NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

DYLAN KAPIT

Interviewer: Evan Zavidow

Date of Interview: June 18, 2018

Location of Interview: Brooklyn, New York

Interview Recording URL:
http://oralhistory.nppl.org/interviews/dylan-kabit-da5oor

Transcript URL:

Transcribed by Alyssa Turrini (volunteer)

NYC TOHP Interview Transcript #060

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Evan Zavidow: Hi, my name is Evan Zavidow and I will be having a conversation with Dylan Kapit for the NYC 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. It's Sunday June 18th, 2017 and this is being recorded at Dylan's home on Rogers Avenue in Flatbush. Alright, so do you wanna get started maybe just by telling me about your earliest memory?

Dylan Kapit: Of life? My earliest memory of life?

Zavidow: Yeah. Earliest one you got.

Kapit: Okay, [chuckle] Um. So my parents used to live on 95th and like Amsterdam maybe? Columbus? And we had a really nice apartment and I broke something in the bathroom and I didn’t want my parents to know. But it was made of glass so I, like, went into the bathroom in my bare feet to clean it up because I didn't want them to know and I stepped on the glass and uh, the only thing I really remember is like being in a lot of pain because the glass went through my foot [laughter]. But I, like, vividly remember like tip-toeing around the glass in the bathroom and then like stepping on it anyway. [laughter].

Zavidow: Do you remember what it was that you broke?

Kapit: Nope. But probably something important. [laughter]

Zavidow: Do you remember how your parents responded or—

Kapit: They were just really worried that I—because I hurt myself. I don't think they cared that I'd broken something. I think they were just like [laughter] why did you go in the bathroom when you broke something? And I was like well cause I didn't want you to know so I'd clean it up! And—but clearly I did not clean it up successfully because I then stepped on it.

Zavidow: Do you have siblings or did you have siblings in the house at the time?

Kapit: Um, I have siblings now. At the time of that memory I was the only child in the house. But I have siblings now. I have two younger brothers. One is twenty and one will be seventeen in two weeks.

Zavidow: Do you remember what year it was or how old you were when you broke—

Kapit: I was two so it was probably early '96.

Zavidow: Okay. So you were in New York at the time. Were you born in New York? Grow up in New York?

Kapit: I was born in New York at Colombia Medical Center where my mom was a doctor but I
left New York at about two and a half and moved to Maryland where I spent the next sixteen years.

Zavidow: And then moved back to New York?

Kapit: And then I moved back to New York for college and now I refuse to leave.

Zavidow: Where—where did you go to college in New York?

Kapit: [laughter] Um, I went to Barnard College at Columbia University in Morningside Heights.

Zavidow: And what drew you to Barnard?

Kapit: Um, what drew me to Barnard? Well—so my mom went to Barnard actually and my dad went to Columbia so there was a little bit of like a funnel from them that I was gonna go there. There was like an idea planted in my head but I didn't want to grow up to be anything like my mom at that time so I was like, absolutely not. Um—but then I actually came and visited and did some research on the school and when I came and visited it was like one of those beautiful spring days where like everybody was on the lawn that doesn't exist anymore and maggie, who also doesn't exist anymore, was blooming and so I was like, this is amazing. This is beautiful. Um, and then I sat in on a psych class that I really liked and I learned about their education program and I'd always wanted to be a teacher so then I was like, okay well as much as I don't want to go here because my mom went here like this school actually has everything I'm looking for so maybe I should just do it anyway.

Zavidow: Why didn't you want to be anything like your mom?

Kapit: [laughter] Because no kid wants to be like their parents. I feel like every kids worst nightmare is like to grow up to be anything like either of their parents.

Zavidow: Do you still feel that way?

Kapit: Um no. At this point I've—like my mom's a total wonderful like badass. I don't know if I'm allowed to say that word. But I just did. She is the medical director of an out patient program at Washington Hospital Center working in psychiatry and is brilliant and is starting a trans health center and getting re-certified in a million things. So at this point I'm like wow if I can be as brilliant and wonderful as she is that would be awesome. So I definitely don't feel that way anymore but I did at the time. [laughter].

Zavidow: Do you remember what year it was when you went to go visit Barnard?

Kapit: Okay, it was spring of junior year so 2011.
Zavidow: And had you been going back and forth to New York and Maryland before growing up? Or mostly staying in Maryland?

Kapit: Um, actually I did go back and forth a lot, because I had a lot of, I still do, but I had more family here. My grandma lived on 85th and Central Park West so we would go every Thanksgiving, every Christmas and stay in her apartment. She died in June of 2011 so then we didn't come stay with her obviously but that was right before I moved here. But I grew up coming to New York a lot. I have a lot of family here, my parents have friends here that we've stayed with, I have family in Scarsdale. So we were actually here a lot, so I spent a bunch of time in New York growing up.

Zavidow: Did you like going to New York growing up?

Kapit: I did like going to New York growing up, there was a lot more to do here than there was in suburban Maryland which was always really cool for me. And I really liked broadway shows and obviously thats here. So I spent a good amount of time in New York before moving here, which was part of why I wanted to move here, I loved it.

Zavidow: What Broadway shows do you like to see in New York?

Kapit: All of them. I really—every single one. I've seen Wicked many times. I love Rent. I've seen Kinky Boots, Avenue Q, Dear Evan Hansen, I saw spring awakening. Definitely missing some—But Lion King, I've seen Lion King on Broadway. I just really enjoy all of them.

Zavidow: Would you go with your family, parents, siblings, alone?

Kapit: Before moving to college I went with my whole family. I went with my mom couple times to see Wicked.

Zavidow: In what years were you at Barnard?

Kapit: Fall of 2012 to Spring of 2016

Zavidow: Cool. What did you study at Barnard?

Kapit: Psychology and education.

Zavidow: How did you like being at Barnard and being at a women's college in particular?

Kapit: I really liked the classes at Barnard, I really liked the programs that I was in, I had some really amazing friends. I had a tough time with the administration in terms of like, my gender identity and what I wanted from them. Barnard itself as a bureaucracy was not easy but the communities that existed and that I build there were really amazing.
Zavidow: Do you want to say more about what you wanted from the administration and their response or how that went?

Kapit: I wanted apparently too much. First it was gender neutral bathrooms. I wanted places on campus, not just in the dorms, that I like felt safe going to the bathroom in. They didn’t want me to have that. Goodness knows why. I don’t understand but whatever. And then junior year I wanted a trans-inclusive admissions policy which I don’t think they didn’t want I just think they weren’t sure how to handle.

Zavidow: What was the admissions policy at the time you went to Barnard?

Kapit: I don’t know that there was an exclusive—like, not exclusive—I don’t know that there was an explicit admissions policy other than like “we are a women’s college and we want women here.” Um, and I wanted like a definitive policy that included trans women and people who identified as women but like maybe societally weren’t seen as women yet. Um, I kind of got what I wanted and kind of didn’t get what I wanted in that they now their admissions policy does include trans women but is exclusive of trans-masculine individuals who identify as trans-masculine pre applying at Barnard.

Zavidow: So, in making what you wanted from the administration known what did that look like—petitions, conversations?

Kapit: All of the above. There were petitions, there were letters written, there were conversations with trustees, with other women's colleges administrations. Lots of conversations about how other women's colleges were already doing it and we were just late to the game.

Zavidow: And who were you doing this with?

Kapit: Actually a lot of the community, the Barnard community, professors, students, it was very— it was very student driven.

Zavidow: And before you mentioned that you loved the different communities that you were a part of at Barnard and Columbia. Do you want to share a little bit more about that?

Kapit: Sure, so I started Best Buddies at Columbia which was awesome. It’s an organization that is like one to one friendships with individuals with disabilities and since I've always wanted to be a special ed teacher that was pretty awesome. I was part of the flute choir which is a great—was a great community for me also. We—like just a bunch of people got together and played the flute which sounds really weird but was really cool. I did some queer group stuff and then that became really like drama filled so I stopped. AllSex was probably my saving grace which I joined spring of my freshman year. AllSex is like a peer facilitated sexuality discussion group. We talk about sex, sexuality, gender, race, privilege, but also like
kink and masturbation. I've described it to other people as like topics that are usually taboo but like we talk about them. And then I did AllSex for two semesters as a participant and then a facilitator for the rest of college. I got to be a part of some really amazing conversations about changing culture on campus to be more sex positive, body positive, identity focused, and less about just people and more about how we can take our identities and build a better, more inclusive campus. I definitely miss that since graduating but it was a really cool thing to be a part of. I made a lot of really amazing friends through AllSex, people that I’m still very close with. Even though I've graduated, a bunch of people that I've met through AllSex are still there or graduated before me and we're all still really friendly and I'm still making friends with people that my friends facilitated. Recently I met somebody that I didn't facilitate but that my friends facilitated and now we're really good friends so AllSex is still bringing me closer to other people.

Zavidow: I have a couple questions off that. What—why have you always known that you wanted to be a special teacher?

Kapit: When I was in kindergarten I grew up—the county I grew up in, in Maryland, is known for its special education program so people flew to the area for—to send their kids to our programs. And I had a really good friend in kindergarten who had down syndrome and another really good friend who's twin sister had autism and I was a little bit of a weird, different kid so I spent a lot of time with them because I was pretty socially isolated, and just totally fell in love with working with this population. I didn't understand why the whole planet didn't see them the way that I saw them and so when I was getting bullied at recess I'd stay in their special ed classroom and just totally loved everything about it. I feel like I'd always known I wanted to be a teacher but that was when I was like this is who I want to teach. So I took every opportunity I could from then on to do that.

Zavidow: Why do you feel or why were you isolated as a kid or weird—was weird the word used?

Kapit: I think I used weird.

Zavidow: —yeah.

Kapit: I definitely have my own like learning needs and mental health needs and social quirks that were hard for other people to deal with so people would pick on me or not want to spend time with me because they thought I was a little off and so I guess that made me want to spend time with other people who seemed like they were a little off or that people were treating them like they were a little off.

Zavidow: Do you want to say anything more about like needs, quirks, or type of bullying?

Kapit: I think a lot of it had to do with—it's funny because I got bullied later for my sexuality and gender identity but I definitely didn’t—like hadn't figured that out yet. So I don’t think
that was it like I didn't have and still don't have a spectrum diagnosis but I think I needed one. But I was very clearly ADHD and anxious and so my like behaviors that would stem from my anxiety and my hyperactivity and my inattention were hard for other people to deal with. I was like just very socially incompetent. I did not know how to maintain a conversation, I did not know how to engage in conversations with people that were based on both of our likes and not just me and I didn't know how to take the perspective of others very well. It's funny because my behaviors as a kid really parallel the behaviors of the kids I teach now. But I was in a mainstream setting so people didn't—I wasn't in the special ed classroom but academically I was very on grade level or above grade level. But socially I just had no clue what I was doing. So I got picked on a lot for that because—it was harder because academically I entered kindergarten reading chapter books, I could do multiplication by the age of five. Like there was no question of wether I was cognitively impaired because I was not but socially I was very different.

**Zavidow:** What kind of coping strategies or things did you learn to do?

**Kapit:** I don’t know that I had any before I was in probably fourth or fifth grade. Yeah I think I was pretty—pretty miserable and didn't know how to tell anybody I was miserable but I spent a lot of time alone or with people I thought were my friends or that were definitely talking about me behind my back.

**Zavidow:** And you’d said that later you feel like you got bullied for your gender and sexuality but hadn't figured it out at the time. To use your words again do you want to talk about that evolution for you?

**Kapit:** Sure. I think around fifth grade—I had always dressed very eccentrically because my parents didn't dress me so it was like whatever I wanted to wear. So I wore a lot of very unattractive flowered leggings and baggy tee shirts and I didn't care I thought I looked great. But I guess my friends were like really embarrassed and before I went to middle school I very clearly remember two of my friends bringing me to one of my friend's houses and telling me—sitting me down and telling me I couldn't wear that anymore If I wanted to have friends in middle school. So I drastically changed my look and started shopping at the stupid stores that teenage girls shop at. So I like went to Hollister and other really high end stores. I don't think I shopped at Abercrombie & Fitch but I definitely shopped at Hollister and wore clothes that I hated and—but that like would help me fit in and clearly it did not work. I still felt pretty socially isolated. I had friends who I still thought were my friends and weren't and people were still picking on me. And then I came out—or was outed at twelve in seventh grade and then people actively picked on me for that. Gender stuff didn't happen till later but sexuality bullying happened pretty early. I think like from people that I've talked to that are friends of mine like twelve is early to be out and have people picking on you for that. Or it was early then. I feel like now people are coming out earlier because it's more represented but ten years ago twelve was early.

**Zavidow:** Were there any other people you knew growing up that were out?
Kapit: Not really until like tenth or eleventh grade. There were people, once I came out — there were people that started telling me they were questioning but they were not coming out. They were just like I once looked at a girl.

Zavidow: Did you—were you receptive to people using you as the person to talk about those things with?

Kapit: I was at the time. It's harder for me now to think about it because I've been the spokesperson for so many communities so many times that I'm kind of exhausted. But it was cool then to be like well actually i'm not the only one and even if these people aren't ready to talk about it like—I'm not alone. And it's cool to feel like people trust you and like know that they can talk to you about things. So I think then I thought it was pretty cool and I was okay with it.

Zavidow: Were yououted to your family? Your friends?

Kapit: It kind of happened in stages. It's funny because I remember the date. It was September 13th two-thousand—it was either 2006 or 2007. But it was Rosh Hashanah so we had the day off from school and I called somebody who I thought was my friend and was like I think I have a crush on a girl. And she was like—she sent me a video of herself trying to hypnotize me out of it which I guess was a thing she really thought would work. And I was very concerned because I didn't know that this was normal and that people have these thoughts. And she—I told her which girl I liked cause it was a good friend of ours that I had liked for many years and she then called the friend and told her that I liked her and then proceeded to call everybody else that were friends with and tell them too. So the next day walking to school it was like one of those movie scenes where you think people are looking at you but they're not but like they actually were and they were all whispering to each other. And then I guess kids told their parents who told my parents which sucked because it got to my parents before I wanted to tell them. Which I guess turned out fine because apparently they'd known for many years anyway so when I finally did tell them they were like well duh. But, I wish that it had come from me.

Zavidow: Are you still—or did you stay friends at all with those people or was that it?

Kapit: Some of them. The girl thatouted me she actually recently—like we went to high school together too so we were in similar friend groups so it wasn't really a choice but we always had a rough time which makes sense because thats a really terrible thing to do to somebody. But now—she actually lives in the city now and she called me a few months ago and was like I just really want to apologize because I realized it was a really terrible thing that I did and that it really could have scarred you and been really dangerous for you if we had lived in a different place where people might have been less receptive. I don't think people were necessarily perceptive but I guess it could have been worse somewhere else. But it was nice that she recognized after a hundred million years that maybe that was not the best thing
for her to do.

Zavidow: And where specifically in Maryland were you?

Kapit: Bethesda...Rockville, Bethesda which is in the blue county of Maryland. We are the most densely populated area of Maryland and we're the reason Maryland goes blue. But we're—so it's like pretty—it's considered pretty liberal but I still prefer New York right? It's like queer representation there is not huge even though it's a pretty liberal place. A lot of people who live there have parents who work in the government.

Zavidow: And so we talked a lot about liking going back to New York because there were like a lot of fun things to do more so than in Bethesda. Like what specifically did you do when you visited New York? Where’d you like to go?

Kapit: I liked to go to the park, I like to eat here which a lot of people do. But it was like going to the park or like just seeing things that were different. There was not a lot of difference where I grew up and I think after I knew I was different like seeing other people who were different was way cool for me. Where I grew up is very upper middle class, white, jewish, cis-straight people. So it was interesting to be like there are not a ton of people of color. And you know, the people of color that are there are definitely academically tracked. Majority of people are fairly well off. Everybody's Jewish.

Zavidow: Do you feel that coming to Barnard was a diverse, liberal, affirming space?

Kapit: In comparison to where I grew up, yes. I think there are definitely places that are more diverse but it was still pretty shocking to me to come to Barnard and be like there are people who are not what I grew up with. It was—I mean it was awesome. I'm not saying it was bad. It was just different.

Zavidow: And what aspects of your identity would you say are the most important to you?

Kapit: Important to me now or important to me then?

Zavidow: Both.

Kapit: I think it has really fluctuated. I think my sexuality and gender identity have always been and will probably always be important to me. As I have grown up and attended Barnard I think that my—I went through different phases where my race, religion, and class were more relevant. Or not religion but ethnicity were more important. But they're not things that I think about enough as I should. But yeah. That doesn't mean they're not relevant I just think that there are things that are more pressing in how I navigate the world.

Zavidow: When and I guess why did gender start taking the fore of your identity? At what point did that become...?
Kapit: Okay so sophomore year of high school I like impulsively cut off all my hair. So I went from having hair down to my chest to like basically a buzz cut. And I don't remember why I did it. I think a friend of mine had also talked about doing it and so we went together but it kind of came out of nowhere like I don't remember it being a conversation.

Zavidow: Did you do it alone? Like by yourself?

Kapit: No. Somebody did it for me which was the first time i’d ever had my hair actually cut by somebody other than my mom.

Zavidow: Do you remember where you went to get it cut?

Kapit: Oh yeah. I—yes. I don't remember the name of the salon but I can picture it.

Zavidow: Do you want to describe it?

Kapit: Uh, it's on—it's like—on Rockville Pike around Congressional Plaza. It's a tiny little salon. It's next to a Staples which is where I got my school supplies growing up and it's near Bed Bath & Beyond and a Petsmart. But we went and we cut off my hair and I remember looking in the mirror and being like oh my goodness...this is how I'm supposed to look. And it was really cool for me to feel like that but then the next day I went to school. Or I think I posted a picture on Facebook that day and everybody was giving me really positive feedback and then I went to school the next day and the girl that I was dating at the time looked and me and said if I wanted to date someone who looked like a boy I'd date a real boy. Like that really stuck with me and I think I realized I was trying to keep her so I started dressing like very hyper-femininely because I was like well I don't want people to think I'm a boy. So I started wearing very tight jeans and shirts that showed off my cleavage. So I think that was when gender became a thing in my head.

Zavidow: Did you—you stayed dating that same person?

Kapit: I did which was a mistake for multiple reasons. I mean I shouldn't have. You should not keep dating somebody when they say stuff like that to you. But also it was a very toxic relationship. But it was—I mean it was my first relationship. It was the first time I’d ever loved somebody or kissed somebody or slept with somebody so I felt like losing her would have been a very big loss for me.

Zavidow: Did you date a lot after that in high school?

Kapit: I was in a few relationships. We actually—she and I dated for three and a half years of high school. But within the last six months of high school I dated a few other people.

Zavidow: What about in college?
Kapit: What about in college? I got to college and I started dating somebody and we dated for like eight months and then we broke up. And then I dated somebody for almost two years. That was a tough relationship too. And then my senior year I dated somebody for six months.

Zavidow: Um and you had said earlier that you did occupy some queer spaces at college but kind of left because of the drama. Do you and I want to talk about what that type of drama is?

Kapit: I mean there's just like—as big as the queer community is it's also incredibly small. So once you're dating somebody who has dated somebody that you've also dated and like—it's tough. There are only so many queer spaces that you can occupy with like fifteen people who have all slept with each other before you're like I cant do this anymore. So I was like I cant be in a room with four people that I've dated who are also dating people that I've dated who have slept with people that I've slept with and it was exhausting and it was hurting me and it was making me very anxious to be in spaces with people who have hurt me. So I disengaged myself from them.

Zavidow: Did you feel better after that?

Kapit: I did. Barnard is a small campus. There are about 2,200 of us and we all know each other. So I would obviously still run into people but it was nice not being in a small room with twenty people, all of whom have slept with each other, for like three hours a week. I mean it's tough to be in a small community like that and my high school was like that too. Our queer community was like ten of us and we all did that. So it was nice to be in a little bit of a bigger community but at the same time I was not—I like needed out.

Zavidow: What about living in New York now not being in college? Do you feel like queer communities you run into the same problem or you just don't embed yourself in the same way?

Kapit: It's different. My queer communities now are very separate from Barnard. But I still—I run into people. It's a big city but small world and—so I do. I run into people that I don't necessarily want to see. But it's—also have had dating since really actively being trans has been a very unique experience for me. So it's a different world than it was at Barnard.

Zavidow: When would you say—like what does ‘since really actively being trans’ mean to you and when did that start?

Kapit: So I got top surgery January of 2016 and then after graduating—I graduated in a relationship and then we broke up last summer. And then I started testosterone November so like I identified as trans but like now that I'm read as trans its very different.

Zavidow: Different how?
Kapit: I desperately am low on calories if I quickly grab something to eat will it ruin your whole...

Zavidow: No, do you want to stop it?

Kapit: No you don't have to. I'm literally going to walk into the kitchen and come right back. Are you hungry?

Zavidow: I'm good.

Kapit: [brief pause] Ready. Your question was different how?

Zavidow:

Kapit: Being read as male means that I either have to—not have too. Um, it's a lot of coming out over and over again. It's exhausting and either way I feel like I'm lying to somebody because like straight women are looking for men typically and they are often looking for—I don't want to say 'real men' because what does that mean. But they're often looking for men with body parts that I don't have. And then queer women are often looking for women with body parts that I also don't have. Or I have to like explain myself a hundred-fifty times to many people and it's exhausting and it means inhabiting a space that I have not inhabited before. Especially online.

Zavidow: What do you mean especially online?

Kapit: Because if you meet somebody organically like in real life you can start talking and then somehow you talk about your interests or your likes. But online it's just like you have to pick you know? Are you male or female? And are you interested in men or women? And it's like well neither and you know, what is the way to go there? And like Tinder now says you can put transgender on there but I feel weird about people like filtering through things avoiding that. But at the same time I'd rather you say no and then I don't have to be like I'm trans and you be like oh never mind bye.

Zavidow: So Tinder. Do you use any other dating apps?

Kapit: I've had very little success with Ok Cupid so not really.

Zavidow: Do you usually meet up with the people that you match with on Tinder.

Kapit: I have a few times and some people have been really cool and some people have sucked. But I feel like, I mean wether your straight or gay or anything in the middle people's tinder experiences have sucked or been great. I know couples who have met online but I also know people who have had like the worst possible experiences with Tinder dates.
Zavidow: What's the best Tinder date that you've been on?

Kapit: [whispers] Best Tinder date I've been on? God. Um, okay I matched with this girl on Tinder—Girl?—woman who was twenty-eight and we like went to dinner and just like talked for hours about everything.

Zavidow: Where'd you go to dinner?

Kapit: We went to BareBurger which is my favorite place ever. But at the end of the date—well the date was really great and then at the end of the date she was like also i'm moving to London in a month and I was like excellent! But the actual date was really nice and she wasn't judgy and she was cool. We're actually like — she didn't end up going to London and now we're friendly. So I mean that was nice but you know, for every nice Tinder date you have like seven terrible ones.

Zavidow: Going back a little bit, you mentioned that you got top surgery somewhat recently.

Kapit: A year and a half ago.

Zavidow: A year and a half ago. Was that something that you'd been thinking about wanting to do for a long time or like how did that?

Kapit: I think as soon as I hit puberty the first time and like started growing a chest I was like no thank you. It was not something I knew was an option until many years later but once—

Zavidow: How did you learn it was an option?

Kapit: Because I—my—some of my friends at college were talking about it. But once I knew it was an option I knew it was something I wanted. It was just a matter of talking to my parents about how to fund it and finding a doctor and all that.

Zavidow: And were your parents supportive of that process?

Kapit: I know it was hard for them at first to understand why I'd do that knowingly. My mom definitely thought it was an elective surgery and I tried explaining that it wasn't really. Then I think the issue was me going under. That was scary for them but they came around.

Zavidow: Did you have other people supporting you in that process?

Kapit: Everybody did. My friends did. Yeah I have a really incredible group of friends and they were totally there.
Zavidow: And where did you have it done?


Zavidow: And I'm just curious where your siblings are throughout...

Kapit: Physically where they are?

Zavidow: Physically and in terms of like your relationships with them.

Kapit: They're both in Maryland right now. One is going to be in eleventh grade and the other is going to be a senior in college.

Zavidow: The same high school you went to? The younger one?

Kapit: Different high school. Yeah my brothers were homeschooled for a while and then I think my youngest brother is doing better in the school he's at than he would have in a large public high school. My middle brother and I have a good relationship now. We didn't growing up. But we do now, he calls me his sibling and we talk. He's actually in Princeton for the summer doing an internship so we have plans to see each other. He and I are a lot closer now, we're like friends and friendly. My youngest brother has a really hard time with difference. He always has, wether that's disability, or gender, or sexuality. So I think he has a hard time with all the changes my body's going through so we don't really talk but he's seventeen he doesn't talk to my parents either. He only talks to his girlfriend and like two of his friends. So I don't think it's necessarily personal I think like being a teenager is the worst and so that's what's happening.

Zavidow: How often do you see your family?

Kapit: I like to go home like once every two months.

Zavidow: Do they ever come to New York to visit?

Kapit: Mhmm. I spoke at Barnard's reunion two weeks ago and they came up for that. My parents did. And I'm going home next week.

Zavidow: What did you speak about at Barnard's reunion?

Kapit: I talked about being trans at a women's college.

Zavidow: How was that received?

Kapit: Overwhelmingly positive. People were really glad that I was telling that story because
people of all years were saying that they knew people who were having gender troubles while they were at Barnard. Whether it was people who were somebody from the class of like 1940 who—I don’t know how old she is then...What...like ninety?—that told me that she had a friend at Barnard who was pretty sure that this person was a man. And that she was glad that I was in a place now where I’m able to talk about it because she wishes that her friend had been able to talk about it. So it was nice, I think, for people to hear that there are and have always been trans people at Barnard and its possible um...So I think it was cool. It was an overwhelmingly positive response. Dean Hinkson: the dean of Barnard was there. She did not like that I was doing what I was doing but, oh well.

Zavidow: And so—in transitioning out of college, graduating high school, do you want to talk a little bit about what you do now?

Kapit: My full time job is being a special ed teacher.

Zavidow: Where at?

Kapit: Which is awesome because I’ve always wanted to do that. I work at the Gillen Brewer school. It’s a small independent school for kids with special needs on the Upper East Side. I teach eight nine year olds. And part time I do a lot of activist education work surrounding—specifically surrounding like LGBT youth and policies in schools.

Zavidow: Are you doing that with a particular group, organization?

Kapit: Yeah, so New York Community—I actually think its Collective—We are Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE) as we do a lot of education reform and such and they have a branch called NYQueer which is for queer teachers and then NYQueer has a branch called the Trans Teachers Network. So we do a lot. We’re writing professional development and just general conference type things, presentations that we can give or other people can give to their staff about ways to make schools more safe and inclusive for LGBTQ youth.

Zavidow: What kind of like policies do you advocate for?

Kapit: Some of it’s as simple as like asking people’s pronouns. Some of its more complicated. Changing administrative policy surrounding changing names on rosters. Preferred name policies, gender inclusive bathrooms, stuff like that. Dress code policies, locker room policies.

Zavidow: And you’re working with all of New York schools?

Kapit: Yeah.

Zavidow: Is it mostly public schools?

Kapit: It’s both. Public, charter, private, independent. We’re actually presenting in a national
conference in July.

Zavidow: What's the conference?

Kapit: It's called Free Minds, Free People. I can't go but my friends who I do this stuff with are going. And giving a similar presentation on what you can do because even if you're a straight cis teacher there are things you can do to make your LGBTQ students feel safe on a day to day basis. It's not that hard.

Zavidow: And how did you find out about NYCoRE?

Kapit: I think a professor of mine in college mentioned it and so I signed up.

Zavidow: Do you remember the professor?

Kapit: Yeah it was Professor Edstrom.

Zavidow: So you've been doing that since college?

Kapit: No joined in September.

Zavidow: Got it. And how many people would you say are in NYCoRE?

Kapit: Probably 80 to 100. NYQueer is probably like 30. The Trans Teacher Network actually has about 40 people in New York registered but obviously not everybody comes to everything.

Zavidow: What kind of—do you have consistent meetings or?

Kapit: We try to have monthly things. It's very interesting I was just talking about this. So majority of the people in the Trans Teachers Network teach middle or high school. All of us except for three are trans-masculine and everybody except for two people are white. So it's not super diverse. We're working on that but it's a pretty cool groups of people. I've met some really awesome people. There's actually another person in it who's a Barnard grad. He's a children's librarian. It's just a really great group of people and it's nice to know that there are other people like living their truths in schools in New York.

Zavidow: Do you know when it started?

Kapit: I don't. I know that there's a Trans Educators Network nationally and that's been around for a while but I think the Trans Teachers Network in New York is fairly new like potentially this year.
Zavidow: Wow. And how is it being a teacher at your school if you're comfortable sharing?

Kapit: A teacher? Or like a Trans teacher?

Zavidow: Trans teacher.

Kapit: Trans teacher. Um, I'm working on my principal. She—I kind of came in day one and was like here are the things I want and I think it was hard for her to hear that she's not doing enough. She's definitely working on it, she's coming around. We're bringing in a trainer so I'm hoping that helps. But I really do enjoy teaching there.

Zavidow: And it's a small school.

Kapit: Small staff of sixty. Actually the staff is a reasonable size. Most schools have that but we have three teachers in a classroom instead of one but we only have a hundred students.

Zavidow: And you studied education at Barnard. What about after Barnard? Do you have any graduate plans?

Kapit: Well that's what I'm doing now.

Zavidow: Where are you doing that?

Kapit: Oh! Grad school.

Zavidow: Yeah.

Kapit: I'm going to Bank Street in the fall for a masters in special ed.

Zavidow: How long is that program?

Kapit: It is two years. I will probably do it in two years plus a summer.

Zavidow: So you'll be doing that while working.

Kapit: Yes, I will.

Zavidow: Is that how it's usually done?

Kapit: Sometimes. Some people don't do it that way but because all of the education classes required field work anyway they were either going to put me in a school or do the fieldwork in the school I'm working in and I figured this way I can at least get paid.
Zavidow: Yeah that makes sense. Going back to something that you mentioned earlier, just thinking about when you cut your hair off, posting it on Facebook, and dating apps and stuff. I'm curious as to how online spaces—how you move through online spaces.

Kapit: I definitely use online spaces as like political advocacy spaces which is important to me that like people hear trans stories from trans people.

Zavidow: What kinds of spaces? Like Facebook, blogs, Tumblr?

Kapit: I have a blog that I haven't really been using but I'd like to use it more. I often write things on Instagram or Facebook.

Zavidow: What's your blog called?

Kapit: I think it's called Gender Transcender which I was pretty proud of.

Zavidow: Um, and is there like a reason you don't use it much or?

Kapit: Just because I—it's not that I don't have things to say it's just like I don't have free time. Period.

Zavidow: And have you like met people through online spaces or it's mostly been would you say through face to face?

Kapit: I've actually met a bunch of people that have like reached out to me online about like about like advocacy stuff or like trans stuff so that's been cool. I haven't—like some people live across the world so obviously I have not met all of the them but I have spoken with people across the world about stuff like this.

Zavidow: And you also talked about really liking to eat in New York and enjoying BareBurger. And you're nourishing yourself in from of me [laughter].

Kapit: Im so hungry.

Zavidow: What are your favorite places to eat in New York?

Kapit: Anywhere that makes good gluten free food I will try. I like S'MAC.

Zavidow: Wheres S'MAC?

Kapit: Its on 14th—Nope. It's on 12th between 1st and 2nd. They make vegan and gluten free mac and cheese.
Zavidow: And you're gluten free?

Kapit: Mhmm. If you have not been there you should go. Like right now.

Zavidow: Alright [laughter]. Sounds good. Is there anything else particular that you enjoy doing in New York?

Kapit: I really like to walk—Central Park, the High Line, along the rivers—it's just beautiful. It's nice to be outside. Sometimes I—when I first moved to the city I really missed being outside. So it's nice to do that in places that have green things.

Zavidow: Is walking mostly how you get around?

Kapit: I mean I take the train to work and back but I like to walk when I can. It clears my head.

Zavidow: Yeah. Do you walk alone or with other people?

Kapit: I often walk alone with music on.

Zavidow: What do you listen to?

Kapit: Almost exclusively Broadway soundtracks.

Zavidow: What was the last thing you listened to on a walk and where were you walking?

Kapit: I'm trying to think. Wait yesterday I walked with people. Friday I walked with people. I was walking around in the Union Square on Thursday listening to the Come From Away soundtrack.

Zavidow: Do you do musical theatre or sing?

Kapit: I cannot sing to save my life. I play the flute so like people that ask me to do pit a couple of times but I don't do musical theatre I just really appreciate it. I grew up—the theatre program where I grew up was really strong. The whole music program—like band, orchestra, theatre and all my friends did theatre so I like grew up around it.

Zavidow: How long have you been playing the flute.

Kapit: Since I was eight years old so fourteen years? Almost fifteen.

Zavidow: And you still play?

Kapit: Occasionally. I brought it in to work and played for my kids which they really enjoyed.
Zavidow: Do you otherwise just practice at home?

Kapit: Sometimes.

Zavidow: Do you live with people?

Kapit: I do. I have an amazing room mate who is currently on the West coast for the summer so somebody else—somebody I know from Barnard’s partner is living here right now.

Zavidow: Do you live with any non-people?

Kapit: I do I have a cat who is currently under my couch sleeping.

Zavidow: What’s your cat’s name?

Kapit: His name is lucky, he's thirteen, he was my tenth birthday present, and I’m obsessed with him.

Zavidow: Tenth birthday present. So you had lucky—

Kapit: He's thirteen I've had him almost twelve years.

Zavidow: So while you were at Barnard?

Kapit: He actually lived at Barnard with me because I certified him as an emotional support animal because he helps with my anxiety so he gets to live where I live.

Zavidow: Nice. Alright. And the last question I have, it’s a very AllSex question, is what is your favorite thing about your gender identity?

Kapit: That is a very AllSex question. I’m sure that— I think that’s actually in one of our — like I remember writing that. What is my favorite thing about my gender identity? I like that it’s so confusing which sounds weird. But I feel like people are so certain of so many things in this world that it’s like—and I am so certain about so many things in this world—that it’s nice that there’s like one thing about me that I will just never understand. I’m the type of person who has a hard time with uncertainty or the unknown. But I like that my gender identity is confusing because it forced me to accept that there is this thing about me that I will never totally grasp and that that’s actually okay.

Zavidow: Is there anything else you want to talk about or add that we haven't talked about already?
Kapit: You're the best!