

May: Alright today is December 7th, 2018. Were at a home in Portland, Maine. My name is May Hohman. Spelled M-A-Y H-O-H-M-A-N. Can you spell and say your name?

Introduction

Milo: Yes my name is Milo Degoosh. M-I-L-O D-E-G-O-O-S-H.

May: Just to remind you you can refuse any questions or stop the interview at any time no questions asked. We can reschedule if we go over. Um- And so lets start with how old are you.

Introduction

Milo: I turned twenty eight on Sunday.

May: So some of the topics that we brought, or rather you brought up, were sexual orientation and gender, Coming out, Portland, Maggie Nelson, and then the National Campaign of Marriage Equality. So let's start with some demographic information. Where were you born?

All topic ranges

Milo: I was born in Lewiston, Maine.

May: Can you talk about your childhood?

Milo: Yeah. I mean my childhood was, so, so I have two moms. They got together I think in nineteen-ninety five. So I grew up in Lewiston, with two moms in the early nineties. Which, was not, um, always the easiest. But, it was, yeah. My moms did their best. And I have three younger siblings. One, biological, and then two step. It's been twenty something years at this point. So, don't really consider them step siblings anymore.

May: Do you want to elaborate on not the best?

Background: Family

Milo: Um, well, I think- we just. I think I didn't meet another person with gay person until I was like out of high school. And we moved to Brunswick when I was, in the 6th grade. So I only went through like elementary school in Lewiston but we had, there were no other, like, Queer people or gay people

in our lives except our parents. I guess they had some gay friends, but for the most part, it was like, yeah. So it was interesting. I remember they like, went to check out a few elementary schools before deciding they wanted to get a house, or an apartment so that they could figure out which school was best for the kids. They were actually told not to make out in the hallway. So teachers like-you know- as long as your not gonna make out in the hallway, like in front of the kids, we can take you through the school. And it's like, okay? Ya know. And it's just kinda eh- like, ya know it's a working class middle town and not a lot of exposure to Queerness and gayness and, the nineties weren't kind to Gay people. Yeah.

Background: Moms

May: Did you have any exposure to gay people or the gay community in high school?

Milo: In high school? Yes. Yeah, in high school. I mean I came out as gay when I was, well actually when I was like six I was gonna marry my

best friend santa, and I was like yeah I know. [Laughter]. So, I knew from a very young age that I, you know, there was something going on. Then I came out as gay to the rest of my friends as gay when I was in high school. Or, most of my friends in middle school. I always felt safe with my friends. Brunswick was more accepting than Lewiston was, or it was a lot easier to navigate. And there were other gay kids all the like, I think, most of them got a little more bullying and stuff than I did. I was pretty lucky cuz I was an athlete and people thought I was cool. So it was easy for me. Which is, I don't know, a privilege.

Background: Mom

May: What about after? Right after high school, where did you go after that?

Background: Moms

Milo: Um, I moved straight to Portland with my best friend. I didn't go to college. I had been an athlete in high school and then considered playing sports in college and then I had some injuries. I didn't get into the one school that I probably would've really wanted to go to. And I was like, well the only reason I was gonna go to college was to play sports anyway. And I think that- had that happen, like had I gone to college and played women's soccer in college, I think that I would have had a lot harder of a time coming out as Trans. So, I don't know. Blessing in disguise. In some ways. But yeah, right after high school I moved to Portland.

Background:
Sexuality

May: When did you come out as Trans?

Milo: Hmm, I came out as Trans [Breath] three, maybe, it'll be three years in February. Yeah. And then I started hormones exactly two years ago. Yeah, I started hormones and then I got my dog the next day. It was a good week.

May: What has that Transition been like for you?

Milo: Um, it's been really great in a lot of ways and I think its been really difficult in others. I think that for the most part all of my communities have overall been accepting. I had a partner at the time who, probably was least supportive than anyone in my life. And, my moms also struggled with it, a lot. Ya know I think there like part of that group, how do I want to say this? They're like ya know the greatest gift that you can be given is to be born a women and I'm like isn't it if you are one? That's so great for you! But like if you're born one and maybe you're not, it's really not a fun gift to receive. Yeah, and I mean, I don't- I don't know. They just had a hard time dealing with it and, my mom, well when my step-mom came out to her parents as being gay and like left her husband for my mom, her parents told her to get a second opinion. Like literally they were like you need to get a second opinion. And when I came out to them, her response to me was basically I should get a second opinion. And I kind of lost it at her. And I was like you know what, you literally are your dad right now. And you need to

Background:
Sexuality

just back off about this. And she was also very confused about why I needed to change my name. I was like because you know so many men named Margaret that it's just total common place and of course, you know what screw it. I'll keep my name the same. I think that she was shocked and she still all the time later will mess up my name and my pronouns. My biological mom wont and she has been really good about it. I think it has been a lot harder for my step mom, for some reason. When I came out to my partner, it's one of those things where I wish I had just like, broken up with this person then and there. Because it was just so not a healthy thing for me to be involved in. But she was very, and I was very confused by this because the last few people that she had been intimate with or dated were Trans people and she's also now dating a Trans person. So I'm like what was the problem with me being Trans? Was it just specifically me and everyone else is fine? But she like, cried and cried and cried for days and I totally had to take care of her and then I like, yeah, ya know, I didn't start hormones until she was ready and I didn't come out to everyone else until she was ready and I totally just, tried to make sure that she she felt good about everything but really I feel like I ended up missing out on like having a coming out party and starting hormones when I wanted to and being able to, yeah. That was tough. And it stayed that way I mean I think we were together for oh God like two- a little over two years after that. And It just like never got better and hindsight twenty twenty, the cliché thing that they say to you! But yeah I should've ended that a long time ago because it really like, literally everybody else in my life had been just amazing about it. Yeah, everyone. Which is great.

Background:
College

May: How did your siblings react to it?

Background:
Transgender

Milo: They're great. They're great. They uh, it made my, so my sisters biological dad has remarried so she has three brothers, like stepbrothers on that side and now she has three step brothers on this side so she's literally the only girl in they're like seven kids in her life right now. So she was just like oh my God okay. Like, great. And she was like I'm not surprised, like nobody was surprised. She was just like okay, yeah I get it. My biological brother said well shit that means Phebe has to be my favorite sister now, and then he said but at least Connor doesn't have to be my favorite brother anymore. [Laughter] I don't know! And then my younger brother was like, I don't know probably stoned when I told him so he was fine. [Laughter] He usually is. Yeah they were great. Even my dad, I don't talk to my dad for a lot of reasons but he, I haven't blocked him on social media, and even he, I did a Gofundme for like half of my top surgery cost. He donated almost a thousand dollars to it and I was like wow I haven't talked to you in years. He sent me a selfie, my dads like seventy, so this is

Transition

Transition/Family

Transition/Family

funny. He sent me a selfie next to the like, welcome to Milo, Maine sign. And I was like okay like we don't talk but you're chill with that which is weird because he was not okay when I came out as gay. Yeah, I don't know. He's trying.

May: Would you like to talk about your relationship with your father anymore?

Milo: Hmm, I don't know. I don't really want to get too much into it - he just- he's [Pause]. I haven't legally changed my name yet and when I do I'll be getting- I have his last name right now. I'm gonna take my moms. I think he just struggles with intimacy and affection. Is like, inappropriately affectionate at times in ways that always made me feel very uncomfortable when I was a kid. And has done some things that made me feel like super shitty. He just doesn't get it. He doesn't understand, he kind of never showed up when we were kids. He lived in Michigan for a really long time and we would have to go there for the summer and it would be me and my brother and my dad would be working all the time. We would just like sit on his couch and he just wouldn't take time off or really want to spend time with us and then he wonders why we don't have a relationship and it's like eh, maybe because you're kind of, I don't know. Not gonna call him names. [Laughs]. I don't have tons of hostility towards him I just think that I don't feel like I'm missing anything by not having him in my life. I have two parents who raised me. I don't need more than my moms.

May: Let's go back to your transition a little bit. Was there any specific challenges, maybe like medical, or cost wise, that have impacted your transition?

Milo: Planned Parenthood is a magical wonderland. I actually went into Planned Parenthood when I started hormones. My ex-partner and I were on break. Because we just kept having the same fight about me being Trans over and over and over again and so we took a month off. I went in to get tested because I was like, well, if I want to sleep with somebody I want to make sure. I went in and they asked you your pronouns which is awesome! Then they asked me if I was on hormones and I was like no and they were like did you know you could start them here? I was like nope! I had no idea where do I sign up? and how much does it cost? And I just had no idea that you could do that at Planned Parenthood! And you can't in all states obviously. But here you can and that's amazing. Yeah I started like, I made another appointment for the next day and I did the blood work and they didn't make me pay anything upfront which is really great. At the time, they didn't have this fund but right now they have a fund where if you're income, like if you're Trans, and your income falls below a certain amount that they could cover half of your cost because, it's not covered

Transition/Family

Transition/Dating

Coming Out/Transition

Hormones and P.P.

Hormones and P.P.

under Title X funding. Like Trans care, like they have some new donor fund or something which is great. So I was able to start getting them and that wasn't a huge financial burden for me. Surgery was really expensive. I did a crowdfunding campaign for about half. It was probably the most humbling experiences that I've ever had because I started it one night I had just decided my back hurt too badly from binding and I was freaking out and didn't feel good at the gym and didn't wanna go swimming and didn't want anybody to look at me. Having all of these, I don't know, crazy thoughts and I was very depressed and I was like okay this just needs to happen. So I figured I would start one assuming that maybe I would raise a few hundred dollars or something and it would help me get there a little bit sooner. I raised a thousand dollars more than I asked for in five days. This city- I know- it's insane. Portland showed up I mean, I think my best friends Grandma saw it on Facebook and gave me like five dollars. It's just like little stuff like that it's like- who is this person? And Kelcy was like, that's my Grandma! My like, eighth grade art teacher and all of these people just got around. I work at a coffee shop, I work at Bard coffee downtown, I've worked there- [Pause]. I took a little break and I moved to Texas for just about two years but basically I've worked there since like two thousand eleven. I had regular customers walk in, this one customer walked in and he handed me sixty dollars and he said, "can't figure out how to use the internet, don't spend this on Tequila." [Laughs]. But it just made me realize like, I have a really amazing group of people in this town and I have a bigger group of people in this town that are behind me than I even knew. It was really, really amazing. I mean even still after that I was able to like pay for it all but then I took six weeks off from work and then I had financial nonsense happen at the beginning of last year, or this past year I guess. So I had a I was still like pretty broke. And, I don't know I feel like If I had spent all of my savings on surgery, and that wasn't the case, that it was necessary.

Cost/Top surgery

Cost/Community

Cost/Community

Cost/Top Surgery

May: Let's talk a little bit about work since you mentioned that you work at at a coffee shop. What was it like to work and be a Trans person?

Milo: I mean we have like the Queerest staff in the entire world at like this coffee shop. We, and it's a really safe space, something that, yeah. Coming out in a place where you, and not leaving, it was really difficult like I can totally understand why people who come out move. I get it, because you have to be so committed to like working with people and correcting people and doing the work and reminding everyone and understanding that, not all your co-workers are gonna be able to stand up for you, and you can't really expect to, it's not fair, and you kind of have to be like alright if I want to stay here, this is gonna suck for a

Transgender/Working

Working/Queer

while. And it sucked for a while. But I think that coffee is a very Queer industry I think that there are, so many really rad Queer people in coffee and I'm in coffee at level that is, I don't know. I did compete in National beresta competitions. That's why I was away over this last week, I was in Denver competing in a qualifier for the United States competition and I've been doing that for years and I have a little, I mean, a lot of industry experience. People kind of look up to me at work but also kind of, a little bit in the industry as well I think, that has been, its made it easier. Not to, not being someone who people care enough get it right, I think. Which is sad that that's not true for everyone. I feel like it's true for me. But we have so many Trans people all over Bard right now we have three Trans people, and then we have like five other gay people. So its like very Queer, so nobody like, someone like misgenders one of us and like, you see fire in everyone's eyes, you're like who gets to tell this person off. It's almost like which one of us gets to correct this person because, we all are. It's like really tight group, and it's awesome! It's a really good place to work.

Coffee Community

May: Alright let's talk about dating a little now. What is dating looking like for you? As a Queer person?

Working/Bard

Milo: I mean, I'm only kinda now figuring out to date as a man. It's a very interesting thing and I don't know if I realized how tricky it would be. For the most part I have been in the last, I mean yeah literally the past ten years I've been in like three pretty long relationships and then not really dating anybody in the middle. I think this is the first time in my entire life, I'm like, dating people. It's weird, because I feel at the same time very confident and very so self conscious at the same time. I don't - it's gonna be fun to figure it out I think. I think I had this idea when I was with my last partner I think it may had, I think there's always that thing where you break up with somebody you think nobody is ever gonna want you again. I think that I was especially wary of that because I had like come out as Trans, I was like okay well, if this person doesn't want me anymore because I'm trans then I'm gonna try real hard to make it with her, because if it doesn't work with her then there's just no chance anybody is going to. But that's not true. That's stupid. It's a thing I'm sure that like so many people feel that way for so many reasons. The dating pool is really kind of great in Portland right now which I didn't expect. I had a date last night, I'm one of those people though that I can never tell if it's a date. Are we on a date or are we just hanging out? What's going on I'm so confused. I've been on some dates with a bunch of people. I've been single since April. I've been dating for a while. Yeah. I don't know. We'll see what happens.

May: Would you say there's a difference between, trying to date as a women and then trying to date as a male?

Dating/Transition

Dating/Transition

Dating

Milo: Well I think that I'm so, I date fems. I date people who present as fem for the most part. I'm so aware of like unwanted male attention and how big fem visibility is and how people see a pretty girl with lipstick on and they're like, oh, you can't possibly be Queer. That sucks. You should never assume things just by looking at someone about who they want to sleep with and who they want to date it's just an unfair assumption to make. I think I've experienced that a pretty masculine person in person but I. I just am so I've heard like partners of mine, and like my sister, and my friends and everybody that I know talk about being hit on by this dude and not feeling comfortable saying like no and not feeling safe saying no. And not feeling like they were allowed to and just having to sit there and listen to this guy. I am so afraid of me being that guy. I don't want to make women feel uncomfortable. I don't want to make women feel pressured or anything like that. I've felt that even like, as a butch Queer person I've felt that. I can't even imagine how it feels when, you're coming from that angle, I'm hyper aware potentially to like a flaw where maybe I'm over analyzing it. Maybe this person actually just wants to make out with you. I think I'm just figuring it out because it hasn't been very long. I haven't been single for that long. I haven't been, I haven't to figure out, trust I'm not being a toxic person. Which, I hope that I'm not.

Maleness/Dating

Maleness

Maleness/Identity

May: I'm interested to hear more about toxic masculinity. Have you felt pressure to present in a toxic masculine way?

Maleness/Identity

Milo: No, I don't think I would say I felt pressure but I feel this need to fit this stereotype of what it means to be a man. Because that's ridiculous. I think that obviously, your gender is your own and it means something different for every single person so, I don't think it makes sense to try and fit it into a box of what somebody says you should or shouldn't be. But I think that honestly especially when I've hung out with a lot of Trans men I've felt like, I've stopped going to. I went to a Trans guy meetup group for a little while and I stopped going because I was like you guys the way you're talking about women is really gross. The language that you are using and like I get the performance and I get the trying to fit in. And trying to act natural or whatever but it's just been, I couldn't handle it. I couldn't handle it. It wasn't everybody in the group but there were just moments where I was like ya know, I don't feel like I'm actually allowed to say anything because I feel like that would be me policing your gender right now. I feel like you would be upset if I said that and part of that is fair but also I don't want to be in situations where people are using language about other people that is, I don't know, that felt very toxic and so I just left that. But I don't know. I don't feel like I necessarily need the company of other Trans men to feel like I have a community. I have friends who are Trans and that's

Maleness/
Community

Maleness/
Community

great.

May: What is some of the other ways you have connected with the Queer community in? Like the past, present, like you mentioned the support group.

Queer Community

Milo: Honestly that's kind of it right now. I have a lot of really awesome Queer friends and for the most part all of my friends are Queer. I kind of only hang out with Queer people I think. Which is, how I want it to be totally honest. Nothing against cis-straight people but um, I don't know I just feel like I really like not having to feel weird about just jumping into a conversation about sex. And then freaking out all of the people who aren't familiar with anything other than like your traditional cis-man cis-women here we go, have a blast kind of thing. and I just want to be able make the jokes and make the references, and reference body or surgery or experience as a joke and not everyone go all awkward. Queer people understand it and there's a shared language and there's even though everybodies experience is different we all have the shared experience of having to come out and having to fight in some ways to be who we are and stand up for ourselves and each other. It's just something that straight people will never understand. They'll never know what it feels like. I like being around Queer people all of the time.

Queer Community

May: Were gonna jump around a little bit.

Milo: Sure!

May: We're gonna stay in the vein of transition. What was it like growing up? What was it like for your body? Socially, for your mind?

Hormones Impact

Milo: Oh, for my mind It was so weird forgetting everything. I got hazy brain would forget that I had switched with somebody at work or like forget that I need to go to the grocery store. Forget that like did I feed the dog today I don't know if I fed him?! I did, I always feed him. But I totally just got so spacy. And I did not expect that. All of the changes from my body started happening very quickly and I think I didn't expect that to happen as fast as it did. My body just started filling out and I got like crazy hairy, and like really fast. I was like Oh my god. This is wild. And I just like, I just wanted to have sex all the time. All the time. And I've always been like a super sexual person. It's a huge part of my identity, my sexuality. I did not expect to, I didn't really understand that I could want to have sex more. Or like, could. Yeah I didn't realize that was like going to happen quite as much as it did. Yeah, but then I feel like I got, like I could, my muscles started getting bigger kind of just on their own. Obviously at the gym they started getting bigger faster. I also just, I got so lazy. Like I never wanted to do anything. I just wanted to sit on the couch. And not go anywhere. Some of that stuff may be just kind of would've happened whether I started hormones or not. But yeah, it was a wild time. It's been two years. It feels normal now.

Hormones/Sex

Hormones Impact

May: You said that sex was a huge of your identity, can I ask why?

Sex/Identity

Milo: I don't know, I feel like for a really long time, it was kind of the only time I felt good in my body was like, when I was having sex. And I, yeah I've always been, I think it's kinda always been that way. And I started having sex pretty young. I had a couple relationships that were like, very unhealthy sexually. I had a difficult relationship with sex for awhile. But I think, [Pause]. I think that I really like having sex! But I just really like having sex it's great. And yeah, that's kind of the biggest part is that it's just enjoyable. But it also makes me feel less crazy and for a long time I totally were like, yeah, I really hated my body for a really long time. And, the only times I felt good about it were when I was having sex. So I just had sex. A lot. I don't know does that make sense?

Dysphoria

May: I want to talk a little bit about dysphoria if that's alright. How would you say your dysphoria has affected you in your childhood? How has it changed from then and now in your transition.

Milo: Yeah. When I was little I used to walk around with like, I would steal my brothers clothes and I would put his weird baby button downs on. But I would walk around with them unbuttoned because my dad would walk around with his shirt unbuttoned. He was really hairy so it was always kind of gross but I would do it anyway. Because I was just like, alright, I'm doing this. And I was two doing that stuff and when I was in elementary school I started, I would like, fall asleep and would lay there in my bed and we were not religious and we didn't pray or anything but I would basically pray that I would wake up a boy the next day. Like every night, for, I don't know. Until I was, in high school probably. I just was like this is stupid this isn't really going to happen. Make it easier for yourself and just stop. It's always been really tough, buying clothes is really hard. Cuz I have like an ass and hips and that's not something something I think, it's pretty common for trans men to be obsessed with getting rid of their hips and any body fat in that area because they don't want curves. I think I've struggled to figure out what I want my body to look like. But at this point I'm just like I don't care. I'm just in a place where I don't care right now and it feels really good. I kind of think it's why I started dating and like going on dates with many people and feeling like, I just feel like I'm very confident right now. I feel good. My surgery went really well and the scars healed really well. I actually when I chose my surgeon, and he's out of Cleveland, we went out there, for surgery and he does this really cool thing where he doesn't require you to come in for a pre-op visit. He does it via Skype. So that you don't have to like go to the doctors office and pay the thing, and he charges forty five bucks and you send photos of your chest to him. And then he like calls you and then you talk and if you decide to

Background:
Dysphoria

Dysphoria/Clothes

Top surgery/Identity

Top Surgery

go with him he just applies the forty five dollars you paid him into your surgery fee. He's awesome! He's really really cool. I did tons of research and I found him and one other doctor. I decided to go with him. It was just an awesome experience. But when we did the phone consultation thing he said I qualified for like the periareolar which is just the around the nipple one. So I wouldn't really have man scars. I, first of all, didn't believe him. Cuz I was like my chest is bigger than that. I have seen people who've had peria before and you don't want me that's not gonna work out. He was like no I've been doing this for twenty something years and I've really, and I was like okay whatever. But I was super bummed out about it, because that meant I wasn't gonna have scars. And I actually the day of the surgery, when I was literally in my gown, and had an I.V. in my hand and he came in and he was like looking at my chest, and he was like, "ya know, you might be right." he was like "maybe we should do the other one," and I was like yes! Because it was really important to me I think that the only thing in that moment I kind of realized, and in the weeks of my surgery I kind of realized the only thing that I really wanted was to not lose that part of my Queer identity. I pass now. I haven't been misgendered in a very long time, except by my mom. It was like, the only real body thing I have I realized I want to have scars. I want people to know. I don't want to just blend in. Obviously I'm going to have my shirt on which is 99% of the time. I do, for the most part. Like I didn't want to be in a situation where I was on the beach and just nobody knew. Maybe that someday could create an unsafe situation and I really don't care. It's not something I was willing to compromise. So I was really glad when he was like, we can still do the peria if you want but this one might be better. And I was like yeah, give me the big scars, huge ones. Thank you.

Background: Top Surgery

Top Surgery/Identity

May: What were some other ways you dealt with dysphoria? Like you mentioned binding.

Dysphoria

Milo: Yeah binders suck. They really hurt. I used, what is it? It's called GC-TWO-B or G-TWO-B, some combination of those letters and words that I can't remember. But they were, I had three. I had one for the gym and I had one for work because it just reeks like coffee. And then I had one for not at work. And yet they were, I tried to be really good about not sleeping in it. But like sometimes you just want to wake up in the morning and look down at your chest and it's flat. [Pause]. But I mean I was really lucky I only had to do that like two years. I know so many people who have been doing it for ten years and will be doing it for ten more. And it's just so bad for your body and for your back. My ribs are like misshapen, they stick out from like underneath where the binders went. I still have this nervous tick to, I'll like, be having an

Dysphoria/Top surgery

uncomfortable conversation with somebody and I'll go to pull my binder down cuz it was always riding up and then I realized that it's not there and I probably look really weird. Binding sucks. I feel really bad for people who have to just do it for so long. [Pause]

Dysphoria

May: Alright so we're going to shift gears a little bit, so you mentioned on paper that you were affiliated with the National committee of marriage equality, or campaign, would you like to elaborate on that a little more?

Activism

Milo: I mean I think really the biggest part of that was my moms. I kind of don't believe in marriage. I mean I do, like I do, but I think it's all kind of a sham. If and when I get married I want to sign papers at city hall and then just have a huge party. And just eat a lot of food. That's really my ideal. I don't want tens of thousands of dollars, I just went to my cousins wedding oh my god. Her dress was like five thousand dollars! I don't think I've ever had five thousand dollars in my back account. It's crazy. But my moms, all they ever wanted to do was get married. I think we all knew that we were just as much a family as anybody else. But their wedding day was the happiest day of my life, I'll never, I'll never forget that day. I think it just felt like- I campaigned my ass off for that. I went door to door and got yelled at, and hung up on the phone and everything. I'll never forget that day that election happened and they were able to get married. Yeah, it was wild. I think it's still one of those things that is exclusionary. Like yay, rich white gay people can get married like that's great good for you. Like, Trans women of color are still dying, can we maybe focus on that now? I mean I think I have very mixed feelings about it. Hey, you wanna get married you should definitely get married.

Activism/Marriage

May: Where were some of the places you campaigned for it?

Milo: I think it was mostly South Portland and Scarborough. I went with a friend and we did the door to door thing. With a pretty large groups we would go to a neighborhood and everybody would pick three doors kind of thing. Yeah, it was fun.

May: For about how long did you do that for?

Milo: I think I only did it for, I don't know, maybe a month and a half or six weeks? A couple of days a week. If I wasn't working or if I had the morning off I would go do it. And I did the phone banks too. I did that, those were easier, like less of a time commitment.

Activism

May: Have you done any other advocacy for the LGBT community in any specific place?

Milo: Not really, I don't know. I feel like I could do better and should do better but at the same time I um, self preservation is sometimes, something I don't like involved too much. Because, I don't know, I get freaked out. I also get so angry. I am not always the best person to

Activism/Identity

have in situations like that because I just get pissed off and I can't like, have a measured response or conversation with somebody. I just want to yell at you and tell you all of the reasons why you're a terrible person and that's not productive.

May: What do you think about our political climate right now?

Milo: Well, I adopted a service animal the weekend after the election in two thousand sixteen. [Laughs]. I think it's terrifying. I think that people who are just blind and say that everything is going to be fine are just so clearly not paying attention. I think that like, the number of blissfully ignorant people that there are in this country right now is really scary. I think that that is going to do so much damage and it freaks me out to think about the next few years and the next decade. And think about what could happen. I think LGBT youth coming up right now, I think we need to do whatever we can to make sure they still get to live their lives the way that were able to live ours right now. Because it's a real possibility they won't. And that we won't. and that's scary. And that's also just like, I don't know. The monstrosities that are happening at the border right now and the way people just continue to forget Native populations in this country. And having no regard for the fact that we are literally sitting on stolen ground right now, and they're dying. And we don't care. And nobody in politics is doing, politicians are never going to help. Or at least not the ones we continue to elect. It's scary. It's really scary/

May: What's your hope for the community? The LGBT community, in response to our political climate.

Milo: I mean I really hope that people who aren't in our community can show up for us. I think that that's what it's going to take. We are, and forever will be, some of the most beautiful communities. But we can't just do it alone. I just hope for us that, people outside of our communities can recognize that they need to show up for us because we have showed up for them. Yeah.

May: So shifting gears again, you put on paper Austin, Texas. Would you like to tell me what that's all about?

Milo: Well I guess I lived there for, I lived there um, I lived there for a few years. I moved down there with someone who I was dating for a minute and I just needed to get out here. Out of Maine. I like, moved down there and it's a cool city but I kind of hated living there. I had a couple of, I had a couple of really intense things happen there that kind of shaped my timeline of coming out. I was feeling, I feel like the reason I like, really really really needed to just split and get out of this town was because I was like, I'm trans and I need to just go. I need to not be here and figure it out somewhere else. This person was, excuse me, going down there for Grad school and she wanted me to come

Political Climate
Erasure

Queer Community
/Activism

Location change

Transition/ Identity
sovereignty

with her and I loved her so I did. And we, um yeah, it didn't go super well down there but I just remember, we had this friend who came to visit us and she was talking about how her partner had just come out as Trans he was just going to tell his his family. And he told her That he was just like I gotta go tell my family right now. And he didn't want her to come with him, he needed to do it by himself so she came to see us. I just will never forget my partner saying about, to her friend was like, oh well like I think it's really important and amazing that you're staying with him. If she came out as Trans I don't think I would. And kind of pointed at me and I was like cool well. [Laughs]. That's awesome. And I just like totally shut off from her at that point I was not, I don't know. I no longer felt safe with that person. She and I have since talked about that and she was like, she like apologised for having said that and was like that was a really fucked up thing to say. And I'm sure that like, a lot of the stuff that came up afterwards was because of feeling you had around the way that I talked about Transness in those moments and I was like yeah, I mean, yeah for sure. Also I was not an easy person to be around. I think before I came out I was kind of a miserable human and didn't- wasn't probably the best partner for a lot of reasons. But, I don't know, we opened it up, our relationship, because we cuz, after that I was just like, I don't want to have sex with you anymore. Cuz I don't feel, like I just didn't feel good about having sex with someone who like, wouldn't want to be with me anymore if she knew who I really was. Yeah, I just, I don't know, couldn't do it. I couldn't be vulnerable with her in that way. And that was a huge issue for us because she also was like a really sexual person and I think it was why our relationship started so well because we were having a lot of sex. And that was great for both of us. Then it started, I can't. So we opened it up because she just needed to be having sex and I just couldn't with her. She was away a lot for research projects like she would be gone every once in a while for like three weeks or a month or whatever. And I totally fell in love with someone else, she was amazing. She was a butcher oh my god. She was so beautiful and so, yeah I was just like- I maybe would say she was probably like the person I feel like I was the most in love with in my whole life even though I know you can't quantify those things. But I was just like wild about this person. And I was like, she was just like I don't understand why you're still with your partner. Like you don't want to be with her and you don't, you need to leave her and be with me. And I was totally gonna do it. But I- [Pause]. I was like I have to tell her that I'm Trans before, because I'm just not gonna deal with that and then I, so I did and she, she was awesome so I, I told her the morning after. So I had a friend I had a friend pass away and I had literally just been home for a funeral and then I went back to Austin and

Transition
/Depression

Dating/Sex

Dating/Coming out

Background

then I found out another friend had died and I couldn't afford to go back. I mean- ideally you would go to all of them but like had I given the opportunity to choose I would have chosen to go to the second one. And I couldn't go and I was just so upset and she came over with a bottle of whisky and a bag of goat chops and she was like, I didn't know what else to do. And I was like I guess we're drinking this entire bottle of Whisky and eating half of a goat and it's going to be awesome. And she, she just, it was just a very sweet gesture and I was like ya know, yeah, so we woke up the next morning and I like told her that I was Trans and having all these feelings and that this was just something that was going to happen. She, in the moment, told me she loved me and that was fine and that, we would figure it out and everything would be okay and she never talked to me again. She left me a letter in my mailbox a week later, saying that she wanted me to be happy and knew that I needed to do that, just like didn't think that, own personal identity was such that she could ever be with a man. Which I understand, and that's fair. I think that for me personally that I don't know if my identity is such that I could ever be with a man. And like, that's okay. But I- but like lost it. Yeah. So I stayed with my partner a little bit longer but I moved home. And then we broke up like almost immediately. I didn't come out, I don't know, probably two years maybe a year and a half after that. Yeah that was rough. And that was like the first person I had ever come out to. Austin was, tough.

Identity/Dating

May: What were some of the big differences between Austin and Portland.

Queer Community change

Milo: Oh god. People in the south don't understand sarcasm. And sarcasm is my favorite thing in the world. I love it. Like being like dry humor or sarcastic snarky funny is just so great to me and people do not get it. They just don't get it. Also people say Austin is just like this liberal Oasis in the middle of Texas but come on, okay it's still Texas. So it's still terrifying and there are confederate flags everywhere. And everybody is super racist. And I think the difference is they don't say it to your face in Austin. But as far as I'm concerned I want someone to say it to my face so we don't have to pretend to be nice to each like. Like if you don't like me that's fine. I don't like you either probably. So let's just not do that. Why do we have to do that? I don't know. Yeah, Austin's a weird city, I mean, really fun in a lot of ways. And I met some absolute incredible people there. And some of my best friends in the world are still there. But yeah, I don't know. It's not worth it. It's not worth it. It's not.

Locational discrimination

May: What's the difference between the LGBT community in Portland and the community in Austin?

Queer Community difference

Milo: Well I think that like just in general Austin is so much more

diverse. Like they would have Queer Cumbia nights and like oh, I know! It was so fun! I went to a couple of Cumbia night where I was the only white person in the room. And it was amazing. Like, ya know, and I would say stupid shit and then everyone would laugh at me because they would be like you're ridiculous and you have no idea what you're talking about and I'd be like cool. You're right! I have no idea what I'm talking about and I love it. And they were, I don't know there's um, there's an after party for south by south called K by GayGay, have you heard of this? It's just like this massive outdoor party at the Sahara club which is this historic black bar on the very far east side of Austin. And it's just like you walk in there and you are time traveling. And it's just, yeah, I don't know. I feel like um, yeah I miss some parts of it, but also it was so clicky, I mean it's clicky here too it's clicky everywhere it's so annoying. I don't understand why we all don't have the same team, I don't get it, at all. But there were some, it was pretty polarizing in Austin which was interesting. Like there were the bars where the white dykes went to, and then there were the white daddy bars, but then there were like Latin X daddy bars and then there was like the black daddy bar and you're like, alright, am I actually allowed to go to all these places or like do I have to not go? Or what's the deal? I don't know. But they do um, go to like Queer bars down there and take over these horrible like awful southern biker bars and they'll just fill them we two hundred of the Queerest people and it's awesome I want to do that here. But I don't know. It's a little less drastic here because nobody really cares. Yeah.

May: Alright so we're gonna switch gears again. On the paper you mentioned Maggie Nelson, would you like to talk about her a little bit?

Milo: Yeah are you familiar with her at all?

May: A little bit, I researched her a little bit before I came here

Milo: Yeah, you can borrow her book if you want. [Laughs]. I have like three copies because I always lend it to people and then I actually am realizing right now that I really need to get one back from someone.

Right now. No Maggie Nelson is like, she totally. her books are incredible, it's brilliant and she totally changed my life I think, in a lot of ways for the better. Her book, The Argonauts, is a Memoir about her relationship with her partner. Kind of like, going from when they first started dating up until present time when they have a toddler. And, she I think it was really hard for me, when I was coming out, to understand my partners pain about the whole thing. It just felt really unfair and I feel like I felt really, I don't know I was like, making myself a victim and feeling all kinds of self pity and other, I'm sure super attractive traits. And her book totally [Dog chews on a toy]. Yeah I mean so she documents her whole experience and I think it was incredibly helpful for me to read someone's perspective. Who is so thoughtful and well

Queer culture:
Dance

Queer Art

Queer Art/Impact

spoken. And her account of being with somebody who she loved more than anything who was changing and what her internal struggle had been. I kind of think it's an invaluable resource for people who are like, FTM, transitioning. Especially if you have a partner. Also kind of if you don't, just understanding, I think it made me have so much more empathy for what my parents were going through. And how, it's not just you that's transitioning, it's everyone. It's your whole life, it's your whole family, it's your friends, it's your coworkers. It's everyone, it's change for everyone. And obviously it's the biggest change for you. But um, she like totally showed me a new way of looking at what I was going through and I think that, my mom actually gave me the book when we were all, my family went to Mexico together, which is really weird since we never done anything like that before. And it was when I told all my siblings and my mom, I had gotten in a huge fight with my partner like the night before we left. And when we went to Mexico, my mom was reading this book and she like, read like, half a chapter and was like, I can't, I can't get into it, I can't get into it you read it. Just take it I don't want it. So I started reading it and I was like, Oh my god! Like, it was totally, I was in the process of coming out, dealing with all this stuff with my partner and this just fell into my lap at this perfect time. And my mom has since read it. Cuz I was like hmm, for me. You will read this book. But it was a huge struggle, I basically had to force my partner to read it. I like begged her to read it for so long. But she just kept on reading it. She eventually did read it and she took a lot of notes but we never, we never talked about it. We never talked about it. Talking about it right now s making me want to read it again. It's a quick read, it's like one hundred and ten pages or something. And it's just, so perfect. It's perfect.

Transition for all

Queer Art/Impact

May: Have, have any of her other works or poetry affected you as well or?

Queer Art/Impact

Milo: Um, she, her book called, *Bluets*, her poetry is amazing. and then, her aunt got murdered like years and years ago, like well before she was born. Like when she was a kid or something. She's not a kid, in her twenties, and they never found out who did it. Which is just like fascinating to me I kind of have a weird obsession with history crime so, I'm all about it. Not the crimes themselves but hearing about them and learning about them. Her, so she wrote a book called, *Jane of Murder*, which is like about her aunts murder. But, it's from this weird perspective where she just is such a good writer but it's all basically factual and um, but they don't know who did it. So it's like this weird open ended book and it's really good. It's really really good. And she's done, I've read some of her more, more like scholar type papers and stuff as well she just, a really amazing, amazing writer and just has, a

Queer Art/Impact

really important perspective of Queerness and Transness. Yeah.

May: Do you, are you interested in another other Queer artists?

Milo: Oh my god, Ursula Daley Ward, do you know of her? Oh my gosh. That's her memoir, on my coffee table right now. [Laughs]. She is a poet. And I, never really could get into poetry like I always wanted to because I don't know it felt like, the Queer thing to do was like, to get into poetry, I don't know. But I could never do it. Like I wanted to and I'd read it and I just didn't get it or, I would get frustrated or, don't understand and I think a lot of times that's still the case where I'm like I have no idea what that poem was about but, I don't know. Some poets I just can't get into. But, she like, changed the way I read all poetry like I, am much more into poetry now than I ever have been and I read it all the time, and I write sometimes and it's totally because of her book Bone. The way that she puts words on paper is magic, she's magical. And she's like, she's from a very like, poor community in London. And she's half Nigerian, and I believe half Jamaican and they're just, she's an incredible, incredible author. And she's like strikingly beautiful she made her money in the early things by doing some modeling work. And she, I don't know, you'll see a picture of her face and you're like I don't want to stop looking at you. Unless I'm reading your poems, then I'll stop looking at you. I love her. Yeah, other Queer, I mean. I don't know. Those are the two big ones for me.

Advocacy/Queer Art

May: How important is Queer art to you?

Milo: I think it's super important. I don't think I actually seek it out but when I find it, it's just the always the most beautiful surprise. Yeah, I would like, all, I'd basically like, will, totally fixtate on if I find like, a new Queer musician just like I'll only listen to this person. I'm only listening to this person. Nothing else. Yeah, which I'm sure drives the people who have to spend time with me crazy.

Queer Art

May: Is there anything else you would like to talk about or elaborate on or discuss? That maybe we didn't get to already?

Milo: Well I do have kind of an awesome story about my Great uncle-

May: Please share, please share.

Milo: that I wanted, I forgot to share earlier. He um, my great uncle bob, is my grandmother's younger brother. And they're both still alive, kicking, you know. And they, he, didn't have any kids of his own he married once to my great aunt Kay, but I never met her, she died when my mom was still a kid. But my moms middle name is Kay, she's like named after his first wife because she's apparently an angel among humans and was just the perfect person and everybody loved her. It really messed with my great uncle when she passed away but he did remarry. And they're still married. I think it's always been really hard for my great aunt Ann that like, nobody liked her because she wasn't Aunt

Queer Art/Impact

Background: Uncle

Kay. But it's like, well she's still nice! She's kind of crazy but she's nice. She had kids but my great aunt never had kids. My mom, was like, always his favorite of my grandmas kids and my mom is the youngest of four. And she just, he just always always always loved my mom like, a lot and so, he didn't have any grandkids so the four of us were like his grandkids he would always just swing by, my family celebrates the winter solstice, not Christmas, because we just needed it to be as gay as possible in our house at all times. So he would always swing by on the solstice and give us each a present you know, he paid for us to get family portraits taken because he wanted a family picture of us, like a nice one. So he's always been a huge part of my family and he, he became a justice of the peace so he could marry my moms. Which, is like, a huge deal. But when I, I always get a little emotional when I tell this story. When I came out as Trans, I told him on Thanksgiving a few years ago. And he, I like took him into a side room, and brought him a scotch and sat him down and we were sitting there and we were like, basically I was like listen, I gotta talk to you about something and he was like oh boy. And I was like no it's not bad! I just gotta tell you. And I told him and I was like I want you to feel like you can ask me whatever questions you want and need to ask me. Like, I was freaking, if it's inappropriate, that's fine, I don't care. You're like eighty something, and I'd rather you understand and ask me awkward questions than like, say something stupid later kind of thing because I don't want, I don't want him to feel weird. And so he asked me how it works and hormones and surgery and money and, Do I need money, and I was like no. I don't need money thank you. And then he looked at me and he was like, "Yeah know Milo, I'm gonna tell you a story." And he starts talking to me and he was in the army and he told me about the first time that he went to New York City. And he saw, what he described as, he saw the first gay man he had ever seen. And I was like yeah that was not the first gay man that you've ever seen. Because, come on, rural Maine. There are gay people there. But he just like described him as wearing nail polish and this was in World War Two time, and he had nail polish on and a three piece suit and makeup. And he was in this fancy hotel. They were in this fancy hotel and my family did not have any money but one of his, like his soldier guys, friends, I don't know whatever you call them, his family was very very wealthy. And so they had paid for a hotel room in the city for them to stay there and he saw this guy. He was like, "What the hell?" What is going on? And that was the first time and then, he kind of became more, he saw more, of it and was exposed so more of it but wasn't, very accepting. And he, was like, crying when he was telling me these stories. He, he was, what's it called, an army ranger? And he was stationed in Georgia and when

Background:Uncle

Coming out

Cis-male power

they would get all, like if something would happen or if they like got punished, or if they got in trouble, or extra drills or something they would like get loaded and then they would drive to the gay bar and beat up a bunch of gay kids. And like, that was what they would do. And he just never questioned it, and he was like this is what we do. Then he, I mean he, he feels deep shame about this in a way is like, you fucking should feel deep shame about that, you asshole but like, I don't know, I have a lot of respect for him. And the way that he has grown as a human being. But he talked about watching my mom grow up and watching her marry my dad and he was always kind of like are you sure that you want to marry that guy? And when she finally came out to him as being gay he was just like, what he described as looking at her and having this huge huge "oh my god" moment of like, how have I ever thought that it wasn't okay for somebody to be gay. When I'm looking at this kid who is scared shitless and has got two kids and is about to be a single mom in like a one bedroom apartment. Who's telling me that she;s gay and like, there's nothing wrong with anything that's she's ever done. He's always just been so good for her and for our family and when my mom and Shannon got together he loves Shannon. Like he loves my Stepmom. He call her Shanny and like, brings her pies and stuff he just, he's a good guy and he loves her. And he's always been so supportive of my family and when i told him I was gay he was like, "yeah whatever I know." And he said that the happiest day of his life was first when my moms asked him if he would marry them and then like the second was when, hi buddy, when he actually did. And he was just like you know, I had this, I had this feeling that I never thought I would be standing in front of all these people marrying two women, together. Based on where I came from and what I've done and the things I've done. And he was like, you know, I thought, Well this is it. This is the last, there's nothing else that's gonna come. For this is just it I've done everything. And then he said he looked at over at me, and my sister, and my brothers and he was like, "And then I looked over at you kids and thought, no. This isn't the end. They'll find something else." And he was like so, your Transgender, alright! Lets just keep it going. Yeah. He's a beautiful man. And I love him a lot. I think it would be really interesting to have his oral history recorded at some point. A friend of mine offered to do it, and I think it would be a beautiful testimony to love overcoming hate. Because that what he is for me. I think. Yeah.

May: Well thank you so much for participating in this, if you have any questions you can always email Wendy Chapkis, or contact her, anything that you missed or add you can contact her. Thank you very much.

Coming out/Family
Impact

Coming out

Change in Family

End

Milo: I'll just text Johnna. [Laughter]

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