NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

GENEVIEVE TATUM

Interviewer: Matthew Dicken

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Matthew Dicken: Hello, My name is Matthew Dickin and I will be having a conversation with Genevieve Tatum for the New York City Trans Oral History Project in collaboration with the New York Public Library's community identifying oral history project. This is an oral history project centered on the experiences of trans identifying people. Today is June 22nd, 2007. Excuse me, 2017. Uh, and this is being recorded at Sage, uh, in Midtown Manhattan. Do you want to start off to... by telling me your name, and if you'd like, your age?

Genevieve Tatum: I'm Genevieve Tatum and I'm 68 years of age.

Dicken: And what are your gender pronouns?

Tatum: She.

Dicken: She, her. How would you describe your gender?

Tatum: Uh, transgender, um... transgender, I would say. [Laughs] Stay with that, yeah.

Dicken: And when and where were you born?


Dicken: I didn't know you were a New Yorker, actually.

Tatum: Yeah, I'm a lifelong New Yorker. Lifelong, yeah, born and raised, educated, everything.

Dicken: Yeah

Tatum: Yeah

Dicken: Where at in Staten Island were you born?

Tatum: Um, near Castleton Corners. I think that was the, uh, section I was in. Then I lived in, um, New Brighton, I believe. Then, when I was 9, I moved to Brooklyn.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Where I, spent much of my life.

Dicken: Hm.

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Where in Brooklyn?
**Tatum:** I lived in Midwood, Coney Island, Flatbush, Crown Ice, Bed Stye, those are the neighborhoods I lived in.

**Dicken:** Sure.

**Tatum:** Mm.

**Dicken:** And you said you moved to Brooklyn when you were 9?

**Tatum:** 9 Years old, yeah.

**Dicken:** Yeah.

**Tatum:** Mm.

**Dicken:** What was your childhood like? Or your family?

**Tatum:** We had a good chi...I had a very good childhood, you know, we were a normal, you know, a normal family, you know. We, I had a younger brother and a sister, you know, we did, every, we did things together, you know. Went to school, went to the same school. Grade school. Uh, we had different high schools, you know. But, you know, we were pretty, always pretty much together, we were always close. Yeah.

**Dicken:** Mm. And you’ve now been living in Washington Heights, is that right?

**Tatum:** Yes.

**Dicken:** How long have you been uptown?

**Tatum:** Uh, 6 years.

**Dicken:** 6 years.

**Tatum:** 6 years now, yeah.

**Dicken:** Yeah.

**Tatum:** Yeah.

**Dicken:** How, would you say, as a lifelong New Yorker, the city or individual neighborhoods have changed over the years?

**Tatum:** Uh, you have... gentrification, you know, you've... now I remember during the like, from the mid 70s maybe to the early 90s. You know, you had the drug and the crack epidemic, and it was, it was kind of wild, [laughs] a little crazy.
Dicken: Hm

Tatum: But, you've seen more businesses come in, you know. Some, some neighborhoods have been really run down and... but you have people who came in. Shops, you know, they created businesses, art museums, shops, you know, eateries, things like that, you know. Then people started coming back to these, some of the neighborhoods, um. I used to hang out in the village. You know, Grinder's Village and East Village, in particular, you know. I remember when East Village was like Dodge City [laughs]. You know, drugs deals on every corner. It was, it was wild back then, you know. But in the late 70s, early 80s it slowly began to change. And the city actually changed, you know, changed, I think maybe by the early 90s I think things really kind of, you could say things were fine then, were much better.

Dicken: Yeah?

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Do you remember, or what was, what it was like, when you first were growing up here, or when you started going to the village?

Tatum: I started going to the village, I believe it was 1968, I was 19 years old.

Dicken: Sure.

Tatum: Now, I had always been attracted to it, for some reason. You know, I had always been, maybe cause it was different. I always liked things that were a little bit different or maybe outside the norm, you know. Just something about it attracted me, you know. We had music, you had, um, people who were, I guess... different from what the norm was at that time. But they were interesting, you know, some of them were quite interesting, you know. I used to hang out at Washington Square Park. You know, listen to all they're saying. This big thing on Saturday. Saturday and Sunday was always a big thing, and I used to go there, I had to listen. I just... I just felt such a part of it, you know. I didn't... participate in a lot of the, you know, some of the other stuff [laughs] some of the other stuff, you know, I left it alone. But I just, I just enjoyed being in the atmosphere, you know. It was, it was a really cool vibe, I felt.

Dicken: What kind of people were you listening to? Were they musicians? Poets?

Tatum: Well they were musicians, you had poets, um, a lot of orators, you know. During the time I was there, you know, the Vietnam war was raging. So you had a lot of protests, um, you had orators, you had, um, people who presented plays or shared their stories. It was kind of like a potpourri of so many things.

Dicken: Mm.
Tatum: Yeah, it was kind of exciting, you know. And you had people from all walks of life coming there. You know, people who lived nearby, people... who were pretty, you know, well, you know up there, well to do, you know. And you had street people in there. So it was kind of really a mixed bag of everything.

Dicken: What do you miss most about the way it used to be?

Tatum: Mmm. The spirit is still there, but at times I kind of wonder if that spirit will be lost. I don't believe that it will be, I always think... that part has always been a part of the village. There's always been, you know, a part of the history of the village, you know, it goes back to the 50s. Maybe even back then, maybe even the 30s. You know, it was kind of a bohemian neighborhood. And as time went on, the park became a part of it. And I don't think this, I don't think it'll ever be lost, you know, because I just think... a lot of things that happened were life changing. You know, you have people that come protest, people still protest, they're not even...

Dicken: Mm-hm.

Tatum: They cleaned it, cleaned it up a lot but the spirit's still there. Yeah, it's still there. I don't think it'll ever be lost. Even though the neighborhood around has changed a bit.

Dicken: Yeah. Were there particularly great characters, or, or interesting people that you remember from that era, the 70s or 80s, in Washington Square Park.

Tatum: I remember the musicians in particular, you know, they just come together. You know, guitars, bongos, whatever instrument they had, [laughs] you know, banjos, you know. They just... they just played. It has always been a part of that, it's always been a part of that Washington Square Park. And I... just people just coming in, just living life, enjoying life, you know. You know people just come wherever they came from, you know, maybe. Kind of a respite from the normal, every day life, I looked at it. It was, it was a really a wonderful time, I really enjoyed that time.

Dicken: Yeah. And how was it different than other neighborhoods in that moment, uh, once you entered the park.

Tatum: A little bit outside, I just think it's kind of outside, outside the norm, really. You know, most neighborhoods, I guess, are... more conservative. If you want to put it, for lack of a better word, you know, straight-laced. Everything was... people could go down there and, you know, you could... you could be who you are, you could go whatever, wherever you want to. One thing I loved about that time, is, you had many people of different races. And I loved that, you know. And I saw people of different gender's, you know. You know, you had gay, lesbian, you know, um... street queens, all that, you know. I, I really enjoyed that, so, you know, I just... I just kind of [laughs]. I was really absorbed by all that.

Dicken: Mm.
**Tatum:** You know, you have these, so many different kinds of people, in this one area. And nobody really cares who you are, you know. You're just one big, happy family. You know, I just loved that. I just loved that. And that's, that's the part I will always remember about it, you know. I think maybe that's the part I... you still see it, you still see it now. But I think, not as much as you used to, but you still see it, but I think back then, that's what I remember the most about it.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** .

**Dicken:** Were there great stories or legends that you learned about the park or different communities that showed up there when you were a young person, visiting?

**Tatum:** Well, I remember when Stonewall happened, about a year later, I remember that. And, I didn't know a lot about the people back then because I was... I attended junior college out on Long Island, so I didn't, I didn't hang out as much, then in [unintelligible] I did, you know. Then, whenever I came in the city I did. Later on, I did find out about people like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, you know. And they were around, [laughs] I'm a contemporary of them, and that was the thing, I didn't find out until years later, that, I said wowee. Hey, maybe we crossed paths. It seems with me, I always cross paths and I don't even know it. I find out years later [laughs]. That they say, oh, you were there, I say oh, oh, I didn't know, I say OK. But, a lot of cases in my life, I met people we would cross paths and years later we met [laughs]. I remember one gentleman I met, you know, he came to the city, 1971. I left in the military, 1971. And he was in another city about the time either I left, or I, he left, I came. And, um, when he passed, you know, I, you know, at his memorial I said, you know. Finally after 35 years we caught up to each other.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** You know, we were, we were wonderful friends, you know. We were good friends, yeah.

**Dicken:** Wow.

**Tatum:** Yeah.

**Dicken:** You left in 71, you said?

**Tatum:** Yeah, in the military, I was in the military service, yeah.

**Dicken:** And, but you had crossed paths first in the, in the village, in Washington Square Park.

**Tatum:** Yeah, it was in the middle of 68, 1968, yeah.

**Dicken:** What is your earliest memory?
Tatum: Mm. Of the village? Or my own...

Dicken: Either way.

Tatum: Ah, boy.

Dicken: What comes to mind?

Tatum: I honestly didn't know much about the village, until I actually started, I... started hanging out there. Then as time had gone on, I started to read the history of the village. And the people who had lived there. Um, I remember, um... big theater, Fillmore East.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Big. It had all the big musical acts that came there, you know, Jimmy Hendrix, The Doors, Janice Joplin, um, Allman Brothers. You know, all the big acts came there.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: You know, things were kind of cheap, you know, you could get orchestra seats for 5 bucks [laughs]. Now, forget it [laughs]. Now you can't, uh, you know, you take out a small mortgage [laughs] just for good orchestra seats. But it was, you know, you saw all the big acts. We had a lot of small clubs like The Village Gate, Blue Note came. The Blue Note was there, ja... jazz, and you had, um, electric circus on St. Mark's place. You had cheap eats. You know, I could bring a dollar, you could bring a dollar, you could get a couple of dogs, you know, french fries, and something to drink and still have change left over [laughs]. So you didn't need a lot of money.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: You didn't need. But everybody was just enjoying... everybody. You know, you just, you know, you listen to some of the conversations and the peace movement was a big thing then. You just listen to the conversations, you know. You know, talk to perfect strangers, you know, just, you know, just kind of a good old time, really.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Yeah. And people came from all over, I mean all over the country. You know, to be here, California. Some came from the mid-west, south, everywhere. New England, everywhere. Yeah.

Dicken: Mm. Did it feel like community?

Tatum: It did, it really did. Because... nobody really cared who you were or where you came from. You know, and... one thing I know about, you know. I wasn't in tune with gender at that
time, but I did notice that nobody really cared about it, you know. It's just that, you know, this is you, you know. We, you know, we're glad you're here, you know, we don't care who you are, you know, just be, just be who you are. That's the way I kind of took it.

Dicken: Mm. And were there... people that you knew then that you still know now? Or have your communities shifted?

Tatum: No, I, um [sighs]. Now, you see, I was away for 3 years in the military, so, you know. A lot of them changed, a lot of things changed, well the whole country changed at that time. And that was 71. I call 1971 kind of like the last hoora.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: At that time because by 74 the country was more conservative, you know. And something my mother had told me, you know. You know the country will be different when you get out of the service, you know. She told me that shortly before I left. And it was. And it was quite diff... I found it quite different. Yeah.

Dicken: That was in the year...

Tatum: But that was a great piece of advice she gave me.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: What was she like?

Tatum: My mother was... warm. She... she was kind of my rock during the hard time in my life. Cause of my... having troubles with my father was having problems with alcohol, you know. And I was going through my changes, you know. I was a young teen, in the teenage, you know, early 20s, you know. Trying to find where I fit in, so. It was kind of a tumultuous time, in the family, and with me personally, you know. I think going into the military was maybe the best thing for me to get away, get away from all this stuff. Because I think it started to affect me a bit. And I was getting angry. Frustrated. Didn't know what I wanted out of life. So me just leaving, just leaving the whole scene was just... I would miss the village, you know, there was no question about that. But sometimes you just have to get away from things, just kind of get a clearer picture.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, of where, where your life is.

Dicken: And yet, the village had changed, when you were back, would you say?
Tatum: It changed, um. It changed some, you know, it didn't change all at once, but... Cause you still had the remnants of, even when I got out of the service you still had the remnants of times when I was, you know, when I had hung out there. But it slow... it slowly changed, yeah. It didn't totally go the other way, cause you still had that spirit, you know. That spirit was there back then, it's still here. Even now, I would say now.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: It did change, yes.

Dicken: Hm. What communities do you identify with now, or would you say you're a part of now?

Tatum: Well, of course, the transgender community, LGBT, um. Uh, my church is accepting and affirming, you know, we have gay couples, lesbian couples, you know, trans, you know. And... The Collegiate Churches have always been open and affirming anyway. They have a history of it anyways, so. When I moved up to, um, Washington Heights with my spouse, you know. We were looking for a church home, you know. We're walking by, we saw Fort Washington Collegiate. And we said we'll come in one Sunday, we... and we'll see what it is, you know. If we like it, fine. If we don't, we'll find someplace else, you know. Walked into the Sunday service, I was dressed in a suit [laughs]. I wasn't now, cause I wasn't quite sure how to, at that time. So I said let me play it conservative.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: And we went in and we enjoyed it, you know, and we looked at each other and said wow. It felt like I was home.

Dicken: Right.

Tatum: And that's... with me... I've been to some great places, you know, but it usually took me awhile to really adjust to it. But this, I felt right at home. You know, that was, that was unusual for me. I count on one hand how many times that's happened to me.

Dicken: Wow. So that was a particularly positive experience.

Tatum: Yes, it was. Quite. It was quite a positive experience.

Dicken: Were there other moments of... community, where you, uh, have these memorable moments of feeling at home in a certain space, or feeling particularly, like you belonged?

Tatum: Mmm. I think when I transitioned, I kind of felt mmm... because, I... never knew I was trans, I was... it was hidden from me. It was flat out hidden from me. I always knew that I felt different. I never knew why I felt that way. But I always knew I felt different. It's something that didn't bother me 24/7, you know, I didn't have the dysphoria or the stress, you know. Or people
getting on my case cause, you know, I walk like a woman or whatever, you know. But I always felt the difference. And no matter how close I got to other people, you know, it was always that sense of detachment. I always felt that sense of detachment. You know, I... I belonged, but then again I didn't feel like I did belong. That was the feeling that I had. And...I didn't stress about it, but at times I did wonder why I felt that way. And I never, ever tied it to gender. Never, ever tied it to gender.

Dicken: When did that start shifting? Or do you remember moments of starting to make that connection between that feeling and transcommunity, or, um... political moments of trans-visibility?

Tatum: Uh... I think it started, like... I'd say when 2000 came. And more maybe going into 2001, possibly 2002, I really felt the shift. Started to... started to ramp up a little bit. Started to go on this way. Still didn't know why.

Dicken: Hm.

Tatum: I remember a couple times, I, for no reason, almost lashed out at people. I never did that. You know, it... It started to bother me. That really started to scare me, you know. You lash out at someone, you don't know why. And that started to scare me, and I... I was saying to myself, what, what's going on? Things are starting to happen inside. Still didn't know what. I said what's going on in this, so I had to kind of guard myself a little bit. Because I didn't want to destroy any relationships that I had. You know, all because I, I said something, you know, just lashed out for no reason. And I'd say from 2002, maybe to 2004 it was a struggle, it was... I was saying to myself I wanted to break out, but break out to what? You know I didn't know what... things were going on inside me, didn't know what it was. I didn't know why it was and that was the part that was scaring me. I said... why do I feel this way, why am I behaving like this? You know I... You know, at times I just went to bed crying and I just said, I just didn't know. Now if I knew it, that was one thing, but I flat out didn't know. You know... and I never shared it with my spouse, I never did, because, this is, this is just a private battle. Because I didn't understand it, I didn't, how could she understand it? Yeah.

Dicken: Who were the people who started to give you... just answers to some of those questions, you know?

Tatum: Well I had [sighs]. I started reading about sexuality and the different things about it. And... I think 2004, New Years eve, I had a heart attack. And then I had heart surgery.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: And then I was home, my wife was working, you know, I could handle... She went back to work, you know, it was... it was, maybe about March 2005. I could be alone, you know. I had a routine and I'd take all my medicines, I could take a nap, you know, everything. And, I just had this desire, I just felt the desire, I wanted to be a woman. I had never had that before. [Laughs] I said, wait, whoa. I said wait a minute. I just, it was, it was strange. I had, I had never tried on
clothes, women's clothes, when I was a kid. Never had that desire and never did that. It was just a strange thing and I started reading things about it. I thought I was weird, so I looked on the internet. I said, you know, found out that a lot of people had those things, so in that aspect that brought me some comfort. Then, um, about... maybe June of that year, I just got the impulse to try on a skirt, you know. It's like when your kids, little kids dare you to do something, you do it, and then the just, the [laughs] urge just passes. So I said, let me, after weeks of putting it off, I said wait a minute. Let me do it. Do it... then the urge will pass. [Laughs] I was wrong there.

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** Wow. It just ramped, it just... And I tried on the skirt, I tried on a blouse, I tried on a dress, you know. The whole 9 yards and it just ramped. It's just like that wheel, you know, once that wheel goes downhill it doesn't stop.

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** [Laughs] I said whoa. [Laughs] And it just kept going, it kept going, it kept going. Yeah. Mm.

**Dicken:** How did it feel the first time, in that first moment of, like, putting on the skirt, or seeing yourself in the skirt?

**Tatum:** I liked it [sighs], I liked it. It, it felt good, I really liked it. You know, then I started buying my own, my own panties and everything and it... it really felt good, I really enjoyed it. I still didn't know why [laughs] at the time, that, that would come, you know. But I just enjoyed it. I felt more relaxed.

**Dicken:** Hmm.

**Tatum:** So, under my work clothes I'd wear panties, you know. On occasion I wore a bra, you know. Nobody found out, you know with the bra, you know, nobody found out. My shirt, my shirt was bulky and, uh, you know, nobody really noticed. But I felt different, you know. I felt, I felt more relaxed.

**Dicken:** Mm. And were there moments that that journey transitioned from, I mean you mentioned the internet and finding some comfort there, and then obviously, the personal journey you were on.

**Tatum:** Yeah. I started a blog, you know, because I had a lot, it was a lot in me and I had needed to write it down. I started a blog back then, you know, writing all my feelings down, what I was feeling. Sometimes I was up til 2-3 in the morning.

**Dicken:** Ah.
**Tatum:** That's how... I had so much in me. And by the time I went to bed, I was totally exhausted, I still had to get up for work. [Laughs]

**Dicken:** Mm-hmm.

**Tatum:** So I had... but I needed to do that, you know, I just couldn't let this explode... explode. And it... and it helped me a lot just to put it out. Just put it out on a blog paper, you know. I got some responses. You know, then... I think in, also in June, I went to um, a place called identity house. I went there, got a little counseling, found out it's real [unintelligable]. I just told them everything, everything I was feeling. Left no stone unturned. And then after they talked, you know, said I was cross-dressing. At the time, I was cross-dressing, you know. When I left I was kind of stunned. I was all, wow, you know. Then, I said, how am I going to, I was figuring out how I was going to tell my wife [laughs]. I said oh no. So I kind of went into denial. I went into denial, said oh, it's all going to pass. It's just a phase. But, as days went on, said this wasn't a phase. It just wasn't. And, you know, I bought my own underclothes, stuff like that, you know. I used to go to the center. You know, Friday nights I'd go over there in a dress. Wear a dress. Now, Friday night after work I used to like to hang out and [laughs] you know, at the village again [laughs]. A village thing. I'm a village guy, person I guess, you know. You know, I go there, dress up a couple hours, you know, it... Just a couple hours just being in a dress, you know, it made all the difference in the world

**Dicken:** Mm. Mm.

**Tatum:** Then I was working and then, my wife called me finally told me she found some of my stuff. I said oh no. So I had 5 hours to think of what I was going to tell her. [Laughs]

**Dicken:** Wow.

**Tatum:** I said well... I was going to tell her sooner or later because I didn't want anything... you know, god forbid something happened to me and she'd have to have... try to explain all that, that wouldn't be fair to her. So I said, well, I'll tell her everything, you know. I was going to tell her later, but it came sooner. So, it was... I went there, told her everything that was going on with me, you know, and she said well... it was a shock to her, which I expected. And she said, well, I guess that's who you, who you are, you know. I said... you know, and I had to educate her and I had to educate myself also, because this is new to me. Cause I, like I said, I never had any inkling of that in my past life.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** I had no reference point, and, you know... a lot of people that I meet, told me, they said, they knew then they were different when they were children. But I had no reference point at all so I had to educate myself. And, it was a relief that I told her. Then a year later I told my son, you know. So it was kind of, um, a relief telling him, but, from then on, you know, I felt that I could be open. You know, I told her, you know. Then I finally admitted to myself that I was a cross-dresser at that time.
**Dicken:** Hm. Were there points earlier in your life when you had also been journaling or, in a writing community with other people before you started to blog?

**Tatum:** Uh... nothing on that, nothing on that magnitude, nothing to do with gender, you know.

**Dicken:** Right.

**Tatum:** I used to write stories, you know. Regular stories and, short stories I wrote mostly, you know. Some of my thoughts and everything, you know. Nothing, absolutely nothing to do with gender, just everyday life, general life.

**Dicken:** Is the blog still online?

**Tatum:** I still have the blog, yeah.

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** I still have it, yeah. Still have it, I've had it since 2005 I believe.

**Dicken:** Wow.

**Tatum:** That's when I started, maybe earlier, I don't, somewhere around that time, yeah.

**Dicken:** But you're still writing?

**Tatum:** Yeah, I still write on it, still write on it, yeah.

**Dicken:** Yeah.

**Tatum:** Yeah.

**Dicken:** Is it something you share readily, or...?

**Tatum:** Yeah, I do, I do, cause, um... You know as I, you know, cross-dress, you know, I enjoyed it. But after awhile I found out my feelings ran deeper than just the clothes I was putting on.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** So I did more research, and then I saw the word transgender. And it was like a light bulb.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** It just connected with me.
Dicken: Hmm.

Tatum: I said, wow, this is, this is what I am. And... very liberating, oh it was a very liberating feeling. And it completed me, I felt. It liberated me cause I knew I wasn't alone, I didn't have to be what society said I had to be. And I felt a piece of the puzzle in my life was put in place. And it, it's just a wonderful feeling that I had.

Dicken: Hm. Were there people in your life at that time, who you knew who identified as transgender?

Tatum: Mm. No, I didn't know anybody at that time. I was going to support group at the center, and, and I was going there before I really came out as a um...

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: I came out as a cross-dresser, you know. But going there would help me with, I saw people at different stages. Some were questioning, like me. Some were, had already transitioned. Some were transitioning or had thinking about it, so I saw a lot of different expressions of it and it helped me out a lot.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: You know, because I... I knew I wasn't interested in the surgery yet, and I couldn't take hormones because I did research on that, you know. Plus I had heart, you know, I had heart surgery so I said no. You know too many, too many factors in there so I just said no. But I was happy just, being non, non-op transgender. A transgender woman, I was happy with that. But I knew people who did transition and I supported them.

Dicken: And what has it been like in these last years? In this... when this, we've been in this moment of particular visibility for transpeople and trans issues?

Tatum: It's been wonderful [laughs]. It's been wonderful, it's been exciting, you know I've, you know, all my life, this, practically all the time [laughs]. Now it's... it's been very wonderful because I've seen trans-people who are coming out into in visible, visible now. You know, um, I point out we don't have to be ashamed of ourselves. This is who we are. But I said that would, you know, gay, or lesbians, or whoever, you know, whatever gender, you know, non-conformer, whoever you choose to be. You know, you don't have to be ashamed of yourself. You know. And I think when I started dressing, I think, I'm somewhat conservative anyway, you know, but I wanted, you know. We were being, we were being laughed at and everything and I wanted to present a positive, you know, face to being transgender. Also, there maybe somebody, you never know. There may be somebody out there really struggling.

Dicken: Mm.
**Tatum:** You know, sometimes, you know, you've heard of the gaydar, I guess there's a transdar too [laughs].

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** I think there may be a transdar, but you never know, there might be somebody out there struggling. They may say, hey this person's out there, [unintelligible]. You know, maybe, maybe somebody might already have one little push, you know. Or maybe they're starting to question themselves and they see that. You never know, you never know who you impact. But then again you're impacting the rest of society too, you know. Cause you're willing to go out there, you're willing to go. Now I've gone to the restaurants by myself, stores. I've been to more stores than you can count [laughs]. Um, out in the public, just out in the public, yeah. And I think that's very important.

**Dicken:** Mm-hmm.

**Tatum:** And I think that's very important.

**Dicken:** Mm-hmm.

**Tatum:** You know, you have to show yourself visible.

**Dicken:** And you feel more able to do that as yourself...

**Tatum:** Oh, yeah.

**Dicken:** In recent years?

**Tatum:** Oh yeah, I... I went out by myself first like 2005. And then a year later I was just walking on the um, pier, Christian Street Pier. And this overwhelming feeling of contentment. It just swept over me like a, like a flood.

**Dicken:** Mm-hmm.

**Tatum:** And I felt comfortable in my own skin. And after, from that point on I said, I'm going to go out, I'm going to be who I am, you know. I'm going to be who I am, you know. Anyone who wants to know about me, you know, I've always been open. Always been open to that. Yeah.

**Dicken:** Yeah. Do you want to describe what you're wearing today, since you said that this is how you dress more frequently now?

**Tatum:** Well, I wear my hat [laughs]

**Dicken:** [Laughs]
Tatum: I wear a hat. Right now I'm wearing a... a dress, a long maxi dress. You know, aqua bloom, white stripe. Uh, I'm wearing a, um, this is called a shrug. Aqua blue, it's my favorite color. This and purple. I never wore purple much before. But I, looked at purple, I tried on a thing and I like this, you know.

Dicken: Yeah [laughs].

Tatum: [Laughs] So, I'm wearing a hat. My mother used to wear hats, you know.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: You know how some things, you know, you take after your mother, and then... but, uh. Actually, I started wearing hats cause one day I was out, it was a hot summer day. And I had my wig on and my head was sweating. Sweating on my head, you know. And then my make up starts [laughs].

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: My make up, I said wait. So I went somewhere, I bought a hat and I put it on it cooled my off a lot.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: And then, I, since then I started wearing hats. You know, jewelry, wearing a little jewelry, a ring. You know. A little perfume. Lightly. [Laughs]

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: Lightly. Yeah, but...

Dicken: We met here at SAGE as part of the Trans-generational theater project, and...

Tatum: Mm-hmm.

Dicken: So this is how I know you, in blues and matching purples, and...

Tatum: Mm, yeah.

Dicken: Yeah, be such a, I mean, you're speaking about the question of being yourself in the world. And, younger people, or other people, at whatever stage of recognition or questioning in themselves...

Tatum: Mm. Yeah.
Dicken: Finding who they are. I knew it for myself that intergenerational community space is, over the last few months has been such a...

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Space in which I could see you and other elders who were... have found yourselves and identity, you know?

Tatum: Yeah. It's good, I mentioned the one interview about a year or so ago, I said, it's good. When we started this, you know. I think it's important that... you know, the elders share what they went through. On the other hand, I think it's important for young people to know that we were... we're behind them. That we want to know what your issues are, you know. We really want to know what, what are the things that you face? You know, what are the things that you come up with every day? Cause I know, you know, either way you cut it, whether it were back then or even now, it's not easy. It's not easy, you know, I like to say, what can we do to help?

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: But I've always pointed out, the fact, is just, go out and be who you are, you have no... you don't have nothing to be ashamed of. This is who you are.

Dicken: Mm-hm.

Tatum: That's, that's the point I, it's part of my... being, you know, just being. You know, and I encourage everybody to do the same.

Dicken: Hm. Are there other social movements right now, or recent moments in history that you've seen yourself as part of, or in relationship to this journey for you personally around gender, or for the larger transgender movement?

Tatum: Um, well with the political climate as it is now, yeah, I'm keeping an eye on that. You know, um, one thing I think is the move to erase our contributions.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: But I'm not going to let that happen. Because we... you know, we contributed to many things you know. We... you know, we work. We work, we contribute, we create art. Serve in the military.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: atum Um. Some of us went through a lot of stuff just to be who we are.

Dicken: Mm.
Tatum: You know, we, we're in the schools, we've always been here. You know, we've been in schools, been in your schools, we've been in the jobs, we worked in the stores. You know, we travel around the world. We're all over the world. [Laughs]. So we've been around since the people have been on earth. You know, so that's, that hasn't changed, but... nobody can say that we never ever contributed, because we have.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: You know, under, you know, even under some of the stressful situations.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, I look at Stonewall, that was one... reason. People got tired of the harassment, you know, and people attacking them for who they are. And finally they said no more. You know, I was 20 years old when that happened, too. [Laughs]

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Did you hear about it at the time?

Tatum: I was in Long Island at the time, but I heard about it. It was all over the news.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: I was in Long Island at the time and the date it happened. But I came into the city a couple of days later, and I went down to Stonewall to see what happened. I said, the place is... wow [laughs]. I mean, not only just what happened there. In the neighborhood that it happened, you know. The village was still, you know, it was... it wasn't cheap to live here, even back then in '69, it wasn't cheap to live here. But it happened in that neighborhood. But I had a gut feeling, I said, this is... I though this was a big thing. It was a turning point.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Didn't know what it was, but I felt it was kind of a turning point. And as time has gone on, it turned out that it was a turning point. And, I'm happy that it happened, you know, because people, people who were out there paved the way where, you know, you and I can be who we are.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: You know, and that's not lost on me, you know, people... I've always said that, always remember the people who came before you because they went through a whole lot more, [laughs] they went through a whole lot more than I ever did.
Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, they took the chance, you know, they said no more, and they, and... I'm just thankful for them.

Dicken: Do you remember what you saw or heard in some more of the neighborhood when you came back?

Tatum: It was, garbage cans all over. I looked at the Stonewall, looked like it burned out or something like that.

Dicken: Hm.

Tatum: I just saw the remnants of what, what had gone on. Later on I did read, I did read what had happened, in the, in the newspapers, I read what had happened. But I went down there and saw for myself and it made an impression on me. And... it needed to happen. It really... you know. And I, of course I'm not for wars or any, you know violence. But sometimes you got to stand up for something. You got to stand up. Because... you, everybody has a right to live their own life, you know, nobody, you know...nobody, everybody has a right to live their own life. Everybody has a right to their own political views, everybody has a right to whatever neighborhood they live in. Whatever job they want to, trans, whether or not they want to have surgery. It can be any, anything. You know, every... you know. Just how you live your life, a person lives their life. Because I don't know, you know, what my vision is, how I want to live...different from the way anybody else lives, you know.

Dicken: Do you remember words that were being used to describe Stonewall in the news when you were reading or hearing about it? Or the type of people they were saying were part of the event?

Tatum: Mm. Um, I know liberation was one word I heard. It was called the Gay Liberation Front.

Dicken: Ah.

Tatum: I remember that liberation was a big word then. And I think, probably rights were, you know, um. I think I remember liberation because, like I said a lot of things were happening back then. You had civil rights movement, you had the peace movement. You had the labor movement. The women's movement was burgeoning at that time, you know. And then when Martin Luther King tried... almost we're all these groups together, just, almost, you... You know I say it was so... [unintelligible] brought militants, the militant groups, you know, and. Um... the gay movement hadn't really burgeoned, maybe about a year later. But... you could say maybe it was, it, it could have been a part of it, or maybe, maybe it influenced the gay movement. Maybe it did, I don't know. But...

Dicken: Stonewall or the civil rights movement?
**Tatum:** I think the civil rights... had a lot to do because... it was about people's rights.

**Dicken:** Mm-hmm.

**Tatum:** You know, just like with, with African-Americans, you know, it was... You know they had a right, you know, a right to live the way they, you know, live a life. They had a right to vote. You know, the gay people, they had a right to live the life they want to live without being harassed. You know, so... it was intertwined, I felt it was intertwined. Even though they were awhile apart, maybe a couple years apart, it was intertwined. I think the civil rights movement was kind of an example.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** You know, you... all the great movements, you know, when we had to change things in society, has always happened in the street.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** It always did, you know, in the civil rights movement. Going back years before, labor movements. You know, it had to happen because, you know, it happened you know, um. We have a history of a lot of labor movements but you can go back into, um, history, you know, um. Maybe in futile times, you know, when people it was just...people were tired of their living conditions, you know. People were starving, and the, and the ruling class was just taking what they wanted, they didn't care. Finally people just got fed up. You know, that's a [unintelligible]. Like I look France, you know, Bastille day is a big, it's a big holiday, because, you know, the govern... the French government was... You know people were practically starving, the French government didn't care. People just finally said okay, enough. You know, and they knocked the whole thing down. And I look at Stonewall, it just knocked down, metaphorically speaking, it knocked down a whole system of oppression. And it had to happen. And it was bound to happen, it was bound to happen. And I'm happy that it did happen. [Laughs]

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** Yeah.

**Dicken:** Is, was Stonewall the first moment in your life that you felt that sense of... this is going to change something? Or were there moments from earlier in your childhood or as part of the civil rights movement, or of seeing African American figures?

**Tatum:** Well, I knew things... I knew things were changing, I didn't know when, um... You know a lot had to happen. I think a lot had to happen, you know. You have to present yourself... One thing I've always said, was the trans community, you knew... if people are going to get on your side or help you out, you have to be visible.
**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** I've always been about that, I mean it's scary, it's scary, yeah, I'll admit that. But, you have to be visible. You know, I never criticize people who are stealth, you know, because, you know, it may not be feasible, you know. Might be a safety issue, I, I totally understand that.

**Dicken:** Yeah.

**Tatum:** I'm just going to speak from my, from the I position, you know. For me, personally, it wasn't an option. I said I have, I have to be out there. Cause it's just too much. Being trashed on, transwomen being beat up, even killed. You know, I had to be, it's something, I had to be visible. It's just something, whatever happens, you know. I'm just thankful nothing's happened, you know. But, I had be, it's something that I have to do. You know sometimes, sometimes you have to do some things, whatever the consequences.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** I mean, I looked at Dr. King, you know. And I've always said with Dr. Kin, he, he went against the whole system at that time. And he knew that someday a bullet would come. He knew that. And that took a lot of courage, that took a lot. And I said to myself, I don't think I'd ever do what he did. But he had that conviction, you know, you know, it was just in him, he just had that conviction. And me being out, you know, I just, it's just my own conviction. I just believe that I have to be out there. And, slowly I... you know, I, like I came out to my church 5 years ago. My whole church, and they accepted me. I was coming out to a lot of other things, I came out to my brother and my nephew about the time my sister passed. But they told me they already knew, I said oh, wow. [Laughs] Cause my sister had told them, I told her over a year, year and a half before.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** I told her a year and a half before. And what she shared with me, I found that very refreshing. She said somebody on her job was transitioning while they were on the job.

**Dicken:** Wow.

**Tatum:** And she said to me "as far as I'm concerned, I have no problem with it." And that was so, that was so refreshing to hear.

**Dicken:** Mm. Do you identify with LGB communities? Lesbian, gay, and bisexual?

**Tatum:** I do. I do, because, we suffered the same, we went through the same stuff. You know, the places. You know, thank god for a place like New York City. But, in other countries, they kill gay people.

**Dicken:** Yeah.
**Tatum:** You know, they, you know, some countries, they want to obliterate, you know, look what's happening in Chechen. You know, and in other countries too, you know. So, I know there's been a movement to want to separate the LGB from the T. Personally, I don't think you can separate them.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** Simply because we went through the same stuff. I guess it has a lot to do with how much an impact Stonewall had. You know, even though later on they, we were kind of pushed in margins, but the fact is, is we were there [laughs].

**Dicken:** Yeah.

**Tatum:** Fact is, we were there. You know, and nobody can take that away. You know, and I support gay and lesbian course, my courses, I always have. I always have supported that. But, I've had to educate some folks about, what it is to be trans. Because with LGB it's, it's to do with, with the sexuality. You know, with transgender, it has to do with identity and expression, you know. And, you know, and um, and expression, you're out there. You know, just like being, being, um, black, you know, I'm out there.

**Dicken:** Mm-hmm.

**Tatum:** I know I never hid from that, you know. And I was out, I can't hide from it, you know. Now being trans, I'm out there, you know, I can't hide from that. This is, you know... And I'm not going to hide from it, you know, I'm not going to hide from it, you know. I have nothing to be ashamed of, you know. You know, and I, maybe it's just me educating the public.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** [Laughs] You know, just from my... I have a degree in um, childhood education, and a minor in english, and I remember, I remember telling the his, the, chairman of my department. I said, I may not necessarily teach in a classroom, in a conventional setting...

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** But I will be teaching, in some way. In an unconventional setting. Or in unconventional ways. And it's pretty much just happened. Pretty much what's... you know, doing the theater, you know, transgenerational theater project. You know, doing other things, out with the moon shows, it's, you know. Queer space, you know. So it's, you know, educating others in a different aspect.

**Dicken:** Yeah. What has it been like to be trans in LGB communities, or...
Tatum: I, personally, I haven't had any, I haven't had any problem. I just... I just enjoy being in the whole thing. I feel, you know, when I go to the center or here, I just feel so comfortable.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: And I feel very comfortable, just being here. I remember a year before I came out as trans. I, well I used to walk by the center all the time before. I remember a year before saying, I wouldn't be caught dead in that place. [Laughs]

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: And then a year later, when I was doing my gender issues, that was the place I went.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: But it was nice to know that it was there. Cause I think about what had happened, and if I had found out that I was trans, you know, like back in the early 70s, when there wasn't practically anything. There were... I mean with the gay, gay and lesbian people, they, at least they had a little bit of something. I don't know if any trans people had any marches, anything.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, and I don't, and [what] some of my friends had gone through, oh. You know, it's, it's a miracle they're alive, some of them are alive right now. Really, cause some of the stuff that they went through. And... that means a lot to me. It really means a lot to me, you know. I've shared, I said, listen, I've never, I never went, any of the things that some of you have gone through. But I'm with you.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, that... that you can kind of take to the bank, you know. I'm with you. Because you went through a whole lot, you know. Some of you maybe lost your life, you think about ending it all. And yet, you sur... you went through all, you know, you survived it. You're here now. You're not a sur... you're not just a survivor, you're a victor.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, and you survived, and you're an example to me. And I've always, that's why it's so important to me to remember those who came before me, I mean, I mean... Some of them didn't, some of them didn't make it. Some of them didn't make it. But you were willing to go out there and take that chance. You know, and that means a lot to me, you know. And people that are my friends now, you know, I'm so happy for them.

Dicken: Mm.
Tatum: Just so happy for them.

Dicken: What is your relationship with other trans or gender non-conforming people like?

Tatum: Oh, it's been wonderful, we, you know, we have our meetings here. You know, after awhile a few of us go out, we go out to dinner, we talk, you know. Just being with each other, you know. When I came to SAGE, I came to SAGE before, but I wanted to meet more transgender women. And...

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: About the time when I came, you know, they had just started the transgender group for women my age, women my age. It just started, so, uh, it was perfect [laughs]. It was... talk about timing [laughs].

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: And I missed the first meeting because we had a snowstorm.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: Yeah, I remember a snowstorm, I said, I said no, no subways were running so I couldn't get here. So they cancelled the meeting.

Dicken: Uh, sure.

Tatum: [Laughs]

Dicken: When was that?

Tatum: It was like, mmm, two thousand... fourteen maybe.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: Yeah, 14, yeah.

Dicken: What are the some, some of the relationships that have been most important to you? Through your life, or recently?

Tatum: Well, my trans-sisters. You know, I just love them, my sisters. I... you know, we keep in touch, you know. Whenever something bothers them, I'm, you know, it bothers me. You know, I try to help them out as much as I can. A, a few that I'm really close to, you know, I'm really kind of close to. Uh, my wife is accepting now, you know. It took her awhile, I knew it was going to take her awhile, you know. It's still a little... tough on her. You know, we do things together. You know, we do things together, but. You know, at time she worries about me. You know,
being out and everything, you know, but... You know, she just prays for me, you know. I have another friend that, you know, I always say when we, she's not trans, but, she loves being with trans people. You know, I always say, get home say, she always says, no, you get home safe.

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: She's more worried about me getting home, you know. And, you know, it's just... just the overall LGBT community, I've just, you know, I just consider them family. Yeah.

Dicken: What does companionship mean to you, or feel like?

Tatum: Well, um... well, I think my wife and I have gotten a little closer. I think it's... she sees that I'm the same person. So, I would say, just a different covering, that's all. [Laughs] But I'm the same person. Uh, some of my friends, you know, friends, you know, some of us, you know, we keep in touch, you know, we, I have some of them I talk on the phone fairly regular. You know, when I see some of them hurt, you know, I see some of them hurt. I, alright, you know, I empathize with them to see what I could help. And because a lot... there are times when, you know we have our meetings you know, sometimes, sometimes we have some heavy subjects, you know. I think about them too. I think about them too, you know. See how they're doing, you know. You know, I remember some nights I just laid there, 2, 3 in the morning just thinking about what went on, you know. Some of the stuff that we had to go through, it's a little frustrating, you know. Naturally it's frustrating, but... I'm just happy that I know them. I'm just, just so happy that I know them. They're my friends.

Dicken: Yeah. How does being trans relate to other aspects of your identity?

Tatum: Um, what's that mean, as um...

Dicken: As in, if, if you think there are ways that your gender or your sexuality, your race, your class, your religion, are there ways that they influence each other?

Tatum: They just, it's just, being trans is just part of me. It's always... up until, maybe 2005 I didn't know I had it. But I always believed the timing, that it was time for me, Genevieve to come out. It was time. And I'm a believer in timing too, you know, sometimes you may not already be ready for it. Now, I mean, I wasn't ready in 2000. [Laughs]

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: I went no, I said no, I don't think, no I wasn't ready in 2000. Just like with a lot of things in life...

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Sometimes, you may not be ready for it at that particular time, but, the time, when the right time comes, you'll be ready. Yeah.
Dicken: Hm.

Tatum: But I think everything about, you know, about my whole, about life in general. I think of life in general, race, gender, sexuality, um, anything else, you know. Education even, you know.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: Like, I went back to college when I was 54.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: Yeah. I had been in junior college. But I couldn't go because there was problems in my family, but I promised my mother that I would get my education one day, and I did. I did. She never lived to see it, but I, it's a promise that I was going to keep.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: And, you know. So it was, it was the right time.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Some 30 years later. [Laughs] Yeah.

Dicken: [Laughs] After she had told you 30 or so years before, the world's going to change, right?

Tatum: Yeah, it, it, the world did change.

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: It was a good piece of advice and I thank her for it, you know, because, you know cause the world, it did change, you know. Sometimes it was a little fast, you know. Other times, I gradually saw it. When I left for the military, I was... I had a feeling that things were going to change. I just had a feeling, you know, because by the end of that year, I said... I looked at it like a chapter in a book.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, cause of all the people who were heroes and all that. I think that the defining moment was in July of '71 when Jim Morrison of The Doors had passed. When I heard that he had died. And then I just had this sense this chapter in my life is ending. By the end of the year, that chapter had ended. Not just, just that whole particular era. You know, like say from maybe, like '67 through '71. Yeah that was a year, a lot of growth for me. I saw, I saw a lot of things...
outside of what I would say... I saw a lot of things, you know. I saw, you know, the highs, you know, just being out there. I saw the lows from all the assassinations, and how it affected people. How it really affected people. And I saw the concerns of other people, like the anti-war movement, you know. You know, trying to understand the women's movement and the gay movement at that time, you know. And then understanding the whole world, the world as a whole, how everything worked.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, and so it was kind of like an informal education for me. At times it was very painful. It was very painful. But it was something I had to go through. I needed to go through. So by the time I got out of the service I was kind of... Okay, this is what happened and this is what I'm faced with now. So I could better handle it, you know, getting back to the timing thing, you know, I could handle it now. Now I was 25 when I got out. I don't think I could've handled it when I was 22. Something like that, I don't think I could've handled it.

Dicken: Mm. I'm 25 now as I'm interviewing you, so I'm...

Tatum: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Dicken: ...thinking for myself about timing and listening to the story and where I stand in these movements, and with my [unintelligable]

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Um, what's a moment that you're proud of?

Tatum: One moment I'm proud of is when I came out to my religious community. I had wanted to do it before, you know. Uh, the senior minister at that time had shared... well I, I think it was his wife that told me, you know... that when he came to the church, you know, he was going to make it open and affirming and like 70 families left. Just totally left the church. He took a chance, he took a chance, he was going to be open and affirming. And he was a very warm, very warm person. I told him, I told him almost immediately that I was trans. I never did that. [Laughs] I never wanted to tell anyone that I'm trans. [Laughs]

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: I said hey now [laughs] I remember when I told, when I had to tell my wife, you know [laughs].

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: But I felt safe, I felt very comfortable, I could come to him. And he took me and he said listen, that's okay. And I thought I was going to come out, I think it was about March of that
year. But then I thought about Pride would be coming up in June, and I thought that would be
the perfect time. And it was. It was the first Sunday in June, I, I came in like this.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: Yeah, I wore, I had worn a suit. I came in dressed as Genevieve. Some people picked it
up right away, others didn't. Matter of fact, one of the assistant ministers, he didn't, he was...
his didn't even know [laughs]. And then I remember one particular moment where we were
talking to one of the ladies, you know, my wife was talking to the ladies. And the lady said to
my wife, where's your husband, she said he's standing right here. She looked at me so shocked
[laughs]. But that was, that was such an affirming moment.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: That was one I remember, I'll always remember that.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: Yeah. Because church has always been part of my life, you know, I grew up, grew up in
there, you know, and everything. It was part of, always been part of my life. And just being who
I was in my spiritual community, it meant all, it meant the world to me.

Dicken: Did you feel seen in that moment? Or is there another moment?

Tatum: I did, I did, from that moment on I did. I did. There were other moments too. Um, when
my wife... went with me while I was like this, you know. At the time she didn't feel comfortable
with me even going. And then the day came when that happened and I was happy about that.
Very happy. Another one I was happy about. Yeah. There were some small, those 2 I remember
the most, those 2 I remember specifically. Yeah.

Dicken: I feel like we could keep talking, but I, they're serving dinner at SAGE right now.

Tatum: [laughs]

Dicken: So I'm, maybe I'll ask just a couple more questions to wrap up.

Tatum: Sure, sure.

Dicken: And, um, we can have a bite to eat. How do you feel right now, in your body, or your
heart, or your head?

Tatum: Uh, I'm the person that I'm supposed to be. Yeah, um, never been happier in my life,
I've never been happier. Yeah.

Dicken: If you wanted to be remembered for one thing, what would it be?
**Tatum:** Mm. Um, I made a difference. I tutored, um, I used to tutor students, uh, getting their G.E.D.'s. I remember the training that we took before that. And, and I went down there, I wanted to make a difference. I was 50 years old and I said that, and I still want to make a difference, it's still my mantra in life, I want to make a difference. No matter how big or how small, you know, I just want to be that difference making somebodies life.

**Dicken:** I think that's a beautiful note to wrap on, so I don't have another question. But is there anything you wanted to add?

**Tatum:** Yeah, I encourage everybody to just be who you are. Be who you are, and don't let others define who you are, you define who you, who you want to be. Define yourself.

**Dicken:** Is there anyone else you know who might be interested in participating in this project and being interviewed?

**Tatum:** I'll have to ask.

**Dicken:** Yeah.

**Tatum:** I'll have to ask.

**Dicken:** [Laughs] Okay.

**Tatum:** [Laughs] I'll have to ask, you know.

**Dicken:** I'm sure there are some people would love to...

**Tatum:** Yeah, I'm pretty sure there are.

**Dicken:** ...have their stories.

**Tatum:** Yeah, I'm pretty sure there are, yeah.

**Dicken:** Thank you, Genevieve.

**Tatum:** Thank you.

NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
https://www.nyctransoralhistory.org/
http://oralhistory.nypl.org/neighborhoods/trans-history

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
GENEVIEVE TATUM
Interviewer: Matthew Dickin
Date of Interview: June 22, 2017
Location of Interview: SAGE Midtown, New York City
Matthew Dickin: Hello, My name is Matthew Dickin and I will be having a conversation with Genevieve Tatum 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 June 22nd, 2007. Excuse me, 2017. Uh, and this is being recorded at Sage, uh, in Midtown Manhattan. Do you want to start off to... by telling me your name, and if you'd like, your age?

Genevieve Tatum: I'm Genevieve Tatum and I'm 68 years of age.

Matthew Dickin: And what are your gender pronouns?

Genevieve Tatum: She.

Matthew Dickin: She, her. How would you describe your gender?

Genevieve Tatum: Uh, transgender, um... transgender, I would say. [Laughs] Stay with that, yeah.

Matthew Dickin: And when and where were you born?


Matthew Dickin: I didn't know you were a New Yorker, actually.

Genevieve Tatum: Yeah, I'm a lifelong New Yorker. Lifelong, yeah, born and raised, educated, everything.

Matthew Dickin: Yeah
Dickens: Where at in Staten Island were you born?

Tatum: Um, near Castleton Corners. I think that was the, uh, section I was in. Then I lived in, um, New Brighton, I believe. Then, when I was 9, I moved to Brooklyn.

Dickens: Mm.

Tatum: Where I, I spent much of my life.

Dickens: Hm.

Tatum: Yeah.

Dickens: Where in Brooklyn?

Tatum: I lived in Midwood, Coney Island, Flatbush, Crown Ice, Bed Stye, those are the neighborhoods I lived in.

Dickens: Sure.

Tatum: Mm.

Dickens: And you said you moved to Brooklyn when you were 9?

Tatum: 9 Years old, yeah.

Dickens: Yeah.

Tatum: Mm.

Dickens: What was your childhood like? Or your family?

Tatum: We had a good chi...I had a very good childhood, you know, we were a normal, you know, a normal family, you know. We, I had a younger brother and a sister, you know, we did, every, we did things together, you know. Went to school, went to the same school. Grade school. Uh, we had different high schools, you know. But, you know, we were pretty, always pretty much together, we were always close. Yeah.

Dickens: Mm. And you've now been living in Washington Heights, is that right?

Tatum: Yes.

Dickens: How long have you been uptown?

Tatum: Uh, 6 years.
Dicken: 6 years.

Tatum: 6 years now, yeah.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: How, would you say, as a lifelong New Yorker, the city or individual neighborhoods have changed over the years?

Tatum: Uh, you have... gentrification, you know, you've... now I remember during the like, from the mid 70s maybe to the early 90s. You know, you had the drug and the crack epidemic, and it was, it was kind of wild, [laughs] a little crazy.

Dicken: Hm

Tatum: But, you've seen more businesses come in, you know. Some, some neighborhoods have been really run down and... but you have people who came in. Shops, you know, they created businesses, art museums, shops, you know, eateries, things like that, you know. Then people started coming back to these, some of the neighborhoods, um. I used to hang out in the village. You know, Grindier's Village and East Village, in particular, you know. I remember when East Village was like Dodge City [laughs]. You know, drugs deals on every corner. It was, it was wild back then, you know. But in the late 70s, early 80s it slowly began to change. And the city actually changed, you know, changed, I think maybe by the early 90s I think things really kind of, you could say things were fine then, were much better.

Dicken: Yeah?

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Do you remember, or what was, what it was like, when you first were growing up here, or when you started going to the village?

Tatum: I started going to the village, I believe it was 1968, I was 19 years old.

Dicken: Sure.

Tatum: Now, I had always been attracted to it, for some reason. You know, I had always been, maybe cause it was different. I always liked things that were a little bit different or maybe outside the norm, you know. Just something about it attracted me, you know. We had music, you had, um, people who were, I guess... different from what the norm was at that time. But they were interesting, you know, some of them were quite interesting, you know. I used to hang out at Washington Square Park. You know, listen to all they're saying. This big thing on
Saturday. Saturday and Sunday was always a big thing, and I used to go there, I had to listen. I just... I just felt such a part of it, you know. I didn't... participate in a lot of the, you know, some of the other stuff [laughs] some of the other stuff, you know, I left it alone. But I just, I just enjoyed being in the atmosphere, you know. It was, it was a really cool vibe, I felt.

**Dicken:** What kind of people were you listening to? Were they musicians? Poets?

**Tatum:** Well they were musicians, you had poets, um, a lot of orators, you know. During the time I was there, you know, the Vietnam war was raging. So you had a lot of protests, um, you had orators, you had, um, people who presented plays or shared their stories. It was kind of like a potpourri of so many things.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** Yeah, it was kind of exciting, you know. And you had people from all walks of life coming there. You know, people who lived nearby, people... who were pretty, you know, well, you know up there, well to do, you know. And you had street people in there. So it was kind of really a mixed bag of everything.

**Dicken:** What do you miss most about the way it used to be?

**Tatum:** Mmm. The spirit is still there, but at times I kind of wonder if that spirit will be lost. I don't believe that it will be, I always think... that part has always been a part of the village. There's always been, you know, a part of the history of the village, you know, it goes back to the 50s. Maybe even back then, maybe even the 30s. You know, it was kind of a bohemian neighborhood. And as time went on, the park became a part of it. And I don't think this, I don't think it'll ever be lost, you know, because I just think... a lot of things that happened were life changing. You know, you have people that come protest, people still protest, they're not even...

**Dicken:** Mm-hm.

**Tatum:** They cleaned it, cleaned it up a lot but the spirit's still there. Yeah, it's still there. I don't think it'll ever be lost. Even though the neighborhood around has changed a bit.

**Dicken:** Yeah. Were there particularly great characters, or, or interesting people that you remember from that era, the 70s or 80s, in Washington Square Park.

**Tatum:** I remember the musicians in particular, you know, they just come together. You know, guitars, bongos, whatever instrument they had, [laughs] you know, banjos, you know. They just... they just played. It has always been a part of that, it's always been a part of that Washington Square Park. And I... just people just coming in, just living life, enjoying life, you know. You know people just come wherever they came from, you know, maybe. Kind of a respite from the normal, every day life, I looked at it. It was, it was a really a wonderful time, I really enjoyed that time.
Dicken: Yeah. And how was it different than other neighborhoods in that moment, uh, once you entered the park.

Tatum: A little bit outside, I just think it's kind of outside, outside the norm, really. You know, most neighborhoods, I guess, are... more conservative. If you want to put it, for lack of a better word, you know, straight-laced. Everything was... people could go down there and, you know, you could... you could be who you are, you could go wherever, wherever you want to. One thing I loved about that time, is, you had many people of different races. And I loved that, you know. And I saw people of different gender's, you know. You know, you had gay, lesbian, you know, um... street queens, all that, you know. I, I really enjoyed that, so, you know, I just... I just kind of [laughs]. I was really absorbed by all that.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, you have these, so many different kinds of people, in this one area. And nobody really cares who you are, you know. You're just one big, happy family. You know, I just loved that. I just loved that. And that's, that's the part I will always remember about it, you know. I think maybe that's the part I... you still see it, you still see it now. But I think, not as much as you used to, but you still see it, but I think back then, that's what I remember the most about it.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: .

Dicken: Were there great stories or legends that you learned about the park or different communities that showed up there when you were a young person, visiting?

Tatum: Well, I remember when Stonewall happened, about a year later, I remember that. And, I didn't know a lot about the people back then because I was... I attended junior college out on Long Island, so I didn't, I didn't hang out as much, then in [unintelligable] I did, you know. Then, whenever I came in the city I did. Later on, I did find out about people like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, you know. And they were around, [laughs] I'm a contemporary of them, and that was the thing, I didn't find out until years later, that, I said wowee. Hey, maybe we crossed paths. It seems with me, I always cross paths and I don't even know it. I find out years later [laughs]. That they say, oh, you were there, I say oh, oh, I didn't know, I say OK. But, a lot of cases in my life, I met people we would cross paths and years later we met [laughs]. I remember one gentleman I met, you know, he came to the city, 1971. I left in the military, 1971. And he was in another city about the time either I left, or I, he left, I came. And, um, when he passed, you know, I, you know, at his memorial I said, you know. Finally after 35 years we caught up to each other.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, we were, we were wonderful friends, you know. We were good friends, yeah.
Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: You left in 71, you said?

Tatum: Yeah, in the military, I was in the military service, yeah.

Dicken: And, but you had crossed paths first in the, in the village, in Washington Square Park.

Tatum: Yeah, it was in the middle of 68, 1968, yeah.

Dicken: What is your earliest memory?

Tatum: Mm. Of the village? Or my own...

Dicken: Either way.

Tatum: Ah, boy.

Dicken: What comes to mind?

Tatum: I honestly didn't know much about the village, until I actually started, I... started hanging out there. Then as time had gone on, I started to read the history of the village. And the people who had lived there. Um, I remember, um... big theater, Fillmore East.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Big. It had all the big musical acts that came there, you know, Jimmy Hendrix, The Doors, Janice Joplin, um, Allman Brothers. You know, all the big acts came there.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: You know, things were kind of cheap, you know, you could get orchestra seats for 5 bucks [laughs]. Now, forget it [laughs]. Now you can't, uh, you know, you take out a small mortgage [laughs] just for good orchestra seats. But it was, you know, you saw all the big acts. We had a lot of small clubs like The Village Gate, Blue Note came. The Blue Note was there, ja... jazz, and you had, um, electric circus on St. Mark's place. You had cheap eats. You know, I could bring a dollar, you could bring a dollar, you could get a couple of dogs, you know, french fries, and something to drink and still have change left over [laughs]. So you didn't need a lot of money.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.
Tatum: You didn't need. But everybody was just enjoying... everybody. You know, you just, you know, you listen to some of the conversations and the peace movement was a big thing then. You just listen to the conversations, you know. You know, talk to perfect strangers, you know, just, you know, just kind of a good old time, really.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Yeah. And people came from all over, I mean all over the country. You know, to be here, California. Some came from the mid-west, south, everywhere. New England, everywhere. Yeah.

Dicken: Mm. Did it feel like community?

Tatum: It did, it really did. Because... nobody really cared who you were or where you came from. You know, and... one thing I know about, you know. I wasn't in tune with gender at that time, but I did notice that nobody really cared about it, you know. It's just that, you know, this is you, you know. We, you know, we're glad you're here, you know, we don't care who you are, you know, just be, just be who you are. That's the way I kind of took it.

Dicken: Mm. And were there... people that you knew then that you still know now? Or have your communities shifted?

Tatum: No, I, um [sighs]. Now, you see, I was away for 3 years in the military, so, you know. A lot of them changed, a lot of things changed, well the whole country changed at that time. And that was 71. I call 1971 kind of like the last hoora.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: At that time because by 74 the country was more conservative, you know. And something my mother had told me, you know. You know the country will be different when you get out of the service, you know. She told me that shortly before I left. And it was. And it was quite diff... I found it quite different. Yeah.

Dicken: That was in the year...

Tatum: But that was a great piece of advice she gave me.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: What was she like?

Tatum: My mother was... warm. She... she was kind of my rock during the hard time in my life. Cause of my... having troubles with my father was having problems with alcohol, you know. And I was going through my changes, you know. I was a young teen, in the teenage, you know,
early 20s, you know. Trying to find where I fit in, so. It was kind of a tumultuous time, in the family, and with me personally, you know. I think going into the military was maybe the best thing for me to get away, get away from all this stuff. Because I think it started to affect me a bit. And I was getting angry. Frustrated. Didn't know what I wanted out of life. So me just leaving, just leaving the whole scene was just... I would miss the village, you know, there was no question about that. But sometimes you just have to get away from things, just kind of get a clearer picture.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** You know, of where, where your life is.

**Dicken:** And yet, the village had changed, when you were back, would you say?

**Tatum:** It changed, um. It changed some, you know, it didn't change all at once, but... Cause you still had the remnants of, even when I got out of the service you still had the remnants of times when I was, you know, when I had hung out there. But it slow... it slowly changed, yeah. It didn't totally go the other way, cause you still had that spirit, you know. That spirit was there back then, it's still here. Even now, I would say now.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** It did change, yes.

**Dicken:** Hm. What communities do you identify with now, or would you say you're a part of now?

**Tatum:** Well, of course, the transgender community, LGBT, um. Uh, my church is accepting and affirming, you know, we have gay couples, lesbian couples, you know, trans, you know. And... The Collegiate Churches have always been open and affirming anyway. They have a history of it anyways, so. When I moved up to, um, Washington Heights with my spouse, you know. We were looking for a church home, you know. We're walking by, we saw Fort Washington Collegiate. And we said we'll come in one Sunday, we... and we'll see what it is, you know. If we like it, fine. If we don't, we'll find someplace else, you know. Walked into the Sunday service, I was dressed in a suit [laughs]. I wasn't now, cause I wasn't quite sure how to, at that time. So I said let me play it conservative.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** And we went in and we enjoyed it, you know, and we looked at each other and said wow. It felt like I was home.

**Dicken:** Right.
Tatum: And that's... with me... I've been to some great places, you know, but it usually took me awhile to really adjust to it. But this, I felt right at home. You know, that was, that was unusual for me. I count on one hand how many times that's happened to me.

Dicken: Wow. So that was a particularly positive experience.

Tatum: Yes, it was. Quite. It was quite a positive experience.

Dicken: Were there other moments of... community, where you, uh, have these memorable moments of feeling at home in a certain space, or feeling particularly, like you belonged?

Tatum: Mmm. I think when I transitioned, I kind of felt mmm... because, I... never knew I was trans, I was... it was hidden from me. It was flat out hidden from me. I always knew that I felt different. I never knew why I felt that way. But I always knew I felt different. It's something that didn't bother me 24/7, you know, I didn't have the dysphoria or the stress, you know. Or people getting on my case cause, you know, I walk like a woman or whatever, you know. But I always felt the difference. And no matter how close I got to other people, you know, it was always that sense of detachment. I always felt that sense of detachment. You know, I... I belonged, but then again I didn't feel like I did belong. That was the feeling that I had. And...I didn't stress about it, but at times I did wonder why I felt that way. And I never, ever tied it to gender. Never, ever tied it to gender.

Dicken: When did that start shifting? Or do you remember moments of starting to make that connection between that feeling and transcommunity, or, um... political moments of trans-visibility?

Tatum: Uh... I think it started, like... I'd say when 2000 came. And more maybe going into 2001, possibly 2002, I really felt the shift. Started to... started to ramp up a little bit. Started to go on this way. Still didn't know why.

Dicken: Hm.

Tatum: I remember a couple times, I, for no reason, almost lashed out at people. I never did that. You know, it... It started to bother me. That really started to scare me, you know. You lash out at someone, you don't know why. And that started to scare me, and I... I was saying to myself, what, what's going on? Things are starting to happen inside. Still didn't know what. I said what's going on in this, so I had to kind of guard myself a little bit. Because I didn't want to destroy any relationships that I had. You know, all because I, I said something, you know, just lashed out for no reason. And I'd say from 2002, maybe to 2004 it was a struggle, it was... I was saying to myself I wanted to break out, but break out to what? You know I didn't know what... things were going on inside me, didn't know what it was. I didn't know why it was and that was the part that was scaring me. I said... why do I feel this way, why am I behaving like this? You know I... You know, at times I just went to bed crying and I just said, I just didn't know. Now if I knew it, that was one thing, but I flat out didn't know. You know... and I never shared it with my
spouse, I never did, because, this is, this is just a private battle. Because I didn't understand it, I didn't, how could she understand it? Yeah.

**Dicken:** Who were the people who started to give you... just answers to some of those questions, you know?

**Tatum:** Well I had [sighs]. I started reading about sexuality and the different things about it. And... I think 2004, New Years eve, I had a heart attack. And then I had heart surgery.

**Dicken:** Mm-hmm.

**Tatum:** And then I was home, my wife was working, you know, I could handle... She went back to work, you know, it was... it was, maybe about March 2005. I could be alone, you know. I had a routine and I'd take all my medicines, I could take a nap, you know, everything. And, I just had this desire, I just felt the desire, I wanted to be a woman. I had never had that before. [Laughs] I said, wait, whoa. I said wait a minute. I just, it was, it was strange. I had, I had never tried on clothes, women's clothes, when I was a kid. Never had that desire and never did that. It was just a strange thing and I started reading things about it. I thought I was weird, so I looked on the internet. I said, you know, found out that a lot of people had those things, so in that aspect that brought me some comfort. Then, um, about... maybe June of that year, I just got the impulse to try on a skirt, you know. It's like when your kids, little kids dare you to do something, you do it, and then the just, the [laughs] urge just passes. So I said, let me, after weeks of putting it off, I said wait a minute. Let me do it. Do it... then the urge will pass. [Laughs] I was wrong there.

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** Wow. It just ramped, it just... And I tried on the skirt, I tried on a blouse, I tried on a dress, you know. The whole 9 yards and it just ramped. It's just like that wheel, you know, once that wheel goes downhill it doesn't stop.

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** [Laughs] I said whoa. [Laughs] And it just kept going, it kept going, it kept going. Yeah. Mm.

**Dicken:** How did it feel the first time, in that first moment of, like, putting on the skirt, or seeing yourself in the skirt?

**Tatum:** I liked it [sighs], I liked it. It, it felt good, I really liked it. You know, then I started buying my own, my own panties and everything and it... it really felt good, I really enjoyed it. I still didn't know why [laughs] at the time, that, that would come, you know. But I just enjoyed it. I felt more relaxed.

**Dicken:** Hm.
Tatum: So, under my work clothes I'd wear panties, you know. On occasion I wore a bra, you know. Nobody found out, you know with the bra, you know, nobody found out. My shirt, my shirt was bulky and, uh, you know, nobody really noticed. But I felt different, you know. I felt, I felt more relaxed.

Dicken: Mm. And were there moments that that journey transitioned from, I mean you mentioned the internet and finding some comfort there, and then obviously, the personal journey you were on.

Tatum: Yeah. I started a blog, you know, because I had a lot, it was a lot in me and I had needed to write it down. I started a blog back then, you know, writing all my feelings down, what I was feeling. Sometimes I was up til 2-3 in the morning.

Dicken: Ah.

Tatum: That's how... I had so much in me. And by the time I went to bed, I was totally exhausted, I still had to get up for work. [Laughs]

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: So I had... but I needed to do that, you know, I just couldn't let this explode... explode. And it... and it helped me a lot just to put it out. Just put it out on a blog paper, you know. I got some responses. You know, then... I think in, also in June, I went to um, a place called identity house. I went there, got a little counseling, found out it's real [unintelligable]. I just told them everything, everything I was feeling. Left no stone unturned. And then after they talked, you know, said I was cross-dressing. At the time, I was cross-dressing, you know. When I left I was kind of stunned. I was all, wow, you know. Then, I said, how am I going to, I was figuring out how I was going to tell my wife [laughs]. I said oh no. So I kind of went into denial. I went into denial, said oh, it's all going to pass. It's just a phase. But, as days went on, said this wasn't a phase. It just wasn't. And, you know, I bought my own underclothes, stuff like that, you know. I used to go to the center. You know, Friday nights I'd go over there in a dress. Wear a dress. Now, Friday night after work I used to like to hang out and [laughs] you know, at the village again [laughs]. A village thing. I'm a village guy, person I guess, you know. You know, I go there, dress up a couple hours, you know, it... Just a couple hours just being in a dress, you know, it made all the difference in the world

Dicken: Mm. Mm.

Tatum: Then I was working and then, my wife called me finally told me she found some of my stuff. I said oh no. So I had 5 hours to think of what I was going to tell her. [Laughs]

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: I said well... I was going to tell her sooner or later because I didn't want anything... you know, god forbid something happened to me and she'd have to have... try to explain all that,
that wouldn't be fair to her. So I said, well, I'll tell her everything, you know. I was going to tell her later, but it came sooner. So, it was... I went there, told her everything that was going on with me, you know, and she said well... it was a shock to her, which I expected. And she said, well, I guess that's who you, who you are, you know. I said... you know, and I had to educate her and I had to educate myself also, because this is new to me. Cause I, like I said, I never had any inkling of that in my past life.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** I had no reference point, and, you know... a lot of people that I meet, told me, they said, they knew then they were different when they were children. But I had no reference point at all so I had to educate myself. And, it was a relief that I told her. Then a year later I told my son, you know. So it was kind of, um, a relief telling him, but, from then on, you know, I felt that I could be open. You know, I told her, you know. Then I finally admitted to myself that I was a cross-dresser at that time.

**Dicken:** Hm. Were there points earlier in your life when you had also been journaling or, in a writing community with other people before you started to blog?

**Tatum:** Uh... nothing on that, nothing on that magnitude, nothing to do with gender, you know.

**Dicken:** Right.

**Tatum:** I used to write stories, you know. Regular stories and, short stories I wrote mostly, you know. Some of my thoughts and everything, you know. Nothing, absolutely nothing to do with gender, just everyday life, general life.

**Dicken:** Is the blog still online?

**Tatum:** I still have the blog, yeah.

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** I still have it, yeah. Still have it, I've had it since 2005 I believe.

**Dicken:** Wow.

**Tatum:** That's when I started, maybe earlier, I don't, somewhere around that time, yeah.

**Dicken:** But you're still writing?

**Tatum:** Yeah, I still write on it, still write on it, yeah.

**Dicken:** Yeah.
Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Is it something you share readily, or...?

Tatum: Yeah, I do, I do, cause, um... You know as I, you know, cross-dress, you know, I enjoyed it. But after awhile I found out my feelings ran deeper than just the clothes I was putting on.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: So I did more research, and then I saw the word transgender. And it was like a light bulb.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: It just connected with me.

Dicken: Hmm.

Tatum: I said, wow, this is, this is what I am. And... very liberating, oh it was a very liberating feeling. And it completed me, I felt. It liberated me cause I knew I wasn't alone, I didn't have to be what society said I had to be. And I felt a piece of the puzzle in my life was put in place. And it, it's just a wonderful feeling that I had.

Dicken: Hm. Were there people in your life at that time, who you knew who identified as transgender?

Tatum: Mm. No, I didn't know anybody at that time. I was going to support group at the center, and, and I was going there before I really came out as a um...

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: I came out as a cross-dresser, you know. But going there would help me with, I saw people at different stages. Some were questioning, like me. Some were, had already transitioned. Some were transitioning or had thinking about it, so I saw a lot of different expressions of it and it helped me out a lot.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: You know, because I... I knew I wasn't interested in the surgery yet, and I couldn't take hormones because I did research on that, you know. Plus I had heart, you know, I had heart surgery so I said no. You know too many, too many factors in there so I just said no. But I was happy just, being non, non-op transgender. A transgender woman, I was happy with that. But I knew people who did transition and I supported them.
**Dicken:** And what has it been like in these last years? In this... when this, we've been in this moment of particular visibility for transpeople and trans issues?

**Tatum:** It's been wonderful [laughs]. It's been wonderful, it's been exciting, you know I've, you know, all my life, this, practically all the time [laughs]. Now it's... it's been very wonderful because I've seen trans-people who are coming out into visible, visible now. You know, um, I point out we don't have to be ashamed of ourselves. This is who we are. But I said that would, you know, gay, or lesbians, or whoever, you know, whatever gender, you know, non-conformer, whoever you choose to be. You know, you don't have to be ashamed of yourself. You know. And I think when I started dressing, I think, I'm somewhat conservative anyway, you know, but I wanted, you know. We were being, we were being laughed at and everything and I wanted to present a positive, you know, face to being transgender. Also, there maybe somebody, you never know. There may be somebody out there really struggling.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** You know, sometimes, you know, you've heard of the gaydar, I guess there's a transdar too [laughs].

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** I think there may be a transdar, but you never know, there might be somebody out there struggling. They may say, hey this person's out there, [unintelligible]. You know, maybe, maybe somebody might already have one little push, you know. Or maybe they're starting to question themselves and they see that. You never know, you never know who you impact. But then again you're impacting the rest of society too, you know. Cause you're willing to go out there, you're willing to go. Now I've gone to the restaurants by myself, stores. I've been to more stores than you can count [laughs]. Um, out in the public, just out in the public, yeah. And I think that's very important.

**Dicken:** Mm-hmm.

**Tatum:** And I think that's very important.

**Dicken:** Mm-hmm.

**Tatum:** You know, you have to show yourself visible.

**Dicken:** And you feel more able to do that as yourself...

**Tatum:** Oh, yeah.

**Dicken:** In recent years?
Tatum: Oh yeah, I... I went out by myself first like 2005. And then a year later I was just walking on the um, pier, Christian Street Pier. And this overwhelming feeling of contentment. It just swept over me like a, like a flood.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: And I felt comfortable in my own skin. And after, from that point on I said, I'm going to go out, I'm going to be who I am, you know. I'm going to be who I am, you know. Anyone who wants to know about me, you know, I've always been open. Always been open to that. Yeah.

Dicken: Yeah. Do you want to describe what you're wearing today, since you said that this is how you dress more frequently now?

Tatum: Well, I wear my hat [laughs]

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: I wear a hat. Right now I'm wearing a... a dress, a long maxi dress. You know, aqua bloom, white stripe. Uh, I'm wearing a, um, this is called a shrug. Aqua blue, it's my favorite color. This and purple. I never wore purple much before. But I, looked at purple, I tried on a thing and I like this, you know.

Dicken: Yeah [laughs].

Tatum: [Laughs] So, I'm wearing a hat. My mother used to wear hats, you know.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: You know how some things, you know, you take after your mother, and then... but, uh. Actually, I started wearing hats cause one day I was out, it was a hot summer day. And I had my wig on and my head was sweating. Sweating on my head, you know. And then my make up starts [laughs].

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: My make up, I said wait. So I went somewhere, I bought a hat and I put it on it cooled my off a lot.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: And then, I, since then I started wearing hats. You know, jewelry, wearing a little jewelry, a ring. You know. A little perfume. Lightly. [Laughs]

Dicken: [Laughs]
Tatum: Lightly. Yeah, but...

Dicken: We met here at SAGE as part of the Trans-generational theater project, and...

Tatum: Mm-hmm.

Dicken: So this is how I know you, in blues and matching purples, and...

Tatum: Mm, yeah.

Dicken: Yeah, be such a, I mean, you're speaking about the question of being yourself in the world. And, younger people, or other people, at whatever stage of recognition or questioning in themselves...

Tatum: Mm. Yeah.

Dicken: Finding who they are. I knew it for myself that intergenerational community space is, over the last few months has been such a...

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Space in which I could see you and other elders who were... have found yourselves and identity, you know?

Tatum: Yeah. It's good, I mentioned the one interview about a year or so ago, I said, it's good. When we started this, you know. I think it's important that... you know, the elders share what they went through. On the other hand, I think it's important for young people to know that we were... we're behind them. That we want to know what your issues are, you know. We really want to know what, what are the things that you face? You know, what are the things that you come up with every day? Cause I know, you know, either way you cut it, whether it were back then or even now, it's not easy. It's not easy, you know, I like to say, what can we do to help?

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: But I've always pointed out, the fact, is just, go out and be who you are, you have no... you don't have nothing to be ashamed of. This is who you are.

Dicken: Mm-hm.

Tatum: That's, that's the point I, it's part of my... being, you know, just being. You know, and I encourage everybody to do the same.

Dicken: Hm. Are there other social movements right now, or recent moments in history that you've seen yourself as part of, or in relationship to this journey for you personally around gender, or for the larger transgender movement?
Tatum: Um, well with the political climate as it is now, yeah, I'm keeping an eye on that. You know, um, one thing I think is the move to erase our contributions.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: But I'm not going to let that happen. Because we... you know, we contributed to many things you know. We... you know, we work. We work, we contribute, we create art. Serve in the military.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: atum Um. Some of us went through a lot of stuff just to be who we are.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, we, we're in the schools, we've always been here. You know, we've been in schools, been in your schools, we've been in the jobs, we worked in the stores. You know, we travel around the world. We're all over the world. [Laughs]. So we've been around since the people have been on earth. You know, so that's, that hasn't changed, but... nobody can say that we never ever contributed, because we have.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: You know, under, you know, even under some of the stressful situations.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, I look at Stonewall, that was one... reason. People got tired of the harassment, you know, and people attacking them for who they are. And finally they said no more. You know, I was 20 years old when that happened, too. [Laughs]

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Did you hear about it at the time?

Tatum: I was in Long Island at the time, but I heard about it. It was all over the news.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: I was in Long Island at the time and the date it happened. But I came into the city a couple of days later, and I went down to Stonewall to see what happened. I said, the place is... wow [laughs]. I mean, not only just what happened there. In the neighborhood that it
happened, you know. The village was still, you know, it was... it wasn't cheap to live here, even back then in '69, it wasn't cheap to live here. But it happened in that neighborhood. But I had a gut feeling, I said, this is... I though this was a big thing. It was a turning point.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** Didn't know what it was, but I felt it was kind of a turning point. And as time has gone on, it turned out that it was a turning point. And, I'm happy that it happened, you know, because people, people who were out there paved the way where, you know, you and I can be who we are.

**Dicken:** Yeah.

**Tatum:** You know, and that's not lost on me, you know, people... I've always said that, always remember the people who came before you because they went through a whole lot more, [laughs] they went through a whole lot more than I ever did.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** You know, they took the chance, you know, they said no more, and they, and... I'm just thankful for them.

**Dicken:** Do you remember what you saw or heard in some more of the neighborhood when you came back?

**Tatum:** It was, garbage cans all over. I looked at the Stonewall, looked like it burned out or something like that.

**Dicken:** Hm.

**Tatum:** I just saw the remnants of what, what had gone on. Later on I did read, I did read what had happened, in the, in the newspapers, I read what had happened. But I went down there and saw for myself and it made an impression on me. And... it needed to happen. It really... you know. And I, of course I'm not for wars or any, you know violence. But sometimes you got to stand up for something. You got to stand up. Because... you, everybody has a right to live their own life, you know, nobody, you know...nobody, everybody has a right to live their own life. Everybody has a right to their own political views, everybody has a right to whatever neighborhood they live in. Whatever job they want to, trans, whether or not they want to have surgery. It can be any, anything. You know, every... you know. Just how you live your life, a person lives their life. Because I don't know, you know, what my vision is, how I want to live...different from the way anybody else lives, you know.

**Dicken:** Do you remember words that were being used to describe Stonewall in the news when you were reading or hearing about it? Or the type of people they were saying were part of the event?
Tatum: Mm. Um, I know liberation was one word I heard. It was called the Gay Liberation Front.

Dicken: Ah.

Tatum: I remember that liberation was a big word then. And I think, probably rights were, you know, um. I think I remember liberation because, like I said a lot of things were happening back then. You had civil rights movement, you had the peace movement. You had the labor movement. The women's movement was burgeoning at that time, you know. And then when Martin Luther King tried... almost we're all these groups together, just, almost, you... You know I say it was so... [unreadable] brought militants, the militant groups, you know, and. Um... the gay movement hadn't really burgeoned, maybe about a year later. But... you could say maybe it was, it, it could have been a part of it, or maybe, maybe it influenced the gay movement. Maybe it did, I don't know. But...

Dicken: Stonewall or the civil rights movement?

Tatum: I think the civil rights... had a lot to do because... it was about people's rights.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: You know, just like with, with African-Americans, you know, it was... You know they had a right, you know, a right to live the way they, you know, live a life. They had a right to vote. You know, the gay people, they had a right to live the life they want to live without being harassed. You know, so... it was intertwined, I felt it was intertwined. Even though they were awhile apart, maybe a couple years apart, it was intertwined. I think the civil rights movement was kind of an example.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, you... all the great movements, you know, when we had to change things in society, has always happened in the street.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: It always did, you know, in the civil rights movement. Going back years before, labor movements. You know, it had to happen because, you know, it happened you know, um. We have a history of a lot of labor movements but you can go back into, um, history, you know, um. Maybe in futile times, you know, when people it was just... people were tired of their living conditions, you know. People were starving, and the, and the ruling class was just taking what they wanted, they didn't care. Finally people just got fed up. You know, that's a [unreadable]. Like I look France, you know, Bastille day is a big, it's a big holiday, because, you know, the govern... the French government was... You know people were practically starving, the French government didn't care. People just finally said okay, enough. You know, and they knocked the whole thing down. And I look at Stonewall, it just knocked down, metaphorically speaking, it
knocked down a whole system of oppression. And it had to happen. And it was bound to happen, it was bound to happen. And I'm happy that it did happen. [Laughs]

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** Yeah.

**Dicken:** Is, was Stonewall the first moment in your life that you felt that sense of... this is going to change something? Or were there moments from earlier in your childhood or as part of the civil rights movement, or of seeing African American figures?

**Tatum:** Well, I knew things... I knew things were changing, I didn't know when, um... You know a lot had to happen. I think a lot had to happen, you know. You have to present yourself... One thing I've always said, was the trans community, you knew... if people are going to get on your side or help you out, you have to be visible.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** I've always been about that, I mean it's scary, it's scary, yeah, I'll admit that. But, you have to be visible. You know, I never criticize people who are stealth, you know, because, you know, it may not be feasible, you know. Might be a safety issue, I, I totally understand that.

**Dicken:** Yeah.

**Tatum:** I'm just going to speak from my, from the I position, you know. For me, personally, it wasn't an option. I said I have, I have to be out there. Cause it's just too much. Being trashed on, transwomen being beat up, even killed. You know, I had to be, it's something, I had to be visible. It's just something, whatever happens, you know. I'm just thankful nothing's happened, you know. But, I had be, it's something that I have to do. You know sometimes, sometimes you have to do some things, whatever the consequences.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** I mean, I looked at Dr. King, you know. And I've always said with Dr. Kin, he, he went against the whole system at that time. And he knew that someday a bullet would come. He knew that. And that took a lot of courage, that took a lot. And I said to myself, I don't think I'd ever do what he did. But he had that conviction, you know, you know, it was just in him, he just had that conviction. And me being out, you know, I just, it's just my own conviction. I just believe that I have to be out there. And, slowly I... you know, I, like I came out to my church 5 years ago. My whole church, and they accepted me. I was coming out to a lot of other things, I came out to my brother and my nephew about the time my sister passed. But they told me they already knew, I said oh, wow. [Laughs] Cause my sister had told them, I told her over a year, year and a half before.

**Dicken:** Mm.
Tatum: I told her a year and a half before. And what she shared with me, I found that very refreshing. She said somebody on her job was transitioning while they were on the job.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: And she said to me "as far as I'm concerned, I have no problem with it." And that was so, that was so refreshing to hear.

Dicken: Mm. Do you identify with LGB communities? Lesbian, gay, and bisexual?

Tatum: I do. I do, because, we suffered the same, we went through the same stuff. You know, the places. You know, thank god for a place like New York City. But, in other countries, they kill gay people.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: You know, they, you know, some countries, they want to obliterate, you know, look what's happening in Chechen. You know, and in other countries too, you know. So, I know there's been a movement to want to seperate the LGB from the T. Personally, I don't think you can separate them.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Simply because we went through the same stuff. I guess it has a lot to do with how much an impact Stonewall had. You know, even though later on they, we were kind of pushed in margins, but the fact is, is we were there [laughs].

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: Fact is, we were there. You know, and nobody can take that away. You know, and I support gay and lesbian course, my courses, I always have. I always have supported that. But, I've had to educate some folks about, what it is to be trans. Because with LGB it's, it's to do with, with the sexuality. You know, with transgender, it has to do with identity and expression, you know. And, you know, and um, and expression, you're out there. You know, just like being, being, um, black, you know, I'm out there.

Dicken: Mm-hmm.

Tatum: I know I never hid from that, you know. And I was out, I can't hide from it, you know. Now being trans, I'm out there, you know, I can't hide from that. This is, you know... And I'm not going to hide from it, you know, I'm not going to hide from it, you know. I have nothing to be ashamed of, you know. You know, and I, maybe it's just me educating the public.

Dicken: Mm.
**Tatum:** [Laughs] You know, just from my... I have a degree in um, childhood education, and a minor in english, and I remember, I remember telling the his, the, chairman of my department. I said, I may not necessarily teach in a classroom, in a conventional setting...

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** But I will be teaching, in some way. In an unconventional setting. Or in unconventional ways. And it's pretty much just happened. Pretty much what's... you know, doing the theater, you know, transgenerational theater project. You know, doing other things, out with the moon shows, it's, you know. Queer space, you know. So it's, you know, educating others in a different aspect.

**Dicken:** Yeah. What has it been like to be trans in LGB communities, or...

**Tatum:** I, personally, I haven't had any, I haven't had any problem. I just... I just enjoy being in the whole thing. I feel, you know, when I go to the center or here, I just feel so comfortable.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** And I feel very comfortable, just being here. I remember a year before I came out as trans. I, well I used to walk by the center all the time before. I remember a year before saying, I wouldn't be caught dead in that place. [Laughs]

**Dicken:** Wow.

**Tatum:** And then a year later, when I was doing my gender issues, that was the place I went.

**Dicken:** Wow.

**Tatum:** But it was nice to know that it was there. Cause I think about what had happened, and if I had found out that I was trans, you know, like back in the early 70s, when there wasn't practically anything. There were... I mean with the gay, gay and lesbian people, they, at least they had a little bit of something. I don't know if any trans people had any marches, anything.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** You know, and I don't, and [what] some of my friends had gone through, oh. You know, it's, it's a miracle they're alive, some of them are alive right now. Really, cause some of the stuff that they went through. And... that means a lot to me. It really means a lot to me, you know. I've shared, I said, listen, I've never, I never went, any of the things that some of you have gone through. But I'm with you.

**Dicken:** Mm.
**Tatum:** You know, that... that you can kind of take to the bank, you know. I'm with you. Because you went through a whole lot, you know. Some of you maybe lost your life, you think about ending it all. And yet, you sur... you went through all, you know, you survived it. You're here now. You're not a sur... you're not just a survivor, you're a victor.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** You know, and you survived, and you're an example to me. And I've always, that's why it's so important to me to remember those who came before me, I mean, I mean... Some of them didn't, some of them didn't make it. Some of them didn't make it. But you were willing to go out there and take that chance. You know, and that means a lot to me, you know. And people that are my friends now, you know, I'm so happy for them.

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** Just so happy for them.

**Dicken:** What is your relationship with other trans or gender non-conforming people like?

**Tatum:** Oh, it's been wonderful, we, you know, we have our meetings here. You know, after awhile a few of us go out, we go out to dinner, we talk, you know. Just being with each other, you know. When I came to SAGE, I came to SAGE before, but I wanted to meet more transgender women. And...

**Dicken:** Mm.

**Tatum:** About the time when I came, you know, they had just started the transgender group for women my age, women my age. It just started, so, uh, it was perfect [laughs]. It was... talk about timing [laughs].

**Dicken:** [laughs]

**Tatum:** And I missed the first meeting because we had a snowstorm.

**Dicken:** Wow.

**Tatum:** Yeah, I remember a snowstorm, I said, I said no, no subways were running so I couldn't get here. So they cancelled the meeting.

**Dicken:** Uh, sure.

**Tatum:** [laughs]

**Dicken:** When was that?
**Tatum:** It was like, mmm, two thousand... fourteen maybe.

**Dicken:** Yeah.

**Tatum:** Yeah, 14, yeah.

**Dicken:** What are some, some of the relationships that have been most important to you? Through your life, or recently?

**Tatum:** Well, my trans-sisters. You know, I just love them, my sisters. I... you know, we keep in touch, you know. Whenever something bothers them, I'm, you know, it bothers me. You know, I try to help them out as much as I can. A, a few that I'm really close to, you know, I'm really kind of close to. Uh, my wife is accepting now, you know. It took her awhile, I knew it was going to take her awhile, you know. It's still a little... tough on her. You know, we do things together. You know, we do things together, but. You know, at time she worries about me. You know, being out and everything, you know, but... You know, she just prays for me, you know. I have another friend that, you know, I always say when we, she's not trans, but, she loves being with trans people. You know, I always say, get home say, she always says, no, you get home safe.

**Dicken:** [Laughs]

**Tatum:** She's more worried about me getting home, you know. And, you know, it's just... just the overall LGBT community, I've just, you know, I just consider them family. Yeah.

**Dicken:** What does companionship mean to you, or feel like?

**Tatum:** Well, um... well, I think my wife and I have gotten a little closer. I think it's... she sees that I'm the same person. So, I would say, just a different covering, that's all. [Laughs] But I'm the same person. Uh, some of my friends, you know, friends, you know, some of us, you know, we keep in touch, you know, we, I have some of them I talk on the phone fairly regular. You know, when I see some of them hurt, you know, I see some of them hurt. I, alright, you know, I empathize with them to see what I could help. And because a lot... there are times when, you know we have our meetings you know, sometimes, sometimes we have some heavy subjects, you know. I think about them too. I think about them too, you know. See how they're doing, you know. You know, I remember some nights I just laid there, 2, 3 in the morning just thinking about what went on, you know. Some of the stuff that we had to go through, it's a little frustrating, you know. Naturally it's frustrating, but... I'm just happy that I know them. I'm just, just so happy that I know them. They're my friends.

**Dicken:** Yeah. How does being trans relate to other aspects of your identity?

**Tatum:** Um, what's that mean, as um...

**Dicken:** As in, if, if you think there are ways that your gender or your sexuality, your race, your class, your religion, are there ways that they influence each other?
Tatum: They just, it's just, being trans is just part of me. It's always... up until, maybe 2005 I didn't know I had it. But I always believed the timing, that it was time for me, Genevieve to come out. It was time. And I'm a believer in timing too, you know, sometimes you may not already be ready for it. Now, I mean, I wasn't ready in 2000. [Laughs]

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: I went no, I said no, I don't think, no I wasn't ready in 2000. Just like with a lot of things in life...

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Sometimes, you may not be ready for it at that particular time, but, the time, when the right time comes, you'll be ready. Yeah.

Dicken: Hm.

Tatum: But I think everything about, you know, about my whole, about life in general. I think of life in general, race, gender, sexuality, um, anything else, you know. Education even, you know.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: Like, I went back to college when I was 54.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: Yeah. I had been in junior college. But I couldn't go because there was problems in my family, but I promised my mother that I would get my education one day, and I did. I did. She never lived to see it, but I, it's a promise that I was going to keep.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: And, you know. So it was, it was the right time.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: Some 30 years later. [Laughs] Yeah.

Dicken: [Laughs] After she had told you 30 or so years before, the world's going to change, right?

Tatum: Yeah, it, it, the world did change.
Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: It was a good piece of advice and I thank her for it, you know, because, you know cause the world, it did change, you know. Sometimes it was a little fast, you know. Other times, I gradually saw it. When I left for the military, I was... I had a feeling that things were going to change. I just had a feeling, you know, because by the end of that year, I said... I looked at it like a chapter in a book.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, cause of all the people who were heroes and all that. I think that the defining moment was in July of '71 when Jim Morrison of The Doors had passed. When I heard that he had died. And then I just had this sense this chapter in my life is ending. By the end of the year, that chapter had ended. Not just, just that whole particular era. You know, like say from maybe, like '67 through '71. Yeah that was a year, a lot of growth for me. I saw, I saw a lot of things... outside of what I would say... I saw a lot of things, you know. I saw, you know, the highs, you know, just being out there. I saw the lows from all the assassinations, and how it affected people. How it really affected people. And I saw the concerns of other people, like the anti-war movement, you know. You know, trying to understand the women's movement and the gay movement at that time, you know. And then understanding the whole world, the world as a whole, how everything worked.

Dicken: Mm.

Tatum: You know, and so it was kind of like an informal education for me. At times it was very painful. It was very painful. But it was something I had to go through. I needed to go through. So by the time I got out of the service I was kind of... Okay, this is what happened and this is what I'm faced with now. So I could better handle it, you know, getting back to the timing thing, you know, I could handle it now. Now I was 25 when I got out. I don't think I could've handled it when I was 22. Something like that, I don't think I could've handled it.

Dicken: Mm. I'm 25 now as I'm interviewing you, so I'm..

Tatum: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Dicken: ...thinking for myself about timing and listening to the story and where I stand in these movements, and with my [unintelligible]

Tatum: Yeah.

Dicken: Um, what's a moment that you're proud of?

Tatum: One moment I'm proud of is when I came out to my religious community. I had wanted to do it before, you know. Uh, the senior minister at that time had shared... well I, I think it was his wife that told me, you know... that when he came to the church, you know, he was going to
make it open and affirming and like 70 families left. Just totally left the church. He took a chance, he took a chance, he was going to be open and affirming. And he was a very warm, very warm person. I told him, I told him almost immediately that I was trans. I never did that. [Laughs] I never wanted to tell anyone that I'm trans. [Laughs]

Dicken: [Laughs]

Tatum: I said hey now [laughs] I remember when I told, when I had to tell my wife, you know [laughs].

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: But I felt safe, I felt very comfortable, I could come to him. And he took me and he said listen, that's okay. And I thought I was going to come out, I think it was about March of that year. But then I thought about Pride would be coming up in June, and I thought that would be the perfect time. And it was. It was the first Sunday in June, I, I came in like this.

Dicken: Wow.

Tatum: Yeah, I wore, I had worn a suit. I came in dressed as Genevieve. Some people picked it up right away, others didn't. Matter of fact, one of the assistant ministers, he didn't, he was... he didn't even know [laughs]. And then I remember one particular moment where we were talking to one of the ladies, you know, my wife was talking to the ladies. And the lady said to my wife, where's your husband, she said he's standing right here. She looked at me so shocked [laughs]. But that was, that was such an affirming moment.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: That was one I remember, I'll always remember that.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: Yeah. Because church has always been part of my life, you know, I grew up, grew up in there, you know, and everything. It was part of, always been part of my life. And just being who I was in my spiritual community, it meant all, it meant the world to me.

Dicken: Did you feel seen in that moment? Or is there another moment?

Tatum: I did, I did, from that moment on I did. I did. There were other moments too. Um, when my wife... went with me while I was like this, you know. At the time she didn't feel comfortable with me even going. And then the day came when that happened and I was happy about that. Very happy. Another one I was happy about. Yeah. There were some small, those 2 I remember the most, those 2 I remember specifically. Yeah.

Dicken: I feel like we could keep talking, but I, they're serving dinner at SAGE right now.
Tatum: [Laughs]

Dicken: So I'm, maybe I'll ask just a couple more questions to wrap up.

Tatum: Sure, sure.

Dicken: And, um, we can have a bite to eat. How do you feel right now, in your body, or your heart, or your head?

Tatum: Uh, I'm the person that I'm supposed to be. Yeah, um, never been happier in my life, I've never been happier. Yeah.

Dicken: If you wanted to be remembered for one thing, what would it be?

Tatum: Mm. Um, I made a difference. I tutored, um, I used to tutor students, uh, getting their G.E.D.'s. I remember the training that we took before that. And, and I went down there, I wanted to make a difference. I was 50 years old and I said that, and I still want to make a difference, it's still my mantra in life, I want to make a difference. No matter how big or how small, you know, I just want to be that difference making somebodies life.

Dicken: I think that's a beautiful note to wrap on, so I don't have another question. But is there anything you wanted to add?

Tatum: Yeah, I encourage everybody to just be who you are. Be who you are, and don't let others define who you are, you define who you, who you want to be. Define yourself.

Dicken: Is there anyone else you know who might be interested in participating in this project and being interviewed?

Tatum: I'll have to ask.

Dicken: Yeah.

Tatum: I'll have to ask.

Dicken: [Laughs] Okay.

Tatum: [Laughs] I'll have to ask, you know.

Dicken: I'm sure there are some people would love to...

Tatum: Yeah, I'm pretty sure there are.

Dicken: ...have their stories.
Tatum: Yeah, I'm pretty sure there are, yeah.

Dickens: Thank you, Genevieve.

Tatum: Thank you.