

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

JAHEED HINES

Interviewer: Sir Knight

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Transcribed by Oriana Ullman

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Sir Knight: Hello, my name is Sir Knight and I'll be having a conversation with Jaheed Hines 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. Today is January 30th 2020, and this is being recorded at the Brooklyn [Community Pride] Center. Jaheed, we're so happy to have you here today, and teamed up here with BlackTransTV for this project. We'd love to have you just start off with saying a little bit about who you are, your pronouns, where you're from, and things of that nature.

Jaheed Hines: Sure, sure. So my name is Jaheed Andre Hines, and I am 24 years old, and I go by the pronouns he/him/his. I am a transmasculine male, and I was born in Brooklyn, New York. I was born here.

Knight: How was it growing up in Brooklyn?

Hines: Growing up in Brooklyn was different. You know, you go outside, and it's summertime, and you hear the ice cream truck, and you go back upstairs and ask your mother for a dollar, like, "Ma, I want an ice cream cone, I want an ice cream cone!" The vibe is so different in Brooklyn, New York, I could say. Everybody was just that type of child, and it was like a big family, you could say. Everybody looked out for each other. When I think of Brooklyn and I think about my life when I was a child, I always go to the summertime because I feel like that was the best time to be in New York...

Knight: Do you want to tell us a little bit about your family?

Hines: Sure, sure, sure. So I grew up in the Pentecostal Church. My family went religiously every Sunday, and I can remember my mom dressing me up in dresses with the puffy shoulders and the little socks with the fancy frills on it, and I'm just like no, this is not flying. Something does not feel right. And I look at my uncles and they had on the ties, and the shirts with the pants and the jacket to match, and my grandmother would always throw on on the fly a fedora with it, and I was like, I want to wear that. I don't want to wear what I have on right now. And, you know, I was young. I was about five, six, and I didn't know where to start. I didn't know how to express these feelings to anybody in my family, because it was different, you know? I never—when I was that age, I didn't run into anybody that was like me. So I didn't really know where to target those feelings.

Knight: So, what would you say was your first moment of recognizing someone that resonated with you? Because you said that you're a young child and you're like, I don't want to wear this. And you see what you would like to wear. When was the first time you saw somebody who perhaps presented in a manner that you did wearing something? Because it seems like it started with clothes with you.

Hines: Wow, that's actually a good question. Wow. I could say maybe high school? But this person didn't identify as a trans man, they was a woman dressed in masculine clothing. And at that time, I was still dressing feminine and things like that, but once I saw that person living their truth and

dressing how they wanted to dress and presenting how they wanted to present, that's when a buzzer went off in my head. Like, ding ding ding! This might be what it is with me. But I want to say in high school I came out as well. I came out as a lesbian though. And that word just felt—it didn't feel right. It was like, ugh, lesbian! So I was like, what is it? I know I like women, and I know I like to dress in men's clothes. And I just couldn't correlate the two. So I did my research, I went on Google or YouTube or both, and I basically had typed in what I was feeling. I was like, why don't I feel like a woman? And then I just see a whole bunch of videos: trans trans trans trans trans. I'm like, what? I've heard of transgender women, but I've never heard of transgender men. I never knew that they existed. So I start watching a few videos from different guys that was recording themselves on YouTube. They'd either be doing a timeline of when they were pre-T compared to now, which was probably a year or two, and I'm like, wow. It all makes sense now. This is me. This is who I am. But how am I going to explain this to my family? How am I going to explain this to my friends? So I was still hiding the feeling that I had come across, but I had found an ACE bandage, and I had banded my breasts down with the ACE bandage, and—don't do that, do not do that, that's very dangerous. But I did it because, you know, I didn't know anything about binders, I didn't know anything about how to hide your breasts, anything, so that was the first thing that came to my mind. I banded my breasts down with the ACE bandage and I went to school. And automatically people picked up on it because—I'm comfortable enough with myself to explain this—I had very large breasts. So people automatically picked up on it. And they kind of gave me that confused look. They didn't really ask me about it because my high school was very—they had the Gay-Straight Alliance thing going on, so nobody really made me feel uncomfortable about expressing myself in the way that I did. And from there I started dressing in men's clothes. I bought my first pair of boxers from M&M World [laughter]—because I went to school right near 42nd Street. So they got the big M&M World thing and I bought my first pair of M&M boxers and I put them on and I was like, wow. This feels great. You would think it's silly because it's just a pair of boxers, but I was slowly starting to live my truth. And I remember my mom had found the boxers balled up in my drawer, and she was like, “Ja, what is this? Why you got boxers for?” I was like, “Ma, you know they comfortable [laughter]—I just want to sleep in boxers.” But knowing me, I was putting the boxers on every day. I was handwashing them and drying them and putting them on when I went to school. I would change clothes—my mom would see me one way, and she left out to work before me, and I would change my clothes, I would sag my pants, and I went to school from there dressing how I wanted to dress. But I was still identifying as a woman who likes women. So prom time came around, and I was dressing in the masculine clothes still, but my mom insisted on me wearing a dress, and getting my hair done pretty and nails and getting my toes done, and I was like mmm. To be honest, I was just in it to be pampered, but I was like, I don't want to go outside like this, because the people in my school were seeing me one way, and then I was just popping up another way. I was like, you know what, I'm going to just do it for my mom. I'm going to just do it for her because she wants—when I would put on the girl clothes, my mom's face would light up. And I would do anything to make my mom feel happy. [car horn] So I did it, and I pulled up in this big old SUV by myself, because I ain't got no friends at the time. [laughter] And I just came out in the dress and stuff and people—their eyes just got big, and they was like, “That's you?” I was like, “Yeah, that's me.” After I graduated high school, and I went through all of that, I realized that I could no longer hide who I really was. So at the time I had permed hair. And I told my mom—I was like, “Ma, I want to cut

my hair. This perm is crack to my scalp.” I was like, “I’m going to grow some of it out and I’m going to cut the rest off.” I didn’t tell her—you know, I still wasn’t like, “Ma, I’m trans.” I couldn’t come to the words to say that to her. I was just like, “I want to cut my hair. Period.” [laughter] So, my mom was like, “You want to cut your hair? Why? It’s so long and healthy and beautiful.” I was like, “No, it’s not. You know what this perm is doing to my hair?” I was blaming everything on the perm when it really wasn’t—that wasn’t the case. Perm is bad, but I just wanted to grow my hair out and cut it because I liked the masculine feel and I felt like it was a style I could pull off. So around 2016 I was at a good length—my hair was grown out a good length—and I made the appointment and I cut all my permed hair off. And I remember it was around my birthday time, which is October, and I remember going outside and my head was so cold. I was like, “Oh no, no, no. I want my hair back, I want my hair back.” Because my head was cold. But I was like, “But I look good, though.” [laughter] And then I went home to my mom, and she liked the cut on me, so I felt at that point it was time to come out to her. So I said, “Ma, I don’t feel comfortable in my body.” She was automatically thinking it could be a phase. She thought it was a phase. And I tried my best to explain it to her—what I was feeling—but she kind of just—she wasn’t really understanding where I was coming from. And me and my mom are very close. My mom’s my best friend. So, she was like, “Ja, how do you know you don’t like this? You never had this before.” I’m like, “I don’t want it!” [laughter] “I don’t want it either!” So when I came out to her the first time as trans—because I came out to my mom three times as a trans man before she actually got it—the first time I came out to her, she kind of thought it was a phase. I was still dressing in masculine clothes and things of that nature and I was starting to think of names for myself. I remember drawing beards on my face with a Sharpie marker and things like that... I still had to hide. I still had to hide because even though I said the words to her, I felt like I was disappointing her because she was losing the daughter that she had. And she probably—you know when you have a child, you kind of think of how that child is going to be like—“Oh, they’re going to get married, and have kids,” and this and that. I wanted to live up to that dream for my mom, but at that same sense, I was kind of digging myself into a hole, because I wasn’t living my truth. So I came out to my mom again, and that time really—it didn’t go as well as the first time. And from there I kind of went into a depression, because I wanted to live my truth, and I wanted people to know my truth, but how can I tell people my truth if I had that first bad reaction? So, fast forward, I go to my first Pride Parade.

Knight: What year is this?

Hines: This was 2016, 2017. I get on the train, I’m with my friend—one of my best friends. And I see—the first thing I see is this big Pride flag. And then I see people just parading down the streets and they yelling and they having fun and couples was kissing, and I just was like, “I feel at home.” I felt at home. I felt at—I felt like I could fly. That’s the best way I can describe it. I felt like I could fly. I was just at awe. You know when you’re a kid in a candy store and you’re just looking around like what candy I want? That’s how I was. My eyes was like this big. I just was looking around at everybody and seeing them living their truth, so I felt like, why can’t I live mine? After I came home from Pride, I explained to my mom, you know, “I had fun, this is my community, this is my family,” and I was going hard for them at that point. Not because—you know, I was in the community. I always felt like people that’s in the LGBTQ+ needed their rights and they deserved

everything that they're fighting for—not saying that I didn't have that feeling for them before. I always had that feeling. But now that I'm in the community and I'm seeing all of why we're fighting for what we're fighting for, it was more important to me and now I was thinking on a more mature mind. So, fast forward to 2018, I came out to my mom again. Last time. No, 2019. I came out to my mom as trans for the third and last time. [laughter] And I remember bawling crying, like I was crying. I was like, "Ma, I don't know why I'm feeling this, but I can't fight this feeling anymore." And she was like, "Ja, you know what, you're my child, and I'm going to love you regardless." So at that point she got it. She got it. And I always ask my mom, "What light switch went on in your head to go from the negative reaction that you gave me the last time to accepting me, buying clothes for me that I identified with, and calling me him and he—what changed?" And she was like, "When I prayed to God for you, I didn't ask him to have you a certain way. I just wanted you." And that right there just had me like, alright. Alright. [laughter] She got it now. So from there it just went off. I told her that I wanted to start medically transitioning using hormones and things like that, and we talked about surgeries and things like that. Names, and pronouns. She's still working on the pronouns. But I'm giving her time, I'm giving her time. As for my name, she loves my name. When I picked my name, it's crazy, because—again I went to YouTube, and I typed in "names," or "choosing names," or "changing names when you're trans," and things like that. And—I don't know if you know him, his name is Chase Ross? I came across his video and he had a whole list of things trans-related. So I binge-watched all his videos. All of them. And I had about three names that I wanted to choose, and I landed on the name Jaheed. And basically what that means is "the one who strives." And I feel like that from my birth, I've been striving. So that name—it just went perfect with my being and who I am. From there I went to the courts and I changed my name, and I did my gender marker, and my ID, and... all of those—this happened so quick, it was like the time flew. [snapping fingers] It flew. I'm like, "Where did the time go?" It's like, I'm 10 months on T now, and I would have never thought that I would be where I am today.

Knight: So you're happy.

Hines: I'm very happy.

Knight: So despite everything you went through, and having to come out to your mom multiple times, you're happy with where you are, and you're growing in the right direction, with your mom still by your side.

Hines: Exactly.

Knight: So as a black person going through this experience, do you feel like there was a bit of fear to reveal your truth to your mother earlier? Do you feel like you held back and lived two separate lives for her sake and yours, in a sense? So that you could keep that—you said your mom was your best friend—so you could keep that relationship? You didn't want to sever it by saying, "Hey, this is what I'm thinking about," earlier, or you just waited until you felt comfortable enough to do it? Because I feel like as black people—for me, I already knew that my parents weren't going to be comfortable with me announcing that I actually identified as a man. And then growing up

religious as well, that's another aspect, because the black community, a major, major part is religion [laughter]. So I do believe that there is a great fear to reveal your truth. Did you feel that fear to say this is who I am earlier, or did you just feel unsure with how you identified to do it earlier?

Hines: I think it's a little bit of both. I could say that the fear part came from what they teach you in the Bible. So that part is what held me back from coming out earlier, and as you said, when you're in the black community, they teach you what's right and what's wrong and you gotta go—you gotta do what they say you gotta do. If you go outside—if you cut outside of those lines, you're wrong. So that's where the fear part came for me when it came to coming out as a black masculine man. I grew up around nothing but women, as well. So that played a part in my life as well, I could say.

Knight: Yeah. And what would you say is the beauty in finding community? You said in 2016 you went to Pride. And you saw how everyone was just joyous running through the streets. So what would you say are some key factors when it comes to community? What is community? When I say the word community, how do you feel? What are some words that pop out? When I say community, you think...

Hines: Together. Family. All of that. I have your back, no matter what you identify as. In the community I'm going to help you.

Knight: And moving forward, do you feel that community, in terms of the LGBTQ+ community, is going to be a major part in you navigating as a man moving forward?

Hines: Oh, definitely, definitely. Definitely, I can say that. It's always going to be a part of me. I'm always going to be a transmasculine man; I'm always going to be black. So both of those communities is going to stick with me until the day I'm off this earth.

Knight: And have there been any resource centers—you said Chase Ross—that you looked into, any other resources that have been helpful to your journey of navigating as yourself?

Hines: Callen-Lorde [Community Health Center].

Knight: Oh, yes.

Hines: Yeah, Callen-Lorde is where I went—is where I go to get my hormones and all of my health needs. They helped me a whole lot. They helped me change my name, they helped me with my gender marker, they're helping me with resources for top surgery. So Callen-Lorde has played a big part in my transition.

Knight: Sounds good. And is there any advice that you'd like to give to someone who perhaps is living with their mom, and does have a close relationship with their mother, and they know religion plays a big part, and they might be scared to reveal their truth? Is there any advice that

you would give to a younger Jaheed [laughter] out there who is trying to navigate through this process? What would you like to tell them?

Hines: What I would say is I know that it's uncomfortable and I know that you don't want to wait. But if you feel like you can't come out for a reason, such as you might get kicked out or anything, for your safety try and hold it down as best as you can, and the time is going to come when you're going to be able to live in your truth. It's going to come. I know that it feels like forever. Your mind is spinning into a turmoil. But you're going to get to where you want to be. Don't worry about it. But if you have a mom like how I have, an understanding mom, then I feel like you know your mom, or your family member, better than I do. So if you feel like the time is right for you to come out at that moment, then go ahead and do it. You know?

Knight: Yeah. I think that's great. Good advice. I want to know what kind of relationships you have with other trans, nonbinary, gender non-conforming folks. How have you grown your own community here in New York?

Hines: Right, right. Okay, so when I first came out, I didn't know anybody who was trans except for one friend that I had who was also transitioning—trans male. And he was actually the one who told me about Callen-Lorde. We're not friends anymore, but I feel like he played a vital role in me transitioning because he knew—you know when you know your friend, and they hiding, it's like you better go ahead and do it. That's how he was to me. He really showed me the ropes of everything when it came to transitioning. As of now, I know a few trans men, and they help me with questions that I may have in regards to certain things, so... I feel like when you're a trans man, that's a community of its own. It's like a community inside of a community inside of a community [laughter]. Black trans men. I feel like it's a community inside of a community. Because they understand the struggles that we face, or may face, or—in the future, what we may face.

Knight: Speaking of the future, do you feel like there is hope for things to shift in a proper direction for us to have the resources that we deserve? Do you see us moving in the right direction in terms of resources and visibility and representation? And if you would like to note anything that you feel is doing the work, such as *Pose*, or *The Politician*, they have people on there. Or any things in mainstream media that you feel are propelling the community into the limelight in the right direction?

Hines: Let me see. When you say that... I feel like we are moving in the right direction, because we're getting more—more light is being shined on the trans community. Because there are people that's in the courts—in the Supreme Court fighting for our rights. The more that we put it out there, the more that we get the support that we deserve. And especially from cisgender people. I feel like they play a vital role as well. Because we can share it as much as we want, but it's only reaching a certain crowd. When you're a cisgender person, and you share something that's trans-related, or LGBTQ+ related, you're getting us to a different audience.

Knight: True. I'm really blessed to be alive during this time. And to have community and to have conversations just like this with each other. I guess one thing I really want to know is what is the most important aspect of your identity that you would say? Would it be the fact that you are transmasculine? Would it be—you know what I mean? What would you say is your most important aspect, and if it is being transmasculine, why?

Hines: Being a black transmasculine male is the most important—is most important to me. Because... wow.

Knight: Take your time.

Hines: Because being black, we have a lot to worry about. Somebody can just see you walking down the street and decide that they want to do something. And then when you're presenting as a transmasculine male, they may not automatically know, but if somebody is not quote unquote passing, and they see you in a certain light, then that can also have an effect. So I feel like—like you said, I feel blessed to be alive today. And every morning that I wake up, I feel blessed to be alive in a time like this.

Knight: So you speak about the intersectionality of being black, of being transmasculine. I also wanted to hear your take on the intersectionality of gender identity versus sexuality. Because I think oftentimes in community, or places [inaudible] where people assume—where people—“oh, you're in the community,” they assume oh, you're a gay man. Right? Because now you're aligned with how you feel. So what would you—if you're comfortable enough, would you say that exploring your gender identity has allowed you freedom to possibly explore your sexuality? Or are you certain on who you are in the sense of this is who I am, and taking a stand and saying, “I am this person and I don't have to be what you assume me to be.” Because I think for so long that's what we've been doing, right? Navigating through this world as how people assumed us to be—a woman. Dressing masculine, not being a man. Now that you're navigating being a man, do you feel like being in the community as a man, people assuming that you're gay, do you feel like that's something that is—that you're struggling with, or is it something that you feel like we need to do more work in terms of navigating that in totality?

Hines: Right, right. We definitely do need more...

Knight: Representation.

Hines: Representation, thank you. [laughter] When it comes to gender and sexuality, that's two different things. A lot of people, you know, they tend to combine the two. Me, I am a straight transmasculine man. They do tell you when you start T that you might start being attracted to the opposite gender that you wasn't before, they do tell you about that. But for the most part, I am a straight transmasculine man.

Knight: For the most part—for the hundred percent. [laughter]

Hines: [laughter] For the hundred percent. [laughter]

Knight: [laughter] This is on record—I just want to make sure that you're properly represented. Yeah.

Hines: Sorry about that. Yes, a hundred percent, a hundred percent. That was also something I was nervous about, because what if while being on T, I started, you know, liking men or whatever? How would I navigate that? Because people have a certain—they look at trans men who date men a certain way, so that would be a whole other fight in itself. But they also need light shedded on them as well, you know? They're attracted to this, and that shouldn't matter. They're still a trans man.

Knight: Yeah. No, you're absolutely correct. I know that we've been having a lot of conversations with people—not publicly in terms of BlackTransTV, but like in the DMs, people hit us up, and they're worried about their attraction shifting. And my thing is, you gotta love yourself. You loved yourself enough to get to this point, so you gotta love yourself no matter what that self becomes and transforms into. You know, you gotta be authentic and true to yourself.

Hines: Exactly.

Knight: I'm happy that you're good and you feel good about not just your gender identity but your sexuality as well. I want to know how you have coped with losing your friend. I know—I'm not sure how deep that friendship went that you spoke of that helped you get to this point. And I know we briefly touched on it, but I want to know how you're coping with losing that friend while navigating as your authentic self. Are you—and then also, how you're creating new relationships. Platonically, and romantically, and things of that nature.

Hines: Right, right. So the friend that I was with, that told me about Callen-Lorde and all of that, we were friends since we were 14. And recently we stopped being friends, so about a ten-year friendship. It does hurt that I lost him, and I'm not seeing his progress, and he's not seeing my progress, as trans men. But, you know, I have to take the jewels that he gave me and kind of just use them in my life without him. It's something that I wish I still had, because that was like my brother, but I don't know. It's just one of those friendships that kind of just ended neutrally.

Knight: Gotchu. So you don't feel like you need to do anything to cope with that. You're good, you're good with that.

Hines: Yes, I'm good with that.

Knight: Okay. So in terms of platonically making new relationships and things of that nature, have you found somebody to be like, this is my bro, and we're going to create—you know, we're going to move forward. Have you found somebody like that, moving forward?

Hines: I can't say I've found my brother yet. [laughter]

Knight: Yeah. Okay, okay, okay.

Hines: [laughter] I can't say I've found my brother yet. But I'm not closed minded to it, I'm still open to it. Just someone who understands what I'm going through. I can't go to a trans woman and tell her what I'm feeling as a trans man, because she's not going to understand. Same thing with a cisgender male or a cisgender woman, you know? They're not really going to get it, because they're not in the aspect of what I am.

Knight: Okay, and that's platonically. So in terms of romantic relationships, how has it been navigating as your authentic self while trying to date? If that's something that you're interested in right now.

Hines: Right, right. Okay. I recently got out of a relationship in September. I was dating a cisgender woman, and it was my first relationship as a trans man. I was still pretty early into my transition, about three, four months. But it was—she treated me well, you know? She didn't treat me as a trans man, she treated me as a man. And I can only appreciate her for that. She didn't make me feel uncomfortable in my body, which, you know, it's been a while since I've been with somebody like that. So that relationship taught me a lot. It taught me a lot. It taught me a lot.

Knight: And moving forward in the future, you're hopeful to find love? Because I think oftentimes people think that navigating as their true self, they're kind of shutting themselves off from the possibility of finding love. Do you want to speak on that a little bit and shed light for those who may be listening?

Hines: Sure, sure, sure. So I used to talk down to myself a lot, you know, "Who would want to be with someone like me? I'm short," and all of that. A lot of silly things shied me away from dating. But now I can say I am open to finding love and someone who genuinely wants to be with me for me. Being trans is just a part of me, it's not who I actually am. It's not all of me. It's a major part of me, but it's not all that I am. And if I can just find somebody who can see that as well, yeah. Of course I'm open to it.

Knight: So there's hope for you out there, anyone who's listening. There's hope to find love. I think that's a beautiful message that you said. I also want to go back to New York City, when you're growing up. So, growing up in New York City, you're out here, you say summertime was your favorite time. So how would you compare summertime as a kid to summertime now as a grown man? [laughter]

Hines: [laughter] Wow. Summertime then compared to now. I'm still running for the ice cream truck. [laughter] But now I can say that—now that I'm living in my truth and all of that... wow. Let me see. Living in my truth as a trans man in the summertime is like—it automatically puts me in a better mood. In the summertime, you know, when the weather's nice, you're automatically in a better mood. And now that I'm living in my truth, you know, it just extends that to another

level. But when I was a kid, I had to go by my mom's rules, and now it's like I can go by my own rules.

Knight: So what are some things that you used to do that maybe you didn't love to do, but—or wanted to do, and now that you are who you are, you can do?

Hines: That's a good question. [laughter] That is a good question. I never thought about that... something I used to—wanted to do...

Knight: Yeah, so something that you either did, that you enjoyed, that you're like I'm still doing it, it doesn't matter, or something that you wanted to do, you couldn't do, because of your identity at the time.

Hines: Right. Going to Pride would be one. You know? They do televise the parades and things like that, and I would watch them on TV, and I would say I wanted to go to it, but I couldn't at that time. So going to Pride would be one. Just being outside and going to the park is another one. Yeah, so those are the main two.

Knight: So would you say that you've not just found peace and joy, but that you've found freedom?

Hines: Yeah, I can say that. I can say that. Because now I can just say, "Ma, I'm going to the Pride Parade," and she won't look at me with a weird face, you know? She'll just be like, "Alright, have fun, be safe." It's kind of like that thing.

Knight: And how would you describe freedom if you had to give us a sentence to describe what freedom feels like, or looks like, or tastes like, or whatever—

Hines: [laughter]

Knight: [laughter] Whatever sense it is to you.

Hines: Freedom—like I said this to you earlier, it's like you could fly. You know? It's like you could fly. I always think of a—what's that bird—the eagle? They soar. So that's what I think freedom is.

Knight: Okay, okay. What would you say is the hardest part about living in New York City as a trans man?

Hines: The hardest part about living in New York City as a trans man. Wow. Another good question. The hardest part would be when you're in the same scenery as black cis men. Because you never know how they're going to approach you or look at you or anything like that. So that's probably the hardest part. You're always thinking, you know—that's always in the back of your head, like, what if somebody knows? What if somebody knows? What if somebody knows? But when you're living in your truth, it's—well, I can say that I don't really care if anybody knows, but

you also have to be cautious, because what if they do know and they decide to go about that in a dangerous way about harming you?

Knight: Yeah. I mean, back to the intersectionality of being black and of trans experience, thinking about law enforcement and police, have you had any experiences or do you know anyone who is of experience who's had any troubles with police and law enforcement? Or do you have any fear of that?

Hines: For myself, I can't say that I've ran into any trouble with the law enforcement. I do know a lot of people who have ran into issues with the law enforcement who are black. I can't say that they are in the LGBTQ+ community and they've ran into issues with law enforcement, but I'm always afraid when I go out and I see police on the side. Because, you know, they can just decide to pull you over for any reason. They don't have to have a reason. They can just decide to mess with you. So I just kind of keep my head down when I'm around them, and, you know, don't act really suspicious. I kind of just go about my way. That's also something I wish that we can change.

Knight: And that's something that we always try to talk about and discuss on BlackTransTV, is that we're black first, right? Black is black, so when we're out in the world, they see a black man. They don't see anything else. So you're sitting here navigating as your truth, but then at the same time, not being seen for your full experience, scared that if they see you and recognize you as a black man, and you are suspicious, whatever that means to them, then you're taken into custody and where do we go if—once they realize our truth? So that is a fear that I think a lot of us have while navigating—especially here in New York. Because I've had issues with law enforcement. And it's a very scary time, you know? But I'm happy that we're talking about it. I think that's the first part to it. But I think that's kind of the scariest part, living in New York especially. Um, let's now talk about some special places that you have in New York. So beyond Pride, that event, what are some spaces that you enjoy going to where you feel free, where you feel like you can fly and soar?

Hines: Church. Yeah, I started going back to church back in November, and it's also in Brooklyn. It's called the First Community Church of Brooklyn or something like that. And for a while I felt like I didn't really have a place in the church, living in my truth. I didn't know where to really go. So I had wrote a local—not a local, a trans man, and I asked him, you know, what church do you go to? Can you recommend me a church to go to? And he gave me that church, and he went the same Sunday that I went, and I liked how she gave the message. Because it wasn't what I was used to. It wasn't straight from the Bible, if you do this you're going to heaven, and if you do this you're going to hell. That wasn't the message. It was more like a life lesson with Bible scriptures tied into it. So that's what had me drawn to that church, and I felt like I could be me, I could be my truth, and I like how the pastor—she just navigates through the church and she goes to every member that's in there, and she shakes their hand, asks their name, and things like that. So I don't feel like I have to tell them I'm a trans man. But I feel safe in that church as well.

Knight: I think that's really beautiful. It's like you get a full circle and came home. Right? Because I think the fear that you initially had, growing up—you said Pentecostal?

Hines: Yeah, Pentecostal.

Knight: As a black person that was queer, and trying to navigate and figure yourself out, and now you're fully—well, you're yourself. You're living in your truth. And you're happy, and you're free, and now you're back in the church. And I think that's really beautiful to hear because I think oftentimes people would think that black people that are queer, that are trans, or gender non-conforming, run away from religion. Run away from the church. But it's like, no. We're grounded. We're rooted. You know? And that's what I think—I know that's where I get my strength from. From my spirituality. So I think that's really beautiful.

Hines: Yes, definitely.

Knight: In terms of growing up in New York, I think that you have a really amazing culture here. Did you ever get involved in the ballroom scene, or—

Hines: It's funny you asked me that—[laughter]

Knight: [laughter] Yeah, I was like we gotta talk about this.

Hines: Alright, so, this was a few—like two years ago. My uncle's girlfriend—then girlfriend—she took me to a ball. And that's a whole different type of scene, you know? It's way different from what I'm used to. I'm used to hearing the lingo, you know, but being in it? It's different. It's loud, and you see people performing, and they're showing off their talents, and they're battling each other—in a friendly way. It's not something that's ever dangerous. But... ballroom scene, wow, yeah. I would definitely go to another ball. [laughter]

Knight: So you're more so attending the balls, but not being involved in them.

Hines: Right, right.

Knight: But did you hear about the ballroom scene when you were growing up, or was that just never something that you were interested in doing?

Hines: I never heard about it. I never heard about it until recently. And then I started watching *Pose*, and I was like, okay, so this is a thing. Especially in New York City. It's big in New York City. I'm surprised I never ran across it—

Knight: Yeah, it must be super underground. [laughter] Because we're right here. We gotta be in the right streets, yeah. [laughter]

Hines: [laughter] Exactly.

Knight: But I mean, then that goes back to seeing people that reflect you, because if you're not seeing people that are in the community, then how would you know about the underground scene? Because back then it was underground. Okay. Are there any—I would say, people in the trans community that you admire, that you look up to, that you—you know, you feel like you can reach out to and actually get the response and rapport that you desire?

Hines: Yeah. Not going to say it, because you're standing in front of me—[laughter]—but BlackTransTV, you know?

Knight: [laughter] I appreciate you, yeah.

Hines: The first time I interacted with you and [Tashan] Lovemore [co-founder of BlackTransTV] was when I had did the—you was giving away t-shirts, with the—what is it—the packer. You was doing the little—the combo thing, so I was like, let me just go ahead and write them. And it's also the message that you were giving. You know, I'm like, two trans men like myself giving messages about questions that I don't necessarily have the answers to. So I feel like BlackTransTV was the way to go when I needed answers for questions that I had.

Knight: And do you feel like if BlackTransTV was back when you were looking at YouTube videos and stuff, that would have been super helpful? Especially to see someone that reflects you?

Hines: Yeah, I can agree with that. I can agree with that.

Knight: Yeah, because I do—I personally know that I couldn't find anybody that looked like me, which was the reason we created what we created, right? So it's just really beautiful to have [Brooklyn] Community [Pride Center] to meet you, because I don't know any other way we would have met.

Hines: Right, exactly.

Knight: So let's talk about things that make you happy.

Hines: Things that make me happy.

Knight: Yeah, like what do you—what does Jaheed like to do? What's a typical day in the life of Jaheed? When you wake up, what are you doing? How do you love on yourself?

Hines: [laughter] That's a good question. Alright, so the first thing I do when I wake up, I pray. I say a prayer for the day. And then I watch an episode of *Blacklist*. [laughter] That's the series I'm trying to finish. I play the guitar a little bit. You know, music definitely played a big role in my life, because it's kind of how I dealt with my emotions and my feelings. I write in my journal. Just write my feelings, how I'm feeling for the day. I usually do it at the end of the week, or I'll do it for the day. Basically, I'll write about what happened the day before, or I'll write about where my head

is at at that moment, just to get my feelings out. I listen to some music and I try to do a little workout.

Knight: Alright. Sounds good, sounds good. Sounds very, very familiar to me. [laughter] I have the same type of flow. [laughter] So I would like to know one thing—or it could be open. Let's make it open. I hate one thing, two things, three things. That makes it complicated in the head. So if you wanted people to hear one thing from you, or to get one thing from you, from this interview, what would it be?

Hines: Always live your truth. Always live your truth. And if you have that gut feeling, go with that gut feeling.

Knight: And we speak a lot about legacy, right? On BlackTransTV and, you know, on my own platform. What do you want people to remember about Jaheed Hines?

Hines: I want people to know that I'm a natural born giver. If you need anything, whether it's advice, or even a hug, I gotchu with that. I'm a real helper. So if you need help for anything—I would say that's kind of where I'm at.

Knight: And is there anything that you want to share with the people, feel free to go on, in terms of your process? In terms of utilizing hormones or surgery or finding resources? Feel free to tell us just anything else that you want to add to your project.

Hines: Okay, so I could say this. Every week that I inject my hormone, it's like a boost of energy. It's kind of like drinking a Red Bull. [laughter] I can say that. Cause I'm living in my truth, and needles don't really bug me anymore, so it's not even about the pain. I just think in my head, like, "Where am I going to be next year at this time or two years from now?" Like, is my mind going to change about how I view myself the longer that I'm on the hormones? So that's something that I can go on. Also, as far as surgeries, I am starting the process to get top surgery. So that's another thing that's—I know that's a whole other ballfield, like some trans men, they run into a lot of issues with it, some get it easy—so I'm hoping that it's an easy process for me.

Knight: Well, I hope it's an easy process for you as well, because I do know that everything that we desire is what we deserve. So when you put that intention out there, and you do the work to get in—you said navigating with Callen-Lorde—they're going to help you move through that process and it's going to be smooth. I definitely just want to say thank you for existing. But I would like to finish off with—I'm going to go back to numbers because I really like that numbers thing. [laughter] List five things that you love about yourself.

Hines: Five things I love about myself. I love my confidence, and I love my drive, you know, I'm very motivated. I'm a very motivated person. What was that? Two? Three? I love that I'm a natural born giver, like I was stating to you before, and also—last thing, I'm family oriented. My family means a lot to me. So those are five things that I love about myself.

Knight: Okay. And I'm just going to throw out some random questions for you because I want people to be left with these [inaudible] things of Jaheed.

Hines: [laughter] Right, right.

Knight: Tell me about a time when you felt most seen. And I'm going to follow up that with tell me about a time when you felt most loved.

Hines: Most seen. When you say most seen what do you mean?

Knight: So, to me seeing is an act of diving into one's soul. To me, it's beyond the surface. It's beyond the physical. So has there been a time when you've felt most seen? This can be a person who says, you know, "I saw you before you saw you." This can be a moment where you felt—you felt whole. It doesn't have to be from another person, it can be from you as well. So just tell me—like, describe how it felt, what it looked like when it happened, and things of that nature, when you felt most seen.

Hines: Okay. Can I name two?

Knight: Yeah, go for it. Take your time. This is all you.

Hines: Alright. So the first one, I'm going to list for myself, is when I saw my first chin hair. [laughter] I saw my first chin hair and that made me feel whole. Because I'm like, alright, I'm starting to see who I am and who I've been fighting all these years for. And from another person is when I first came out to my uncle. And from there he got my pronouns right, he got my name right. He didn't slip up at all. He's still not slipping up. So that's another time that I felt seen and whole.

Knight: Okay. And then, loved. When was the time that you felt most loved? Was it the moment when your mom said I see you? Like, I get it? Like, the light went on? Was that the moment or was there another moment or were there a few moments where you felt most loved, either by someone else or yourself?

Hines: Right. From someone else I can go back to my mom.

Knight: Yeah, say [inaudible].

Hines: Every time she hugs me, I feel loved. Nothing like a mom's hug. Nothing like it. And for myself, I can say just taking care of myself because there was a—this is my goal for 2020 is to take care of myself spiritually, mentally, and physically. So every time I go to church, I feel like that's me loving myself. When I go to therapy, that's me loving myself. Because only I'm going to take these steps to better myself as the best person that I can be. And then when I work out, that's another way of loving myself, I feel.

Knight: Okay. And—let's see, is there anything else left that you'd like to share? Anything that you want to throw out there, put in this capsule, to be held for all time? [laughter] Because this is what people are going to get when they think about Jaheed Hines, you know, when they tune in. This is what they're going to get from you. So is there anything else that you just want to throw out there, let people know? It could be anything. It could be like, "Hey, listen, you can go in Brooklyn and go get X Y and Z [laughter], and they going to love you no matter what you look like, no matter what you dress like," or "I remember that time when I did—" you know, just tell us anything that you'd like to share.

Hines: Right. Um... put me on the spot. [laughter]

Knight: [laughter] No, it's fine! There's no—there's no rush. We can sit in silence and think about it together. [laughter]

Hines: [laughter] What is something that... wow. [pause] This is really hard. This is really hard to think of. Something that I want somebody to know is that Brooklyn is the best borough in New York City.

Knight: And why is Brooklyn the best borough in New York City? [laughter] Are you just saying that because you're a Brooklynite?

Hines: That's one reason, that's one reason. [laughter] But look at all of what we have, we got Biggie—well, we had Biggie, you know what I'm saying. So, we the best borough. Best food, all of that.

Knight: All of that. And what is your favorite food? And where do you find your favorite food?

Hines: [laughter] You know, you gotta go with the chopped cheese. You gotta go with the chopped cheese on a cheap day.

Knight: Oh, okay, okay. I actually haven't had one of those.

Hines: Really?

Knight: No.

Hines: Really?

Knight: Never.

Hines: It's delicious.

Knight: I guess I haven't done Brooklyn right.

Hines: No, you haven't. [laughter]

Knight: [laughter] There's still time, there's still time. For sure. For sure. Well, I'm going to say thank you so much for your time, for sharing your story—

Hines: Not a problem.

Knight: For sharing every aspect possible of yourself, and I really think that this interview is going to help a lot of young Jaheeds out there [laughter] living in Brooklyn, navigating through New York City find hope. And peace. And understand what freedom sounds like. Because I think sometimes we know what freedom looks like, and oftentimes we focus too much on the physicality of this journey and experience. But I think hearing your story and feeling you through your words is a monumental moment. So thank you so much.

Hines: Not a problem, not a problem.

Knight: And your name again is Jaheed Hines.

Hines: Jaheed Andre Hines. [laughter]

Knight: Oh, okay! Now we're getting the full name! You've opened up to us. [laughter] Thank you so much. Alright.