NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

ALLISON CHARDE

Interviewer: Grace Ramsay

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Grace
Ramsay: Hello, my name is Grace and I will be having a conversation with Allison for the New York City Trans Oral History Project in collaboration with the New York Public Libraries Community Oral History Project. This is an oral history project centered on the experiences of Trans identifying people. It is February 15, 2017 and this is being recorded at SOHO in the NYU Sociology Building. Okay, so... do you want to start off with talking about where you’re from a little bit?

Allison
Charde: Um...yeh, I'm from the bottle neck of Long Island, the East Hampton, the Hamptons but not from a wealthy family. Which, you know, at the end of the island it's very separated from the rest of the island and the rest of the whole country, so...

Ramsay: Yeah

Charde: Yeah, it formed my experience a lot.

Ramsay: Definitely. Do you, do you have specific memories of that forming, you know, your childhood, or...

Charde: Um...well, definitely you know of course I have formative gender memories and queer memories like everybody else but specifically being separated from other people, I just remember whenever I realized that not everybody lives completely surrounded by the ocean and I've like, you know, just was jarring for me to think people to drive North and go to a different town, you know. I only knew like three towns till I was like 14.

Ramsay: Yeah, that's so different from other parts of the country..

Charde: Yeah

Ramsay: Yeah

Charde: Yeah

Ramsay: Do you want to talk a little bit about your family, like who else was in your family growing up?

Charde: Um. My family was me, my older brother Jack, whose three years older than me, my mom Lisa, my father John. My parents were together, are still together. Yeah, my brother is a definite, definite bro, like sweet bro. But, yeah, you know I was always a really weird kid. Always weird kid. (2:21)

Ramsay: Do you have a specific memories? [laughter]

Charde: Um. Well I used to think that, I used to think that people, because I didn't have, like, friends till I got to high school. I didn't really have, like, anybody. I used to be really bitter...
about that for a long time and then realized that I didn't like the way other people played and didn't really want to, like, chill with them. Specifically, I remember in elementary school when everybody had social time, I would sit on the carpet and cup both of my hands around my mouth connecting up to my ear and whisper very softly to myself [laughter]. For, like, the whole time. And my teachers would be like “maybe you should like, you know, talk” and then I'd like talk at them for like 20 minutes and then they'd be like “maybe you should get a notebook” [laughter]. One of my teachers gave me a notebook and was like “if you get too riled up and you feel like you can't stop talking go out into the hallway and write in this book”. Misses Aimes.

**Ramsay:** So sweet [laughter]. So... did you feel like you were isolated? Like you're kind of bring up these things of isolation, did you notice that growing up?

**Charde:** Mmm... I noticed it in that when there were like, when I had spent enough time alone at the end of the day and be like, I would crave somebody to call. You know, somebody to like reach out to. But, say for like, my friend Nicole Frank in 5th grade who... we spent like one month talking on the phone every night but... didn't actually end up, she was never actually a very good friend. Definitely a longtime friend but as far as quality goes, yeah. Yeah, so I did feel a lot of isolation after I had enough time with myself. Like, okay everybody show up now, you know. I'm still like that, yeah.

**Ramsay:** Definitely. So, um, when do you think you found your first sense of community?

**Charde:** Um... that's... college. Really truly not until college. You know, there were, I was in the, my high schools “gay/straight alliance”—I'm using air quotes. And that, you know, there were like one to five other people in it at any given time but not people that I really related to. You know, that I felt any kinship to. We had sort of held each other up as queer and I got to like, you know, express myself. Oh, the internet! I'm sorry, the internet. Tumblr, um, yeah Tumblr! That was I think, yeah, my first sense of community/queer community, outside of myself. It was a way to drive north, I guess. You know?

**Ramsay:** Yeah, when did you get on Tumblr?

**Charde:** Probably 2009, Sam King, yea, because me and Sam King were, you know, kissing a little bit. Somebody who grew up in South Hampton as I grew up in East Hampton. Um, another queer person who like was like at the end of this island and we were both bottlenecked. Yeah, he had a Tumblr and I used to go on it every day. Every day I used to go on it. I was King Crown, I think. KingCrown.Tumblr.com, and I went on it and you know eventually, he was like in and out, like, his own stuff so I had to pull myself away from him and I just, like, sort of dove into the queer internet community. In a very shallow way, I just like posted poetry and stalked, like internet stalked people.

**Ramsay:** Definitely. You mentioned earlier that your teachers would give you notebooks to write in—
Charde: Yeah, for like poetry

Ramsay: Yeah, right. So did you use writing...

Charde: Definitely! Definitely. I did and I still do. My concentration was in playwriting in college and I used it as like a, you know if, I think that in my isolation I still always wanted to be heard. Yeah, I just didn't like the way people played. You know, I think it's like a control issue probably. But um, year writing was a definite outlet. My writing is still ON, like all my adolescent, like queer feelings--- but they weren't, they weren't feelings that were actively and warily synthesizing my queerness but they were like, dreaming up people and relationships from which to draw. You know, because I just didn't have any other ones, so... Yeah, used that. It's still, I think, still up. Ifeelphishy.tumblr.com, so if anybody stumbles across this in the future and feels like looking at a truly adolescent gender queer adult persons young self, go ahead. I'll only be, I can't be embarrassed because I don't know if you're looking at it or not.

Ramsay: So I want to get back, you had mentioned earlier, about your early queer inklings, you know... How did you, how do you narrativize them now, how do you, you know...

Charde: I think that I say to a lot of people, I remember my um... a haircut that I got after taking scissors to one side of my head, you know, the hair on my head. And I cut it really short and we went to Genie, who was my mom's hairdresser to even it out and by the time it was evened out I had just truly looked like a little boy. And I looked like my cousins, my cousin Robert had the same haircut and I just remember reveling in that. I thought it was the most, I thought it was the best I felt as a little creature. It was truly the best I felt. So that was, that was the beginning...you know, yeah...

Ramsay: Yeah, queer hair is real.

Charde: Queer hair is real.

Ramsay: Yeah

Charde: It's all over me

Ramsay: [laughter] Was there any pushback in your family?

Charde: Mmm—There was-- there was gender stuff towards me being a girl from like, my boy cousins. You know, I grew up with pretty exclusively male cousins, my age. And so, you know, but other than that I—I always took note of my father complimenting me when I was wearing a sweet little Christmas outfit on Christmas Eve to go a big family party. That sticks out to me—his, like, overcompensating approval of my once a year femininity—you know? And then you know, as I got older—school dances, you know, stuff that I had to wear a dress for, he was always like “you look so amazing, you look so great” and it's only sweet from him but that is something that always reminded me to curve towards the normative. Be better at it, work at it—worked at it all the time.
Ramsay: Um... did you—when you were going to the school dances and everything in these really gendered spaces, what did that feel like?

Charde: Well, um... there was one time when McKayla Monte in I’m sure just in a sweet little—like feeling bad for me moment—cause I was always alone at the dances and you know everybody else had a group and she was like come dance with us. And I did and it was fun but everybody grinded in middle school, right, and that made me very uncomfortable because I had a perception that when I was older I was going to come out. I had an idea that there was something wrong—you know something that I was holding inside of me that had to do with my sexuality. Gender at that point wasn’t a big idea but I didn’t let other girls touch me, ever. I didn’t hug, didn’t—you know, there was this girl Dana Dedrone who was always trying to sit on everybody's laps and she’d come over and I’d freak out if she touched me because I thought I was going to come out and everybody was going to say “Oh Allison touched me in the 7th grade cause we hugged—you know, I was petrified of that. Only until college I got comfortable touching—you know, my friends.

Ramsay: Yeah, that makes sense. When you had this—these premonitions of your own coming out were there any icons, any celebrities, anyone in your life that you were drawing from to understand that process?

Charde: Duh, Ellen [Degeneres], duh, and—what was her name—one of the people that my mom grew up with and was with my mom volunteer ambulance association and another person in that—Anne, I forget her last name—though it’s one of those first name last, name people. Anne is so butch and a lesbian, and the only lesbian I really knew for so many years. You know, had a partner, was the foster parent and then an adoptive parent, but she was so butch. She is so butch. And, um, like, you know-- I'll drop Allison Bechdel and Lisa Kron to [inaudible] from the musical Fun Home. Ring of Keys is a song about young Allison Bechdel seeing the butch walk-in with her ring of keys and her confidence and her boots—and just being in awe, and there’s this one line that’s like “I know you” and she repeats it, “I know you”--- Like, I get you and you get me. Were here together, can you look at me and see me? And that’s, you know, that was my icon.

Ramsay: Yeah, um—What-- when did-- how long was she around? Was she around your whole life?

Charde: Yeah, on and off. You know, friends with my mom. She was assistant chief and my mom was chief so they, you know. I was always seeing her. And her—she had, she had this long grey blond hair but presents in such a masculine way. I just, I like had to remind myself not to stare at her. You know, very important to see for me and like one of the only examples ever.

Ramsay: Yeah

Charde: You know
Ramsay: Yeah

Charde: Like a real one

Ramsay: Yeah, she was somebody you could notice---

Charde: Right

Ramsay: and did notice

Charde: I identified with---

Ramsay: Right

Charde: And that’s, you know, that was my first introduction to, like, what community means, you know? Cause, um, you think of it as gatherings and spaces and connections but community is like an undercurrent, truly. Especially in a place that pigeon holds everybody into like three towns. You know? Community is such an undercurrent.

Ramsay: Yeah. So, how did you start reckoning with yourself or consulting yourself when--- it sounds like you were planning this coming out in some ways.

Charde: Duel planner, yeah.

Ramsay: Did you want to talk about that?

Charde: I’m a Virgo

Ramsay: [laughter] Of course

Charde: Yeah, um, well I planned my sexuality coming out—I, um, you know, I’m an intense person sometimes so things happen really quickly, um, once I admit them to myself. So I knew something was going on so I didn’t touch anybody and once I finally—kind of—my friend Shawna Polly on AIM (AOL Instant Message) said to me “do you think you’re gay?” and I was like “yup, I do, YES that’s the ticket”. Then got really depressed. My mom was like—my mom reached her strong, wonderful hand in and yanked me by the scruff of my neck out of the closet and—um—from then on it was just how to tell people from school and this was freshman year of high school in 2009. I told my, I told, like, these three friends that I had named Nicole and Christina and I just told them to spread it like wildfire. Everybody knew I was gay in a day. It was hot.

Ramsay: That’s great [laughter]

Charde: [laughter]
Ramsay: That's what you wanted, right?

Charde: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's how I execute literally everything.

Ramsay: [laughter] Yeah?

Charde: I'm like, let's get it done—let's finish it all today.

Ramsay: Right. So 2009 coincides with your Tumblr christening.

Charde: Yes. My Tumblr christening—yes.

Ramsay: So, were you out online before you were out in real life?

Charde: I don't know if I was ever—No, I was out in real life first. I was out in real life first. I was weary, very weary of the internet. Like, self-expression was sort of convoluted, like, early poetry is very cryptic. My early kid poetry is very cryptic. If that's possible.

Ramsay: Do you know why the internet was--?

Charde: Well, I think that it's—we have a way different relationship, it's evolved so much in the past couple years. So, in 2009 there internet was something we feared a little bit more, you know? That it was sort of a roaming place for all sorts of people and being taken advantage of was a fear and being—just anybody reaching out was scary, you know? So, us all sort of reaching out to each other in like a dashboard—on the dashboard, you know, where everybody's post show up together—that even when I first did it felt like a violation. Like, all these people's thoughts and feelings are inside of my room, spooky. It was really scary in the beginning, it was really weird. Now were so used to it, you know? Were used to the stranger being familiar, you know?

Ramsay: Yeah. That's really right, I feel like. It's hard to consider what the internet meant to an adolescent when it was growing kind of with us.

Charde: Right, right. And I think it truly did. Literally. I mean, born in '94—like when did the internet become something people could access. I don't know.

Ramsay: Yeah. So you mentioned the quote unquote gay/straight alliance, right, in high school. Were there other people around you that were out in your high school?

Charde: Out? As bisexual, were two other people-- those people I think – I think one of them currently identifies as queer and has changed names and pronouns, so they're queer evolution didn't stop it—um, bisexual. Not that that's an early stage—but they, you know, their life has changed or like they've come into their own, you know. Yeah, you get it. The other one I think self identifies as a lesbian.
Ramsay: Cool

Charde: Yeah

Ramsay: Um, were there people that you had that sense of connectedness with you moms friend—were there other people that you could see yourself in at that point?

Charde: mmm—no. No, it was very lonely. My development was very lonely. It's beyond—you know, not having anybody else around my age, I didn't even see anybody at anybody else's age. You know, who represented it. Yeah, it was very lonely.

Ramsay: Do you feel—for some people the coming out part process that was granted to us in high school was limiting or caused stereotypes of some kind? Did you have negative experiences with the way in which people read you once you came out in high school?

Charde: Um...mmmm—no. No. I mean, I think—I think I was novelle to people. The— I think—I was popular in high school, um, I think because I was a little bit mysterious to people but before I was in high school, I was gay, and I was like—totally on the other side of the fence than everybody else. So, that was intriguing to people I think. And I—I don’t know, I was funny, so. That all helped but I didn’t get anybody who—I mean, I got two slanderous words but everybody was pretty upset with the person who spoke. You know the two people that messed with me. You know—everybody, everybody was on my side. Everybody wanted to say they were on my side but the loneliness was still there. My friends would say “you can talk to me about this stuff”, and you know, I’d be like “I really would love if I could... I wish I could but I can’t”. I can’t relate. The undercurrent of community— I needed the undercurrent to start flowing on the top. I needed something to hold on to. Yeah, that made me strong especially as a queer person. I do crave community of course we all do but I’m—I can really hold my own, I think, and step outside and do a lot of analysis of queer community and queer rhetoric and all the different voices are very individual and I hear them all when I’m listening. I can discern what I feel is my truth from all of it. Which is hard, and was hard in college, you know, we all--- we all got there and wanted to scream and make our own new rules and a lot of that discourse was so important, you know—and definitely got me to—like I remember I was using they/them pronouns for like five minutes because that's truly how I feel. I'm gender queer, genderless, but also identify as, like, masc (masculine) of center dyke, you know, masculine of center dyke. I also identify as boy, young man—never man. I also identify occasionally as a woman, you know. So, getting to college, having a strong sense of lonely self and individual self. There were maybe two years that I was really immersed in the queer community and maybe couldn't quite critically analyze what was going on but my latter two years in college were full of critical analysis. The queer community and what we were saying and doing, you know.

Ramsay: Yeah, and I would love to get to that and hear that—

Charde: Yeah—yeah
Ramsay: [laughter] No, absolutely that would be great but I want to pick up on this thread of language and identification—um, and thinking about what words you used and were accessible to you earlier in your life once getting to college. You know, how did that change? How did new access to language shape what you’re speaking about now?

Charde: Mmhmm—Well, I have a very close relationship with my parents and I sort of stopped talking to them, especially my mother, because I felt that once I got to college within a month I had a different tongue. I spoke-- just a different language and I was learning so much and synthesizing it all that I couldn't talk to her about anything. I mean now were close and she's so cool. She is so good at listening and being there with my queerness. But, the switch from having no words for what I was to having words-- like, gender fluid—like, gender non-conforming—like, gender fuck—you know? Oh my God, when I learned gender fuck I was like “yeah, this is me 3000%”. It was—I mean it was, like, you know, getting to college and having language was like—it was like almost like having sex for the first time and it’s really good. You know, and you’re like “I could do this every day for the rest of my life... but you can’t do it every day”... I guess some people can.

Ramsay: Yeah, so, like—what—before you went to college, what words did you have—what were you using to identify yourself?

Charde: Couldn’t’ say the word lesbian-- um, well I was saying that I was gay. I’m gay. Gender wasn’t a question—um, that I felt that I could really ask myself. There were—there was the feelings were there and they were underneath it all and I thought about it all the time but I knew that people who wanted to be—at the time I knew that people wanted to be-- that boys wanted to be boys and I would go through periods of convincing myself that that was my bag. And then become petrified with myself, revert and go back to “no, this is not who I am, I'm totally woman”—you know, I don't want to change anything about myself. But, it's already different. Without changing anything, you're already just different and that’s special. And that’s something that I learned in college that, you know, there's—there was nothing I could do. And I had to start accepting who I was and here were all of these people and this whole language, you know, that—that allowed, you know it opened a pathway. It let cleared the brush.

Ramsay: Were you aware of any sort of, um—I know the language of transness has become more popular I think for today's adolescence but were in the same class year, we went to school at the same time and I’m wondering your experiences about knowing anything about transness.

Charde: In high school?

Ramsay: Yeah, even besides questioning your own gender did you have an understanding that that was something that people did?

Charde: Yeah, I mean—who was it-- music I never listened to but in the gay straight alliance was someone who liked music by Ryan Cassata, I don't know if you know who that is. Ryan Otto Cassatta, I remember looking at his Facebook a lot because he is Trans and very prolific
about it. Very open and fabulous. And I think he was that example of somebody who transitioned but, you know, he had top surgery. I'm not sure about hormones, you know, but he kind of represented like the other end of the spectrum. And again, like, I'm—I'm a black and white thinker, really and truly, so I was either like “I'm like Ryan” or “I'm nothing like Ryan”. There was no in-between. That's why being able to hold onto something, like, gender queer was—it was like, you know, the black and white thinking. All of a sudden I could click with something, I could put myself in that box. But, didn't happen till college.

Ramsay: Alright, so, you went to Purchase (University), right?

Charde: I did.

Ramsay: Does that environment somewhere in which is—did you find your people there easily? What was it like kind of coming to Purchase as a gay person?

Charde: Um, a blessing and a curse. Purchase sort of breathes a queer community or at least it did when I was there. That I think for me, it held everyone a little too close to the flame. It stressed me out to be someone who could fuck up so easily and make a mistake and ruin my social life. Which happened once, with somebodies birth name that I used and didn't know they didn't go by it. In a really serious and deadline way. And I ended up being, sort of, ex-communicated, which was hard because we identified in a similar way—like our genders made sense to each other, you know, there was that community there. But the community ostracized me and that's when my criticisms really, really kicked into play. Because I was like I never want to make anybody feel this bad for making a mistake. That being said, it is really important to hold people close to the fire, it's still really important. Um—to demand respect and sometimes sacrifice certain relationships in order to progress—and to radically progress. You know you have to—you have to push really hard and you push certain people out of the way. You know, I see why. It hurt me, but—but you know, I needed to become weary because when I first got to Purchase I found the queer community. Like, the LGBTQ+ club was filled the first week, you know, at that club it's just a meat market. You know, every bodies just jonesing to, you know, meet people, make new friends, kiss each other, you know—everybody wants that. Um, so I dove in right away because I've never hung out with more than two other queer people in a room together. Um, maybe trusted a little too easily. So, I think that while I do believe that we need to get careful, that I need to be careful as a queer person not to hurt other people, or like, be too hard on people who don't get it. That's just my own, my own queer plate. [Whispers to self] I lost it, I lost my thought.

Ramsay: We're talking a little bit about accountability and, kind of, if I may use the term “call out culture” this, you know, social capital. Things that happen, especially on liberal college campuses, not to disparage liberal colleges campuses, but there's some politics there.

Charde: Right, you said call out culture that is definitely a, something that, something that is really hard. You know, um, but. You know, because I, I know that I'd never want to make my mom feel the way that, you know, that if she spoke out about how she was feeling before I had
any discourse with her, that's exactly how that would make her feel. You know, people would tear her apart. So, you know, I hate that.

**Ramsay:** Yeah. So in what context in participation did you come into these vocabulary words that so strongly resonated with you? Was it in a class setting? Was it in that community?

**Charde:** Social.

**Ramsay:** Social.

**Charde:** Totally social. And in a really, really nice way. At Purchase there was a lot of using new terms and new understandings and there were certain people who had just little light descriptions of them and then after that, it was sort of assumed do you know, you knew what was going on. So, social capital was bound to happen, you know. Social hierarchies are bound to happen. My friend Annie used to say “Queerer than thou”. You know there are certain people who are “queerer than thou” but there were certain people, God, that are just such good educators. And after they educated you treated you in the way that you wanted to be treated. Like, you knew what was going on. God, our insecurities like are so intense especially when it comes to language and rhetoric. Language is one of the things that people are so insecure about. So, my favorite thing about going to Purchase is that there were certain people that treated me like I already knew what was going on and I learned from that. When I talk about things that I know people don’t know about I do the same thing. I give very light descriptions that let you in and open the door and just treat people like they all know what’s going on. People want that because then they do know what’s going on. Then they have a door and access through me.

**Ramsay:** Yeah. Absolutely. So did you kind of perform, have you performed that role as educator for people since?

**Charde:** Yeah, definitely out of college. And I guess in college. But, yeah. I worked at, between May when I graduated college and December or January, I worked at a local bar. I worked with people who are the farthest outside the queer community that you can possibly be. There is just no understanding, at all. Like, people that still use like, Caitlin Jenner's birth name. Even though she's such a huge, everybody knows about her. Anyway, I did a lot of that, you know, let me treat you, treat this conversation like it's a regular one to have because it doesn't feel like it, but it is. It just between two groups that don't necessarily communicate very well. Normies. [Laughter]

**Ramsay:** [Laughter] Definitely.

**Charde:** Love me a good normie.

**Ramsay:** So, I want to back track a little back to college. What did you major in there?

**Charde:** Theatre.
Ramsay: Theatre.

Charde: Theatre and performance. Concentration on playwriting, I did a lot of acting. I did a little directing and stage designing.

Ramsay: What drew you to that?

Charde: Um… We had to go to college after high school. That’s our um, that’s what they wagged their finger about in this world. And I was good at it in high school. It’s like, you know, a lot of leading roles and musicals. A lot of long hair and dresses. So, that’s what I chose. And I loved it and I still love it. I don’t know if it’s going to be my whole future but I’m seeing what my relationship to it is all the time. Actually, the other day started, I had a really, really hard gender day. Some days are easy, some days are really hard. I started writing a gender forward piece, I like theatrical viennets. I like a bunch of moments put together that don’t necessarily culminate into a linear story. I just like pieces, like skits, and wrote sort of a bunch of gender skits in my crazy dismorphed gender media. So, I use theatre definitely as an outlet. Also, in New York it’s crazy to see, there’s so much good theatre but there’s also bad theatre and seeing bad theatre makes you think “I could put my shit up”. You know, if this is up here I could, I’m in.

Ramsay: Yeah, absolutely. It’s interesting when you think about theatre and performance in gender. Have you made those connections?

Charde: Yeah, there’s this little word and it’s called “performativity”. Yeah, that was my first time using it, it’s been really cool, and I’ve only seen it written. [Laughter] Yeah, there were a lot of acting classes that just became completely about my gender. There was this solo performance class that I took with a professor and performance artist, director, and writer name Lenora Champagne. And I just—the whole thing was about my gender, my genitals, and my relationship with my mother.

Ramsay: That’s a good tagline. [Laughter]

Charde: [Laughter] Um. I’m going to need to write that down. I’ll just remember it “my gender, my genitals, and my relationship with my mother”.

Ramsay: I’ve been thinking about what you mentioned earlier, like the first week at the LGBTQ+, you know, this stomping ground for young queers. Did you have any relationships earlier on in college that kind of influenced your trajectory through the queer world at Purchase?

Charde: Like, romantic relationships?

Ramsay: Romantic or…

Charde: anything?
Ramsay: anything.

Charde: Well, I mean, yes. Overwhelming yes. I had—it was my first girlfriend. So, um—Lauren, great human. We dated for six months and it was my first experience being like “here's my own—here's my other”, you know. How about that look, it's flesh and blood and it's, and it's, yeah. So that, going from somebody who always flew solo to, you know. Because my first, my first relationship in high school was a secret relationship in freshman year. Which was heartbreaking because I was out but she didn't want anybody to know and I couldn't even tell my friends. So, when I met Lauren and she had never dated women before but she was so game and it made me feel so proud to be in my body. And I felt like this person wants to be in a relationship with me and she really gave me a huge amount of confidence. And then there were of course, like, Kelsey Harrison, who was the big dyke on campus. Like the person everybody had a crush on, like, who was really nice to me. And I was like, you don't know what this means, you're so hot and incredible and like a great, you know, a great and well spoken, very gentle, queer person. The kind of person who would lead you with descriptions and definitions of the things that you maybe didn't understand and be very gentle and sweet about it. Kelsey's partner Anna, who I ended up living with and becoming really good friends with and I'm still friends with today. She—you know, just another person who I looked up to. Who I felt was so sweet and gentle with other people the way I wanted to be. She, she and Kelsey were both queer in the way that I wanted to be queer. Kelsey was like, Kelsey is also like, you know, very butch. And so, to see someone who everyone pines for so much because I used to think that masculine women, you know—like that's how I identify and how I kind of felt. But I used to think that that was so ugly in high school and that's totally self-deprecation. So, to see such a, such an attractive person that everybody really liked and respected be so butch and so masculine I was like, well me too. That's hot and if it wasn't I still am hot.

Ramsay: Yeah, obviously. [Laughter]

Charde: [Laughter] Thanks world, thanks Kelsey.

Ramsay: Yeah, so it sounds like your relationship to masculinity, I mean gender broadly, but specifically masculinity has changed over-time. Do you want to talk about that?

Charde: Yeah.

Ramsay: It's a big one.

Charde: Yeah, it's a big one. I just heard you say masculinity now and I'm just like “is that”—I mean I say that all the time and I'm like “is that the word”-- I love the word butch but I use masculinity so much more. Masculinity though is such a heavy word—so loaded with so much. Now I'm, now I'm kind of wondering what the better word is for me and I think that, I think that butch is probably the better word for me. And see there, just then, you know-- this is why it's so fun and time consuming to deal with gender identity and like, sexuality identity and basic
identity problems because it's that, you know, one second the word that felt so chill, like now rubs me like sandpaper. So silly. Um, what was the question you asked?

**Ramsay:** Oh I was just, okay. You can say butchness. What's your relationship to this masc-centered gender? You've seen it in other people, you see it in yourself sometimes. You know, how was that growing and changing throughout your experiences and out person?

**Charde:** Hmm... Constantly being reflected back to myself through everybody else, all the time. This great human that I'm involved with named Becca, she says, she said that gender is like community created and socially created and that's—which is a term that I really familiar with but I don't think really took ground with it until she said it recently. You know because everybody's affirmations, and you know that is something that I've thought about forever of course but everybody's understanding of you informs you and there are certain people with whom, forever reason, my gender feels perfect. Like, um, you know---one of my favorite people Luke, we—you know, he's a Trans man and before he came out as Trans even then our genders were created really nicely together. There's certain people who are just perfect with that and I can't point to anything about Luke that makes it right, that we are two people in a room together. It's just, it something cosmic I guess but then there are ways in which people are actively and openly helping me understand my gender. Which is fun, it's a little more unnatural than just somebody who I just jive with but, you know. Like, when I was growing up my, and now, my dad we'd call daddy-bones and my brother we'd call Jackie-bones and I've always held this little secret nick-name for myself called boy-bones. And I said that to Becca for the first time, like I've never told anybody else. She's been calling me boy-bones like in little ways and it feels like, like a little bit forced but the rest of it feels really good. Very, always informative the way other people see you. And like even today, when I meet new people and we've met before but when I meet new people I always want to dress the way, I always want to dress really butch and really mascu-center. So that people know who I am and if they meet me in the way that they think that I am then they'll always know me but truly you don't like know me till you've seen me in a dress and really, you don't know me till you've seen all the different parts of me. But I want people to meet me as...butch.

**Ramsay:** Yeah.

**Charde:** Boy-bones.

**Ramsay:** Um, so you talked a little bit about this experience of trying on different words for yourself and coming to different languages, especially in college. Do you want to kind of talk through some of those identities you've tried on and the ones that didn't fit or did fit?

**Charde:** Gender queer is the right thing. Gender nonconforming, gender fluid, gender fuck. Gender is sort of a word in those phrases that say, like, “I am”. I feel like, I don't know. I feel like “I am, period”. You know that's kind of like what those words, what those phrases mean. But yeah, trying to use they/them pronouns was I think my most complicated relationship because I thought about it for a really like time before I tried it for like, literally I think I tried it for like an hour. With my partner, I was like “do it--let's do it.” Probably didn't give myself long
enough to really know how I felt about it but I think I'm glad I trusted my gut on that one. I mean I could still try it at any time but I don't think I will—but who knows. Obviously everything is changing. I think it rubbed me wrong because I want and crave connection with so many people that without—if I sort of like throw—like, I don't want to fuck up any of the cogs. I want social lubrication because then I can—I'm granted access to most everybody. Now, that's a personal thing. That's not something I ever expected any other queer people-- I have a really, really social personality and really, really want to connect with a lot of people. So, that's like a plight that I take on myself to want to be close to other people—so that's one of the other reasons for she/her pronouns. Another reason is like, I know who I am and my friends know who I am and maybe subversion is a little bit more true to who I am with the whole queer gender thing. But I personally find it more subversive to be so masculine-centered and be so butch—like to the point where I fucking know that if I'm 30 and I can handle it I'm going to get top surgery. Sick of these babies—don't love them, I love the rest of my body and my assigned female at birth business but I think it's more subversive to say “Yeah, I'm suing the pronouns that were forced upon me when I was born” because I know who I am otherwise and how I've changed.

Ramsay: Yeah, totally. That was so awesome I just forget my follow up question.

Charde: [Laughter]

Ramsay: [Laughter] Yeah, so I think we were just talking about you moving through your own identity--

Charde: Mmhmm...

Ramsay: Which is great. I mean I guess, if you feel comfortable—you did mention just phoria and your body—how do you connect with this common narrative of Trans-ness where it's complete, you know, in terms of pop-culture not maybe queer culture. Pop-culture Trans identity is like “I hate myself”, how do you move through that?

Charde: Right, um. I'm reading The Argonauts by Maggie Nelson—have you read that?

Ramsay: No.

Charde: [Sigh] Great. It is such a travesty that you have no read that yet but I get it, it came out in 2015. We all have booklists. Something that—I think she brings it up—she's been making me think so much about this in a really critical way. The idea of being born in the wrong body is a very overarching Trans part of the Trans narrative and maybe it was Maggie Nelson but maybe it was like some really, really boring but very informative Trans podcast I listening to the other day and I won't name that because it's embarrassing to call them really boring—but it was. Being born in the wrong body is a really old way of thinking about being Trans and a really pigeon holding way to think about it. Particularly I think damaging for people who really don't want to be at the other end of the spectrum completely. I certainly don't like having to smash my D-breasts into a sports bra like post-not being able to hand a binder for more than
two years of my life but other than these I was not born into the wrong body. You know, I was born into a confusing body, so is everybody. Everybody's born into a confusing body. Specifically not identifying with your gender as it relates to your sex, being born in the wrong body is still like—you only have one body. So calling it wrong is not—it's not right. I think there are parts of us that are broken or parts of us that we feel can improve, but I don't think that-- I think that's one of the narratives that I really don't relate to. That being said there are so many narratives that I do relate to but I still haven't been able to comfortably call myself Trans. I know I am, I know that being gender-nonconforming is a total valid way to be Trans. Still feel like, however, I don't have—I shouldn't—like I'm not having a hard enough time and I'm having a hard time. I feel like I need to prove myself as a Trans person which is really silly and how do we fix that. Yeah, I am. I am Trans. I am under the Trans umbrella is the way I can say it without feeling uncomfortable. I don't know, that's why I like to say I'm gender non-conforming.

Ramsay: Yeah.

Charde: Because Trans is short for transition. Transition is from one thing to another and that's just not what people are. Even Luke, Luke who came out and super gung-ho and got top surgery and did hormones—stopped taking hormones. Still uses he/him pronouns but also use they/them pronouns. I feel like saying Trans evolutionary is more of, like a way to say it. Big narratives are always, always cast as like really dark shadows in places.

Ramsay: Yeah. Did you bring that critique because we had earlier—I wanted to get back to this, you mentioned you had started to kind of critique the queer landscape at Purchase and was this something you brought there?

Charde: Um. I think in way to private of a way. Yeah, because when you’re around everybody else you still want to fit in. So you like, sort of like keep quiet about certain things. God, that sounds so messed up. But more in my personal relationships, I really expressed a frustration with stuff. And, but...I don’t know. I don’t have enough active queer conversations. I did though when I started writing a play. Sent one of my partners, Amelia, a bunch of questions about like gender and what are gender relationships to each other when we were having sex. I asked her to describe what it's like and got a very interesting response. The most interesting to the both of us is that we’re talking about it. You know, you get to a point where you’re just like stop talking about it but it evolves every day. But in Purchase-- at Purchase I withdrew myself from it and was personally critical. Not as outwardly as I think I should have been.

Ramsay: Yeah. One of the ways I know you is from a weird Facebook group, right? [Inaudible] for Selfies...

Charde: Yeah, yeah, yeah...Oh my God. I left it [inaudible] for selfies.

Ramsay: That day... I left too after I wrote that manifesto.

Charde: I feel like I read a lot of it but then I was like “yeah, I already agree with all of this.”
**Ramsay:** Yeah. Um. I mean it was a hyper gendered space that kind of pretended it wasn't...

**Charde:** Right...

**Ramsay:** You know, that was one of I think our main critiques of it, but that's an interesting blend of, you know, Purchase community, real life community, and online community.

**Charde:** Yeah...

**Ramsay:** So do you want to kind of talk about what happened with your relationships with the interest and the queerness and stuff as Facebook became big, as groups like that became big.

**Charde:** Mmm... Well. I think that forums where you can express things that are going on that are painful to you, that are mental health issues, are important and I think that's what [inaudible] had a lot to do with. People really expressed something and saying I really need my community now, which is super important and I definitely supported it but part of me felt like and feels like we shouldn't—we should reach out to—you know, certain people really should of reached out to health care professionals in that circumstance. You can't lean on that kind of forum that hard, you know? I think certain people who posted all the time, you know, had mental health stuff that maybe the internet community made them feel better but I think if we really looked really closely at it maybe did more harm than good. Because you check your posts for likes and comments and that is-- that is fixates us but does not necessarily help the—what's really, what's really irking us.

**Ramsay:** Okay so, we're at the one hour mark and so I'm wondering if you wanted a break or—I have like a handful more of questions that we can take further...

**Charde:** Do you want a break?

**Ramsay:** I am fine to keep going.

**Charde:** I'm good.

**Ramsay:** You're good?

**Charde:** Yeah.

**Ramsay:** Okay, cool. Just wanted to check.

**Charde:** I talk a lot...

**Ramsay:** It's the best

**Charde:** I also haven't had like, this kind of outlet in a really long time, so...
Ramsay: Definitely.

Charde: Good job listening to me, you too phone.

Ramsay: [Laughter] Yeah, so. Back to Purchase. What—at what point did you start noticing the politics of queerness, Trans-ness, gender stuff rubbed you the wrong way?

Charde: Mmm... It kind of always rubbed me the wrong way because of the way that—because of the militancy of um—a lot of queers about issues that—it's hard to talk about because I both want to give like a lot of credit to a really important and powerful work that people are doing but also critiquing it but I guess that's just enough to say about that. Can you repeat the question, I forgot.

Ramsay: Sure. Um—do you have a specific memory or experience that made you realize you weren't feeling great about the way people were talking about--

Charde: Oh for sure, mis-gendering—mis-gendering that—that person. And then, to misgender them at a reception or at an after hang out in the lobby of a burlesque show on campus. Everybody was around, huge—huge queer turnout. You know, the burlesque show at Purchase. And misgender this person, using their birth name—they walked away, I didn't notice that I even did it or that they were upset. It was a lobby, people are flighty and they walk away. I kept talking to my partner and then they came back over and they were just shaking red mad and have informed me that I had used their birth name and that's not what they go by and to never ever, ever do that again. I was like--my fucking heart—who wants to hurt anybody? Who wants to hurt anybody that hurts like you do--who aches like you do about gender and about the world? Totally felt like a double sided sworded stabs myself and them at the same time. And totally broke my heart. Got on my bike, flew home, and wrote a Facebook message to them saying—you know, really sorry—I don't want to ever make anyone feel like that, especially someone who I identify with a lot. I didn't know you very well—you know. I don't think we've ever actually been formally introduced. So, but then my partner was telling me about everybody talking about it and all of the queer people talking about it. Where people hours ago were [inaudible] with me with other people. That kind of—I don't, I don't complain about a lot of stuff. I'm like that, I don't like to go to doctors, I don't like to complain very much. So already have an opposition against that kind of thing, you know like being really intense and that's something I've had to work through—you know, just letting people yell about whatever they want. Totally valid. But, that was mean, it was rude, it was inconsiderate. It was a mistake that I made, it was at the—the person ended up forgiving me, we like messaged about it on Facebook. It was chill within the hour—you know, they explained they had a really hard week and a bunch of people had done that to them and I was just the straw that broke the camel's back. But I got all the fucking guff—I got it all. I was like, you people suck! You have no idea how damaging this is to me and my identity. You know, then that's a moment when I feel like I must not even be Trans if I could make this mistake. You know, if I could fuck this up. You know, and if I could gather them all in a room and just say fuck you guys for doing that because you shattered my trust in this community I would 100 percent hold that forum for discussion. Fuck you guys, but let's actually talk about this though. Yeah, that was my—that was my moment. I
was like mm-mm sick of you, black and white thinking. I was like—nope, not a part of this community anymore. I literally did not identify with the queer community at all. If I was called a part of the queer community I would say nothing but in my head I'd be like 'I'm not a part of that fucking community, those are not my people, my people are different, my people are more careful'.

Ramsay: Yeah. So who were your people after that point?

Charde: Um. The lovely group of friends that I still have now: Will, Crystal, Hannah. They're all dancers. We all went to Purchase together—just a group of like, not necessarily deep in the queer community. Christa's queer, Will's queer, Hannah's straight but like 10% queer. You know, like, has her own stuff. But they just—you know, I'm really diving in deep with you guys here. They'd already been my best friends but they were my community. Now it's hard because we weren't always talking discourse but I still wanted to talk discourse. Bringing it up around them was like, was and is not always the easiest thing. Just cause it's like not casual. You know? We'd like make a lot of jokes, have a lot of fun, and we definitely hold each other up and support each other. I'm sure if I brought it up they'd be so game, they always are. It's like, hard. It's hard to talk. I'll be like, do you want to watch a movie or do you want to get really deep into like, Trans-exclusionary shit I've been going through.

Ramsay: Yes and yes.

Charde: [Laughter]

Ramsay: I feel that. Which is a good Segway. You mentioned your mom is awesome at discourse now. So, what conversations did you have to get her there? Was it you?

Charde: Yeah. Hard ones. Hard ones because she—that's where I get, I get it from her where I don't complain about a lot of stuff. Complain is maybe not the right word to use as far as like, the evolution of queer discourse and not like that complaining. I'm just saying me personally, don't complain about a lot of stuff. You know, stub my toe and I'm like 'ugh, it's over'. But, so, I think that's how she sort of viewed it. When I first started talking about the intense intricacies of gender identities, you know? She's from East Hampton, she lived in Germany for one year, in Texas for three months, and lived in East Hampton for her entire life. So, like, my bottle neck experience but like, you never leave the bottle neck, at all. So, like, she is the most commendable person in my whole life for understanding all of this. You know, because I think when she realized that I was opening up to her finally after months of not talking to her—she was just so happy to have me back in her ear, four times a week. You know, chit-chatting away. She for a while was being really fucking cute and saying—she would like use masculine pronouns for me. Or like call me 'cute little boy'. Just out of nowhere, out of freaking nowhere. And that was just—for her to have, for her to evolve with me I think allows me to evolve. God, what a special person. And a person who like, in high school, I would be into masculine shit—and be like, must you wear this clothing and I'd be like 'yep' and be like heartbroken but you know—she's just like, tough. She still thinks half of my wardrobe is ugly but just because she
thinks it’s ugly, you know. Like, ‘really, that shirt’? Seriously, she says that to me at least two dozen times a year.

**Ramsay:** That’s such a mom move.

**Charde:** Yeah. Dick.

**Ramsay:** [Laughter] I mean since you are, you know, you invest your presentation in a very specific way and you make sure that—show how do you navigate gender spaces in the world?

**Charde:** Mmm...always self-aware in a public restroom. I use public women’s restrooms. Very self-aware in that space, very careful. Um, hold my body very close you know—as to not, hold my eyes very narrow and small. Um, try to respect any discomfort anybody might feel because if they’ve never seen anybody like this before or they don’t know how to see somebody like this then I would like their experience with me to be pleasant. Which again is a plight that I do not think that queer people should be taking on but it is mine. I want everybody to like me and I want everybody to learn who I am. Everybody, except like most straight cis white men. That’s like outside of discourse and everything—I just can’t tolerate them. They’re like the only people that I’m just like, I’m just going to be rude to you I don’t really care, I just don’t have the time—I can’t have the time.

**Ramsay:** Yeah. Do you think—I guess this is an obvious question but cis men and masculinity is probably where queer people don’t want to identify with that term.

**Charde:** Mhm. Yeah. Don’t want to but then there’s like, I remember we were watching—in college, we were watching a show about trans men and it was all white trans stealth guys. And the show as still about them being Trans but I remember just being like ‘what, what?’ There is stuff that we are just not acknowledging here. Like, there are power dynamics that nobody cares about. It was a queer class so we finished watching the episode and we tore that shit apart. Well, there was a frat a Purchase, they were trying to start a frat at Purchase which is like, such garbage. Coming into our little closet—coming into our little closet, that’s like a Jamba Juice opening up next to a lemonade stand. That’s not fair, that shit is not fair. They were trying, they didn’t succeed. It’s like, in Purchase there are bylaws that we don’t accept groups like that. We don’t, you know. This is, we are cut from a different cloth. But, in the feminist club Forth. The frat guys were like, trying to get everybody on board. And there was like two Hispanic men and one trans guy and they were like ‘we are so inclusionary’ and I was like, ‘sick’. But I came late to the meeting where two of the representatives from the frat came to Forth and one of the—the trans guy just got done telling his story and like, on a personal level, sure you’re in my community—you’re a part of my community. You—that person specifically is a part of a community that I don’t like but still a part of my community, whatever. Um—he had just sort of finished the story of his life and I came in and I was like—I started to tear apart the frat. Like, I was really loud in the club. You know, and of course like leaving space for other people to speak, ask questions, and talk because I know I’m a big personality. Fucking tore the shit up—pardon me for cursing so much—and he said well I know you weren’t here but I was just telling everybody I’m trans and I was like ‘and...I don’t care. You don’t get to hold an identity
in this community up as a flagship to sail into like Bullshit Island"—pardon my French again, I speak a lot of French. Um, I don't even know what started me on this but it pissed me off, man. You don't get to use your queer identity to gain social clout. That is against the bylaws, that is against the world, that sucks.

Ramsay: Yeah. I wanted to pick up on a thread that you had mentioned this documentary about white trans dudes and I would be remiss to not acknowledge were both white and talking about this stuff. But what was your experience to understanding your whiteness and especially your gender.

Charde: Well, our forbearers in the Trans community are so strongly Trans women of color that literally would not be here do what we do, living the lives we live without them. And I think as far as understanding my white trans-ness, my white gender queerness I have a lot more privilege in circumstances than people of color do. Literally just like down to like the value of human life in our society. It's easier for me to slide through and live that 'I want to socially lubricate I want to be friends with everyone'. You know, that's rooted in being able to be friends with everybody. You know me standing and holding my body really close as a white person is easier to do and get away with than if I were a person of color in the same situation. The way I navigate being white and Trans within the community and outside the community is support and not necessarily silence but, quiet. Never starting chants at rallies, just being quiet. Those are the situations in which—you want to shut me up, just put me in a situation where like people of color are talking to each other about stuff like that. And I interject very, very rarely. Like I took a black American drama class, which was a really good class cause I learned so much. And the thing I learned the most is that we don't have any idea that there's an African burial ground in New York. That our white lives are built on top of, like, there are bones in the ground. There are spirits in this world that, you know, we still white wash. That's my relationship, quiet and supportive, as a white person.

Ramsay: Absolutely. There is this interesting connection between— I know you've talked about this in context—in a racialized context, but I feel like queerness spirituality are very closely linked and just your— when you said spirit it made me think of that. Do you have any connection to— I'm mean we've mentioned your horoscope. [Laughter]

Charde: Yeah. That's only because the girl I'm seeing, Becca is so astrological and like keeps—at this point I can't talk to her for more than four hours, like we can't text back and forth without her saying 'oh it's because your Venus is in Scorpio'. I didn't know my Venus was in Scorpio. I accidentally took a navel chart test and sent her a screen shot of it—wrong decision. She feels like she knows everything about me now. Umm—I'm, I'm not spiritual. I do believe that—you know energy is neither created, nor destroyed and it's also really mysterious energy however things translate. But I think we just, we like to humanize a lot of things. We like to humanize our dogs, we like to give human personalities to everything and I think there's just energy in the world and it's just ambivalent, it's just energy. It's not ghosts, it's just like movement that hasn't left a space.
**Ramsay:** Um. This is kind of changing directions but we've been talking about butchness, masculinity—this gender spectrum and you know, some, I don't know if this is true, but feel uncomfortable expressing feminity yourself, but you can't talk about butchness without fem, right? So, what's your relationship to fem people or culture—how to navigate that within your own gender.

**Charde:** Right. Um. God, I don't know. Um. One of the the—So I'm writing a play and sending a bunch of questions to Amelia by Gmail and her responding back with like—she's very naturally, well uh, she's a good writer—but like dissertation writer. She's like a really powerful writer. So she sent me back something really surprising, like overnight, about it and about – I asked her a lot of questions that were sort of prodding at her feminist and her relationship with her gender when were together. And she said a lot of interesting things. She recalled—and so, this is my relationship with fem because I just don't have one personally in a really serious way—she recalled cutting all her hair on in college and wearing really butchy clothes. And how it felt so good to have like—she went to Bryn Mawr which is like an all-women's college so she—is that what she calls it. Yeah, is that what you call it?

**Ramsay:** I mean, you can call it a women's college or some people call it gender minority college, depending... You know it's one of the seven sisters.

**Charde:** Right, right. I remember calling it something and she corrected me.

**Ramsay:** Yeah. You said it was an all-girls school?

**Charde:** Oh, I did say that. Yeah, yeah, yeah and that's not right. [Laughter]

**Ramsay:** [Laughter]

**Charde:** So she cuts all her hair off, she wears masculine clothes and gets a lot of positive affirmations from the queer community and then eventually really liked it but she was like, this is just not me. This is just not the boat I float in. And she identifies very hesitantly with fem and that's really sweet and lovely and us together we make a lot of sense to each other gender wise. She is definitely way more comfortable identifying with her womanhood and—she's awesome, she's like a doula and, you know, super sweet. Just lovely, and understanding and just asking questions about her gender was really cool and affirming for the both of us because we hadn't talked about it and I think I'd made some assumptions about her and her understanding of herself. Like, she blew me out of the water with her response and it was beautiful. On the other hand, the other person that I'm seeing, Becca, is such a power fem. In ways that are not—they have very little to do with the way she dresses and presents herself which is really funny for me because I associate them together so much. Like the way you—the way you dress, you know? That has a lot to do with it. I think that has a lot to do with me being a small town boy. I'm like, I don't understand [in a country accent]. I've grown a lot in my life but Becca accomplishes feminity in a very subtle way and I just don't know how to describe it but it's fabulous. That being said I've worried a lot when I'm in committed monogamous relationships, not that non-monogamous relationships can't be committed. In monogamous relationships I've dated a lot
of very effeminate, very fem women and it always makes me feel like masculine center is my only option. And the sort of fluctuation of my gender comes and goes. But I dated Vook for a while, and again is a Trans man, before that was very gender queer. And I was—I felt, an only—and still now do feel around him like I just get to express like, 2% femininity that I don't get to express otherwise. You know, it's like a burp. You know, then I'm around him and I'm just like belching. Gender belching.

**Ramsay:** [Laughter]

**Charde:** [Laughter] you're welcome

**Ramsay:** [Laughter] Um, well do you feel comfortable talking about your movement? It sounds—I don't want to assume—how you've entered non-monogamy?

**Charde:** I've entered it, um, I think only in lieu of monogamy, if that makes sense. To explain it, I would describe myself in college as a serial monogamist. Getting into very serious relationship with people who maybe I should have thought twice about getting into serious relationships with them. Committing myself to them, again, black and white thinking. Like, 'I'm yours! I'll be here for literally ever'. And just like doing a lot of damage—doing a lot of damage. So, non-monogamy is an opportunity to be really—understand the way I communicate. I've been such a good communicator. Oh my God, all my feelings are out on the table and it feels so fucking good. And there's this one girl who I was seeing for like, maybe five minutes who was like—I said, you know, if we're going to do this we're going to have to be really communicative. Let other people in your world know that, you know that you're not—I don't want you to lie to anybody. You know, so we have to be really communicative. Like, you live your life but if you have to tell a lie because we're seeing each other then I can't feel comfortable with this. And she was just like 'oh yeah, I can't I guess'. Or she was like, 'yeah, I can't—I'm having a, I just don't think I can do it'. I was like, yea I don't think I can do it either. Non-monogamy is an opportunity to be really honest, for me. Also a chance to explore different emotions at the same time. Feel different things with different people. Helping, definitely exposing a lot of me but also so amazing, so amazing. Everybody in the world is just chances to get to know people. Not too many at a time though, holy mother of God.

**Ramsay:** Did that emerge after college?

**Charde:** Yes. My downloading of Tinder changed everything. I don't think I'm a polyamorous person. Actually, I don't know enough about polyamory to say that but I don't currently identify as such and I want to respect that definition.

**Ramsay:** Yeah, so um. Do you want to kind of—talk about your journey back to the city or into the city?

**Charde:** It's been so hard.

**Ramsay:** Yeah.
Charde: The first month is always so hard. Really fucking hard. It's just like, I just feel, like almost completely lost. You know? And my friends, I love them so much, but I'm the strong one and like the person who really doesn't need any help. I think they are having a hard time recognizing that I need help. If, you know, somebody doesn't reach out and be like 'stop'. Then I find other ways to do it, like writing. You know, I feel completely lost but completely capable of getting on track. There's a light at the end of the tunnel. I'm happy. I'm scared but I'm happy.

Ramsay: Yeah, um. Where do you live right now?

Charde: Crown Heights [Brooklyn]

Ramsay: Okay.

Charde: Yeah.

Ramsay: Um and do you have any local connections there?

Charde: Um. I mean. The coffee shop around the block is called Little Zelda and its sweet but, no. Actually, I was doing so much biking and then my bike was stolen yesterday. Yeah. A bike that I've had for almost a decade. A bike that like really crooned me in my self-identification, like the most true to me is bike dyke. I'm a bike dyke. My calves are remarkable, like, I loved that bike. His name was Prince and then he got stolen yesterday from Home Depot. Yeah. But, I compartmentalized and now I'm okay. You know, I'm like, fuckin' whatever. I have roller blades. And now I'll be a blade butch.

Ramsay: You're already—you're ready.

Charde: [Laughter]

Ramsay: You've made the new identity.

Charde: Everything is always changing with my gender.

Ramsay: You're growing up on Long Island. What's it like being here now? How did you imagine it before you came?

Charde: Growing up, especially in the Hamptons, is like, such a void of people of color that going to Purchase was a culture shock for me. You know, like—and I was very, I believe I handled it well. I handled it very personally, very quietly. As we ought to handle our white plight. But, moving to the city was like a similar deal. Living around people of color literally I just didn't do that growing up. It's a really weird thing to admit to and because it's not necessarily my individual fault I'm comfortable admitting to it but because the repercussions of it and the—not being able to place people of color in my childhood in a real way--and dealing with the repercussions of that now, definitely. I think I'm doing a good job but the
understanding of people of color is personal. It's not something I can like talk to my PSU friends about, except my friend Monique who I've just been like 'hey, I feel this way'. And it's funny but that's like, in larger discussions about race and social placement. She also got fired and we think it's a racial thing. So, we've been talking about it a little lately.

Ramsay: Yeah. Have you—what have you been doing to find community again?

Charde: Um. This. Just being—I'm—here I am. Saying yes, saying yes. Trying to say yes. Reaching out to like—like I had this really great theatre professor who we got lunch and now we're going to see a show in the city and a show at Purchase. Just connecting back. And just trying to be open. Trying to use my social skills that I've been honestly blessed with, you know? I was born this way, I was born to gab. Just trying to be like. Trying to reach out and be brave.

Ramsay: Cool. Is there anything that we haven't touched on or anything that you're still thinking about?

Charde: I feel like I'm dancing around but I'm not really sure what I mean by it. I—I don't' want to get explicit because this is public, public record. Um, so what I'll say is one of the vignettes that I've written is a chart, like a body sized drawing of my nude form and numbered, I haven't done it yet—I've written it but I haven't made it. Like, numbers from my head to my toe in different places that have a corresponding number defining of the space while sexual active we—like, you can engage with my body in this place in this way, or in this place I'm skittish but you can try it, you know? Here, you have free reign. Or something that I like is when you put your open palm on my chest. You know it's like that, every time—every time you become intimate with somebody you redefine yourself—everybody does. Someone who feels like a different degree of gender confusion every day and like every hour. I'm like constantly having to like, I'm constantly keeping [inaudible] on my toes. Which is stressful for the both of us but also exciting. That's all I wanted to say.

Ramsay: That's awesome. Cool. Um. I think that is a good place to stop unless there is anything you want to revisit.

Charde: No, that was a lot of talking.

Ramsay: That was great. Alright, let me turn off the recorder now.