trying to navigate what it means to be in this shell, and also deal with someone else's shell, and everyone's shell you open that thing up there's a whole bunch of things and issues and problems and things you gotta solve, and being completely dedicated to working through them, so that you can make it to the other side and be a whole complete thing, that deals with the problems that you go through, thoughtfully and introspectively, with the care and the love that you have for each other, still being the number one priority. So right now I feel like I've made it there, I've grown so much when it comes to love and relationships, and I really want to continue and push through and see where that goes. And I think, as someone who is non-monogamous, I hadn't really entertained being with other people. But I am entertaining the fact that I like more than just cis-gendered women, and like what does that mean? And like, how can I move forward with that being something I'm super curious about, in the most respectful way I possibly can, how can I holler at that girl over there and be like ey, what's good? And detaching myself from the fixation that I used to have over specifically genitals, and what it meant to actually love somebody as a person. So I've been going on sex fasts, and trying to figure out what everything really means for me. I feel like I'm becoming, I don't really know, and I think that's really great, I feel really good about not knowing, and I'm really interested in seeing what it looks like a month from now, as I'm growing into more of what I feel is the appropriate way to be the best me. Sexually, and in a romantic relationship.

Knight: Wow, that was beautiful. Thank you, thank you so much for sharing, because I know that oftentimes people assume that because you're black and trans, or queer, or whatever, that you are gonna struggle when it comes to finding love, or dating and things of that nature. It brings us back to what you said before, authenticity, because that's truly what love is, or a relationship is, or a partnership is. It's your most authentic self and they are as well, and then you come together and it's just like boom, it's magical. It has nothing to do with your genitalia, it has nothing to do with your gender identity, it's so much deeper than that, it's a soul connection. So I always like to ask that question, especially for us, because people assume that life is so tough, how are you going to find love because you're queer, how are you gonna find love because you're trans?

Henry: Somebody out there for everybody, I promise you.

Knight: Definitely, definitely. Also, on that note about genitalia, because that's a big thing in the community, right? So you're saying, right now you don't plan on medically doing anything, in this moment. And that might shift, and that's ok, you also have the choice to do something but you also have the choice not to do something as a trans person. But, what are five things that you love about yourself, or five things that you would describe yourself as? Because I think oftentimes, people will say you're black, you're trans, they have these labels placed upon you but

they have yet to get to know who you are, so how would you describe Jeux? Who is Jeux? And who are you trying to present to the world, and what do you want them to know?

Henry: For sure. Yeah, hungry. Vibrant. Thoughtful. Humble. I know that might not be a humble thing to say, but definitely humble, I'm aware of everything that I have been given, and I am so grateful. Um...insatiable.

Knight: Would you like to expand on any of those?

Henry: You just can't get enough of me, that's just straight up.

Knight: That's true, that's true.

Henry: [Laughter] You just can't get enough of me, um...I'm authentic. Is that five?

Knight: You did six, but that's ok, I mean, you're magical. If you have more than five, no need to stop at five, some people even struggle to hit three. But, I can tell that you love yourself, and you've done a lot of work to get to this point, so you can probably list fifteen. You want to keep going, we have time!

Henry: Yeah, I mean, essentially that's just kind of the nice...

Knight: Core.

Henry: Yeah.

Knight: So those are the things you love about yourself, and also that you want other people to get from you, at the same time. That's really beautiful. I want to know what makes you feel the most alive, or when do you feel the most alive, and joyful: who are you with, what are you doing, what does it look like. I know that, in another interview, we asked Ryann from Brooklyn Boihood, and they said that they feel the most joy when they're outside in nature.

Henry: That's exactly what I was gonna say!

Knight: This is beautiful.

Henry: Yeah! I love my favorite, and this is something I can't wait to get back to... going to the deli up the street, talking to my Italian friends, getting me a couple of good hearty sandwiches, couple drinks, some chips, got some alcohol in the car, taking it to the lake, sitting down with my girl and my friends, playing my music, and just dipping in and out of the water all day long. That is like, my favorite thing to do. It is my favorite thing to do. I cannot wait, I am gonna put a lot of time on the calendar for that this year.

Knight: Yeah, I really love water, and I think the correlation of water and life, and blackness, and transness, it's literally magic. It's freedom, it's...it liberates our souls to be in the water. My black trans body, submerged in water, where the water could literally drown me, take me, but I'm kinda fighting that force with my body at the same time, and I'm ok. It's like life, right, we're floating but we're actually in control, we're pushing against the stream and the waves, so water and blackness is something that I like to correlate. So that's really beautiful, because I love the water too, it brings me so much peace and reconnects me, because Lord knows, life is tough.

Henry: Life is tough.

Knight: But when I go to the beach, when I go to the water, I'm always able to recalibrate.

Henry: So we goin' to the beach then?

Knight: Oh yeah, you already know. I'm trying to hit the beach every single weekend this summer, like I'm not playing. So, I wanted to talk about things that inspire you. People that inspire you. Because I want to kinda stay on this flow of what makes you feel good, what makes you feel joyful, what brings you peace, because I think oftentimes we get sucked in there, in black transness in terms of what triggers you, what makes you sad, I don't want to focus on that. I want people to listen to this, tune in and really understand the joy of your life. Because you're happy.

Henry: I am! Sometimes. Sometimes, sometimes.

[Inaudible]

Knight: So what is your greatest inspiration, if you can. That can be a person, a song, a mood, a meme, yeah.

Henry: I'd say my greatest inspiration is my great grandfather. Um...that's what I would have said, but now I think my greatest inspiration is my mother. Which is so crazy.

Knight: Yeah tell, tell people a little background.

Henry: Yeah, yeah, me and my mother just...well, first off my mother is a brilliant black woman, mother of five, been through a lot in her life. Her father, who is my grandfather, was a drug addict, went to Vietnam and came back, you know, strung out. Had to deal with that, dealing with that, my grandfather passed of AIDS [Acquired ImmunoDeficiency Syndrome], and my mother had to power through that. My mother deals with mental illness, she... she has been working through it for as long as I can live, and when I think about my mother and how severe her mental illness is, and how she somehow always kept us fed, always keep food on the table, and like good food too! Like, always made sure we had a nice home, always made sure it was clean, always made sure that we stayed together, which is super important because as someone who also has mental illness, she has Bipolar 1, I have Cyclothymia, which might be, I don't think it's numbered but it is under the bipolar spectrum. When I think about the things that I've gone

through, and to imagine having kids in the picture, that I had to actually take care of? I don't know how she did it, and I think that's so inspiring to me that somehow she, I mean obviously black women should never be struggling the way that my mother struggled, I think that a lot of the black men that she dated are fathers, or pieces of shit, and they left her, they left her out to dry, and I think the fact that she pushed past that and is now, like, now all of her children are doing so great, we're happy, we've got our issues but whatever. And we love her, and we're there for her, and she still provides a safe space for us and holds us down. I was just talking to my mother, and she was with my sister, fighting to get a cop to take a ticket off her record, that's how she's spending her Wednesday afternoon? That's crazy to me, my mom is really the OG and she inspires me every day to be the best me I can be, so I can make her proud.

Knight: That's so beautiful. I'm really close to my mother as well, I think there's something about being a child of a black woman...

Henry: Yeah, that's some crazy shit.

Knight: It's actually, like...a divine life, to be just, this is my mom. My mom too has gone through so much, and normally at the hands of black men, right? And it's just like, she's still pushing through, and she's the one who taught me how to be me. And yet she had no idea, do you feel that way too? Like your mom taught you how to be the best part of yourself, and you are the complete anti...anti, what she wanted of you. But, at the same time now, she realizes that you're everything that she ever wanted.

Henry: Yeah! Everything that she ever wanted, that's crazy. Me and my mother are, I'm learning to love her. I'm learning to love her more now, I can honestly say I didn't love my mother when I was growing up, I hated her, I wanted to do a lot of crazy things, but now that we're in a different space now, I like to think that... I remember having a conversation with her, a few weeks ago, and I was like you're not telling us, because my mother is not really that affectionate, and I think her past kinda created that reality for her, so she's not really affectionate, she doesn't do words or affirmations, her love language is acts of service and gifts. But, we were talking and I was like Ma, my brother was graduating, right now in this moment I have two little sisters who are eighteen and twenty, both going into, well one of them is in armed services, and they're both being deployed, they both going out. My brother just graduated from college, the first one of our siblings to ever graduate, and me I'm doing so many great things over here, and I'm like, Ma are you telling your kids that you're proud of them? Are you telling your kids that we're out here, doing our thing? And she was like, yeah I'm proud of y'all! I'm like, no no no, are you telling us you're proud of us? And she's like, well, I'm proud of you because you're independent, and you're doing good things, she really don't know what I do but she knows that I'm doing something. You're doing good things, and you're out here, and like, you don't need me for nothing, and you're really, independant, you're doing a thing and I'm so proud of you. Even though I'm like, you have no clue about what it is that I do, I still felt like wow, that's real too. I appreciate you for at least saying that. She said I had a mind of my own, before she hated that and now she loves it, and so like you said, everything that she was is everything that I am, and sometimes, you hate that shit.

Knight: [inaudible] absolutely painful. I'm just really happy that you got to find your relationship with your mother, because I do know a lot of people who have lost their mother, and they're like I wish I did this, I wish I had told her that, I wish that we had a moment to spend time together. I always go see my mother, whenever I need some... I don't even know, when you, just to get away. Like I can feel like a complete two year old, with my mom, and she loves that position of being my mother. I'm really just happy that you rectified that, I know you guys have been through a lot. But back on the note of mental health, in terms of her mental health situation, as a black woman and a mother, raising five children you said, and then your experience and your own mental health situation, how are you navigating that, what resources have you found, especially as a person that is black and trans, are there resources out there that you're aware of, could you tell people about them if you have found them, or what do you think we should do to create those?

Henry: Well, good question. I will say, to create a resource for people, I just teamed up with an amazing person named Racquel [Reid], they are a licensed therapist and they'll be joining the Black Boi Complex team, to provide really impactful services for our community but also just like, a really great resource for creating and facilitating spaces where people can really get the help that they need while still being vulnerable and authentic. So that's something I'm looking forward to. When it comes to mental health, I've had really bad experiences with therapists, I've had really bad experiences with the American healthcare system, they've always let me down, I've never had, they have always let me down. So it's been really hard to just deal with that, so I will say, when I feel like something's not serving me, I cut it off completely. So that's what I did, so no I don't go to therapy, I don't seek any type of mental health, but I do have a primary care provider. I go to this doctor's office called One Medical Group. Really great, really great service. Most of the providers are, at the very least, LGBTQIA competent. They don't deadname you, they recognize your gender identity and your pronouns, they do what they have to do to help you, and they'll assist you in any way. So if you're hearing this, reach out to me, I'll hook you up with a discount, and or completely waive your fee. It is a member supported practice, so they do have an annual membership fee associated with that, but you really get what you pay for. It's really great service, and they have a team that works to make sure that they find a therapist for you, or whatever, and they're located all over the country.

Knight: One Medical Group.

Henry: One Medical Group, you can go to onemedical.com and look up providers in your area, and yeah, give them a call see how we can, how they can help you.

Knight: We, like you work for them now, [laughter].

Henry: Right? So there's that, I go to a provider, actually right across the street, 42nd street, 5th ave, and I go to my, she's a black woman, she's amazing, and she's been working with me through my darkest times here in New York, and I'm happy to say that I feel very emotionally and mentally stable, I'm off my medication which was a really big goal for me, and I'm going onto bigger and,

to other options now with my health. Now we're just focusing on getting my weight together and stuff like that. So I don't have the best resources, however I'll do whatever I can to make sure that I can find some for you. I know the Audre Lorde Project is really good with that, I know that Callen-Lorde is really good about finding places like that, and also there is a website called The Lighthouse, it's literally like an LGBT, I don't if anyone's heard of Zocdoc, but it's like an LBGTQAI friendly database with providers across the nation who are LGBT friendly, and therapy, primary care, endocrinology, anything, any kind of medical provider that you need, it's gonna be on Lighthouse.com, and they're building their database daily, so if people, providers and doctors can go and input their information and be added to the list, of competent providers who are available to care for you.

Knight: That is beautiful, I'm just happy that you've found someone you can work with. Because I think often times people think the only way to navigate mental health is through a therapist, and I think it's just finding someone you connect with, who makes you feel safe, and is willing to listen and actually be there for you, and support you in ways that you need. So that's beautiful that you've found a friend, I know there's a shortage of black primary care physicians.

Henry: Yeah! For sure, when you go to therapy, and they, because I've been, I want a black woman. And then I get a black woman who is a therapist, I've had two so far, and I've been deadnamed, my pronouns haven't been used appropriately, they want me to explain my queerness to them, so that they can help me, it just didn't make any sense. So I just stopped going. And when it comes to the care that I've gotten, really when I think about just how I've been able to pull myself out of my extreme depression and really put a quell on my spurts of, I would say, because of the Cyclothymia you have ups and down, and I can kinda level my emotions out, because sometimes I act really sporadic, was being able to realize that it's OK to feel the way that I'm feeling. A lot of times I was fighting against my sadness, fighting against my pain, fighting against the internal issues that I was having, and when I realized that I didn't actually have to fight against them, that it was OK to be sad, like no actually they did you wrong and that made you feel bad, and like oh no actually you didn't do what you said you were supposed to do, that means you have a lack of integrity at this moment, how are we going to help and make sure that you, Jeux, can be the best you next time. Like when I stop feeling, it's so hard to not feel bad for yourself, when you got all this shit that's going on, knocking you beating you down, telling you you're not good enough, telling you you're not worthy, deep down in the corners of your mind you don't even really want to be here, you don't have to be here, you don't want to be on this planet, how the hell did you get here, you're ready to go, and then what I had to realize, going back to the mountain, there's so much else on the other side and if you want to see that, Jeux, you know you're so great, if you want to see that, let's set ourselves up for success. Let's make sure that, write it down in a book, make sure that you're looking at the mirror every day, even if you got to put up post-it notes, even if you got to tell your friend and be like, there's been times I called my friends up, and I was like bro, just tell me I'm cute man, and that's just it! Just tell me I'm cute, tell me I'm worth something, having a really good friend group around you, changes everything.

Knight: That's a true testimony right there. I really appreciate you sharing that. I felt that, and I'm also here like, oh yeah I'm interviewing! So, if time, money, energy, identity, sexuality, all these things people worry about, if they weren't a factor in life, what would you do, what would you go after, if you knew that you wouldn't fail?

Henry: This.

Knight. This.

Henry: This, this is exactly what I want to do, this is my life's work, and I'm so happy to do it.

Knight: Awesome, awesome. And, Black Boi Complex, is there anything we should be looking out for—

Henry: Yeah yeah yeah! If you're hearing, I think they put the date out May 22nd is now, so June 2nd, from 5-7 we're gonna be in Philly with a Complex Conversations at the MOVES Gallery, that's in Philly, so definitely check us out. Obviously you can, we're also doing an event with bklyn boihood for Pride, so keep an eye out for June 23rd. And then, moving forward, we're teaming up with Black Trans TV, in Philly, July 27th, we're gonna have two events that same day, so it's action packed, so stayed tuned for that information. If you hear that, pull out your Google Cals, lock them dates in, because we're going hard, and I really would love to see all my family there, so we can grow together and become one. If you wanna find what I'm doing, check out Black Boi Complex, it's literally @BlackBoiComplex, and that's every platform. Facebook, we have Blackboicomplex.com, so you can just go there too and check out everything that we have, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram we live.

Knight: Alright. Well, this was great. I had a great time just listening—

Henry: Thank you so much for having me!

Knight: —and hearing, you know, your life, on a whole different level!

Henry: Yeah, we on a level, we never even really talk like this!

Knight: Yeah, so this was amazing, and I hope this resonates with somebody, at least one person out there, and I know it's gonna reach a lot of people out there, is there anything else you want to leave them with, before we sign off?

Henry: Yeah, I wanna say something because I'm a Virgo and I feel like I should because I have valuable thoughts, [Laughter], but I just really want you to know that whatever it is, wherever you are in your phase in life, is exactly where you should be. Even if its the most unsavory place, believe me I know, wherever you are right now is exactly where you should be, and everything aligns if you've aligned yourself with the most authentic you, so just keep up, just keep doing it,

keep powering through, and if you have any questions or if you need help with something, feel free to reach out to me, my DMs are always open.

Knight: And remind people again your name?

Henry: My name is Jeux. [Laughter]

Knight: You're amazing, I love you Jeux, thank you so much for doing this.

Henry: Thank you for having me.

Knight: Alright, peace.