

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

JULIETA SALGADO

Interviewer: Antonio Rodriguez

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Transcribed by Tamara Meneses

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Antonio Rodriguez: Hello, my name is Antonio Rodriguez, and I will be having a conversation with Julieta Salgado as part of an Oral History of Brooklyn Transcore, to be included in the New York City Trans Oral History Project. This is an oral history project centered on the experience of trans-identifying people. All right, so before we get started, can I get your name, as you'd like it to appear in this, and the correct spelling of that name?

Julieta Salgado: Sure, my name is Julieta, that's J-U-L-I-E-T-A, and my last name is Salgado, S-A-L-G-A-D-O.

Rodriguez: And your pronouns?

Salgado: She and they.

Rodriguez: Okay, thank you so much. And how are you connected to Brooklyn Transcore?

Salgado: It started for me, it's very interesting. So I went to a show in the old ABC in Rio, I think it was 2014 or 2015, and I went because it was my first time seeing a show advertised specifically for queer and trans people, and I was very excited. I really love music, I love hard music, I love punk, I love metal, I love a lot of iterations of music. I'm South American, and I always say, South Americans, we go hard, we're very metal people. But I always felt overpowered, or not necessarily welcome, or regarded, whatever. So I was like, holy shit, this is exactly the kind of show I want to go to. So I went to it and I got to see a lot of great people. It was my first time hearing HIRS, it was my first time seeing Cristy Roads in her former band, a bunch of other people that are now, I guess, people that we know, Santos was playing in a band. It was an incredible time, and it was life-changing for me. When HIRS came on stage, it was my first time someone being like, if you're an immigrant, if you're a femme, if you're a woman, whatever, come to the front of the pit, open up the pit. It was just a really amazing experience for me. So there was merch, and I saw this shirt that said Brooklyn Transcore, and I was like, that's the merch I want, that's what I want to rep. So I've had that shirt for all these years, it's got holes in it, it's got grease stains on it, I love it. And from that experience, life happened, things happened, I just never really got to connect further with Brooklyn Transcore from that day on, but I would wear the shirt all the time, because it's fucking cool, and also because I think in this way, subconsciously, I was still kind of like putting out feelers or something, like flagging in this way. And it worked, even though it was subconscious. One day, I was at Metropolitan Bar here in Brooklyn, and I go to this weekly karaoke night, and that's where I met our friend, well, now my friend, and integral member of Brooklyn Transcore, Evan. This person comes up to me, super big music head, and is just talking me up, like, oh my god, that shirt, holy shit, blah, blah, blah. It was the first time anyone was really excited for this old, tattered shirt that I had. And he was

like, you have to meet my friend Saoirse, you have to meet her, she was the new leader of Brooklyn Transcore. And I was like, sure, sure, whatever, cool. I didn't think much of it. So then one night, I'm back at my usual karaoke night, and he's like, hey, you have to meet my friend Saoirse. So I'm like, okay, cool. I meet her, we get to talking, and it was just super energizing and exciting, and I think it was in September, and I think ever since that moment, we've all kind of come together in this very organic, but it's almost effervescent, I think something was bottled up and ready to pop off, and the response from other people, from everyone, has just been like, yes, at last, and that's basically the whole mythology.

Rodriguez: Yeah, no, that's amazing. HIRS Collective at ABC No Real in 2014, that's fucking awesome. I've never been able to catch HIRS Live, and they've been coming up so much in this process of interviewing. So how would you explain the HIRS Collective to someone who had never heard of them?

Salgado: Oh my God, like fucking guttural, like dissident, like femme, rage. So when I met Jenna Pop, first of all, out comes this trans feminine person with a fucking lipstick tattooed on the side of her skull, and she builds a wall of speakers that they're known for, but this is my first time, and I'm like, I don't know what's about to happen, but I'm about to die, and I'm really looking forward to it. So I don't know, I think all their music, I think, especially back in the day, I think they've like, yeah, where they are now is amazing, they worked so hard to be where they are, but to me it always just felt like subversive, like guttural, like, I don't know, like visceral feelings, and I think that's what a lot of us look for in these spaces. I like all kinds of music for sure, but I think sometimes we're looking for a healthy outlet for aggression, where we're going to be sustained, you know, that's how I describe mosh pits too, where it's like we're all sort of agreeing to be aggressive with each other. So I think that's kind of, you know, I'm getting into too many topics, but yeah, that's how I would describe the music, and for me specifically, it just felt like oftentimes women, or people who are read as women, or people who are aligned with femininity, often don't feel like they are, aren't seen as aggressive, or aren't seen as like pissed off, or, so to me it's also a really gorgeous experiment, and like, for me being like pretty, and soft, and wanting to like crowd kill.

Rodriguez: If you, at any point, if you need to step away for work, just let me know, but thank you so much for that. Earlier you used the term flagging, I know what you mean by that, but how would you explain that to someone who didn't have any sort of connection to queer culture, or punk culture in general?

Salgado: Sure, so specifically flagging and queer culture, it comes out of, and I wouldn't say I'm an expert in this, but basically it's people wearing different color handkerchiefs in different

pockets of their pants, traditionally to symbolize, you know, if this color is on this side, it means I'm a top, of course, but if it's on the other side, it means I'm a bottom, and if this other color, I like leather, and things like that, and it was a way for people to keep basically kind of safe, a covert way to express desire, to express queerness in public space, to find partners during a time specifically where it was much more dangerous and taboo than now, and I think the way that's evolved, besides like more colors and a variety of desires and things, for example, just like, for example, for myself, there's a time where I had my dominant hand with really short nails, and my left hand with very long, elaborate manicures, and for me that was my way of flagging my queerness, and my femme queerness, and being like, if you know, you know, and if you don't, and you're like, why does this weird bitch have like, uneven nails, then that's what I'll be to you, but if you know what you're looking at, you're going to be like, wow, that's really hot, so that's how I describe flagging in general, but in this context, and like a less, far less sexual content, like I was flagging, I was signaling for other people who are looking for queer trans punk communities.

Rodriguez: Yeah, very cool, very cool. So in the recent meetings, can you tell me sort of what's been going on in the recent meetings, and your role in what's going on now, and sort of what you want to do in the future?

Salgado: Sure, so we've had three open meetings, I believe at this point, and it has just been like a gathering of, they've been incredible, like the first two are just very like, come to this bar, like the bar that I'm at now has a sister bar, Metro, and so you know, as queer people, as marginalized people, like we don't really have public spaces, I mean generally, like there's just no such thing as like public spaces in the U.S., right? So we meet at bars, you know, and that's where we have community, and so like 50 people came out, and we're just talking, you know, Saoirse, I think is definitely our oftentimes like a little bit reluctant leader, but that is what she is, and she leads those conversations in an incredible way, in a very like chill way, just talking about this lineage, this history, and connecting across generations, like it's been incredible to see, like I'm 37, it's been incredible to meet other people of my age group, and maybe a little older, and we've had from that age group to like, we have teens, like sneaking into this bar, like trying to like meet with us, and so it's been like an incredible, just like gathering, just getting to see each other, trying to create like little work groups and stuff like that, and then the last meeting, we were more intentional, and we had this all-ages space to accommodate the youth that are trying to engage us, we had free food, and it was incredible, it was an incredible event, and so I would describe, I guess, it's our desire to provide each other with care, like we are looking forward to having free clothes, free food, and connect each other to resources, and mutual aid, and to try to uplift each other's projects, like so right now, I would have to say like, it's pretty loose in a lot of ways, but also like, what we tell people is like, you know, people will be like, oh

I'm interested in doing harm reduction, or literally someone would be like, I'm an apparent, I need a basis, and then people are like, I'm a basis, so right now, it's just been like connecting to resources, and you know, and getting started with an open collective financially, in order to like fund our projects in a transparent, very like, formal, legal way that doesn't sell us out as much as possible.

Rodriguez: Yeah, definitely. I spoke to Evan recently, and they were telling me like, there really does seem to be this intergenerational connection with a younger crowd, and sort of the older punks who are around before COVID. I wonder if you have any thoughts about why now, like why something like this feels popular.

Salgado: Give me one sec.

Rodriguez: Go for it, go for it.

Salgado: Oh yeah, I'll sign it for you. Yeah, it's all good. Little stuff happening. Actually, right now, there's a couple people here, because we informally meet at my bar on Mondays, so that's why I was like, oh, you could have come in person, like it would have been great. So many people here, but you'll join us sometime. Hold on a sec, and just sign it? All right, cool. Thank you, sir. I'm like multitasking. Thanks so much. Have a great day. Okay, so why now? You know, that's a great question. I think like, there's like a witchy, woo-woo side of me, and just like, from the moment I met Saoirse and Evan, I was like, there's something so fortuitous about this. There's just something so auspicious about this, like everything is just coming together, like so many things at once, and I think it's because, I wouldn't say it's exactly the same as mine, but like, I think a lot of us have just been waiting for this, you know, and I don't know, that's really it. We've been waiting for it, and it's just popping off, because so much, so many of us have just been looking for this. I think the nicest lesson I've learned recently from connecting with teenagers, you know, you asked me what my role is, like, I, like being in an auxiliary role, like role, I'm a little older, I don't play in a band, even though I'm a music lover, and I'm really invested in like, care work, and radicalizing that, and so I like to help with like, yeah, care work stuff, and like, uplifting other people who are like, I'm in a band, I'm doing this, like, I enjoy that role for myself, but with the youth, I was having this conversation, and I was like, you know, like, I don't want to sound condescending, but I'm kind of older now, and I've been a little jaded for a while, and it's just very inspiring to see you, you give me a lot of hope for the future, and they were like, well, y'all give us hope, you keep us from being depressed about our future, as like, young trans people, and I realized this really incredible thing, where I'm like, actually, like, you know, it's actually kind of an ageless thing to like, see hope in each other, and see a future in each other, and so I think that's the thing too, is like, there's so much hopelessness, there's a lot

of structural and cultural things coming for us, a lot of very real violence, and there's so much that we don't have, and I think that we're working from a perspective of like, but look at how much we do have, you know, and I think that's why we're, it's just exploding, because like, we already know what sucks, we already know what it feels like to feel isolated, so it feels incredible to feel something totally different than that, and generative, you know.

Rodriguez: Yeah, yeah, that's totally great, I'm happy to hear that. I think, I don't want to take up too much more of your time. You said you're from South America, where in South America?

Salgado: Sure, so my parents are Ecuadorian immigrants, so I'm first generation Ecuadorian from Bushwick.

Rodriguez: Sick, you grew up in Bushwick?

Salgado: I was born there, I lived there a few years, but I moved around a lot, so I can't claim that credit too much, but it feels good to be back, I've been back for the last 12 years, and it rules.

Rodriguez: That's awesome, last time you came back, what brought you back to the city?

Salgado: A desire to like, be here in New York, I lived between upstate New York, like Rochester area, like family stuff, and like finances, just cheaper life up there, and then I also lived in Ecuador for like, similar like, family reasons, which is also like, a privilege, like I really love being bicultural, but after all that movement, like I just saw myself just longing for New York, and there's no place like it, so yeah.

Rodriguez: Yeah, so I'm interested, one of the things we've been talking about to everybody is, is sort of like, why punk first of all, which we've talked about a little bit, like why, why does it make sense for queer and trans people to organize around punk, and also why in Brooklyn, and I'm curious if you, if you have thoughts about either of those things, why punk, and why Brooklyn?

Salgado: Sure, I think punk, it could almost be used as like, I don't know, umbrella term is the right word, but I think it often just comes with a lot of different baggage, like it's about being counter-cultural in this way, and like, not just like, in this nilly-willy way, but like, in a way that is informed by, I believe, like activism, by a subversion, by social justice, by being like, the current system doesn't work, and the current dominant culture doesn't work, and so punks historically are one of many people who are like, I'm gonna go against the grain, or I'm gonna subvert this, you know, I'm gonna, you want something pretty, I'm gonna actually make it disgusting, and

there's so many ways to look at it, you know, like I'm definitely, I always joke, I'm like, I'm a punk, and I'm about that life, and I absolutely like, I don't know, I'm into a lot of different music, you know, so I think it's like, it's like an umbrella for that, for like, DIY stuff, we have a lot of different musicians, you know, to, you know, and we also want to make sure that that's known, like, we want people doing acoustic music, we have Maya Byrne, like, rolling with us, and she's like a country star, you know, so it's like, it really, I think the essence of punk in this is more like, we are here to subvert the dominant culture that not only erases us, but also, like, simultaneously profits off of us, and we're trying to do something that is like, I don't even want to say non-profit, because it's almost like a dirty word, but we want to do something that's, like, people-powered, and like, just that captures, like, abundance, like, it's like the operational word that we use a lot, there's just abundance among us, you know, it's about redirecting where everything is, and as for Brooklyn, you know, we have friends that, we have a couple friends that come from Jersey, right now, a friend just came from Jersey, we have someone that travels all the way from the Bronx, like, from, like, the last sick stop it comes through, so it's pretty, you know, inter-borough, interstate, but I think it's just more, like, that's what it was called when it was created, and I think we're trying to, like, kind of capture that lineage, you know, because that's the other thing, too, is that, like, a lot of us feel like we're just floating in space, and it's like, actually, we have a history, and so I think it's more of, like, this desire to be, like, this organization has been around for this long, you know, but it's not, like, only for Brooklyn, and it definitely goes far beyond.

Rodriguez: Do you know when it was founded?

Salgado: Um, Saoirse, who also goes by Sawyer, I think knows a little better, but I think around that time that I'm telling you, like, 2014, 2015, it might be even before that.

Rodriguez: Okay, cool, cool. All right, I think, I don't have any other questions for you, is there anything you want to talk about that I haven't asked about yet?

Salgado: Um, you know, no, this has been really awesome, um, I hope this is all helpful, and, you know, I really look forward to see, like, what you do, if you can, like, send me a link or whatever, I'm really excited to see.

Rodriguez: Yeah, definitely, definitely. All right, well, listen, thank you, thank you again so much, and, uh, I'm gonna try, uh, Sawyer told me about, um, I think a show on the 11th of next month, I'm gonna try to get out to that, so hopefully we can meet up.

Salgado: Oh, you gotta.

Rodriguez: Yeah, yeah.

Salgado: Yeah, it's gonna be awesome, I think it's, like, that open meeting I described, and then a show afterwards, I think it's gonna be, like, a lot of great energy, so hope to see you there.

Rodriguez: Awesome, all right, thank you so much, and, uh, have a good night, all right, bye.

Salgado: Bye.