

**The Cookout Podcast Transcription -- TRUTH Podcast Library**

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**This podcast aired on November 15, 2019**

*Trigger warning: mentions of death and transphobia*

Transcript

**Mulani** [00:00:00] Hey everyone, this is The Cookout. You just listened to Part One, this is Part Two. We're gonna continue the conversation. My name is Mulani Jackson, pronouns she/her/hers.

**Sam** [00:09:35] And I'm Sam Martinez and my pronouns are he/him/his.

**Jayy** [00:12:85] I'm Jayy Covert and I use they/them pronouns.

**Dexter** [00:16:02] I'm Dexter K and I use he/him pronouns.

**Mulani** [00:19:31] Perfect. So, we're going to continue the conversation, um, being POC and trans and the experiences and issues that we face through our experiences.

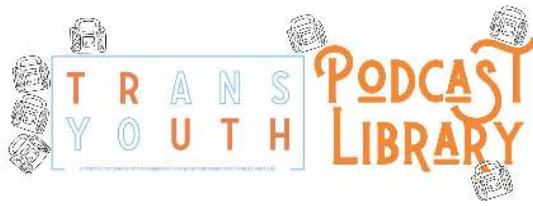
**Dexter** [00:30:40] So, since this is a podcast episode about our experiences being trans and POC and how those experiences intersect and what that means, how about we give everyone an introduction to our identities and where those experiences come from that we're speaking from? So, just going around the circle, just share where you're speaking from as far as your identities, experiences, and past.

**Mulani** [00:56:89] Well, hey, it's Mulani again, um, and I am a Black trans woman of urban experience.

**Sam** [01:04:25] And I'm Sam again, um, I'm trans masc and I come from a Latinx/API mixed experience.

**Jayy** [01:15:45] And I'm Jayy and I'm coming from a nonbinary genderqueer identity, um, growing up in a mixed Asian and white household in the South.

**Dexter** [01:26:15] Yeah, so I'm similar to Jayy. I have a lot going in there. I'm Latinx, I'm Indigenous Native American. Um, I've been raised in white households and Native American households as well as Latinx households, and um, Asian households as well. So I have a lot of



different experiences going in there as well as racial experiences with what I have with my own identity.

**Mulani** [01:52:51] Come on, Dexter, cultured!

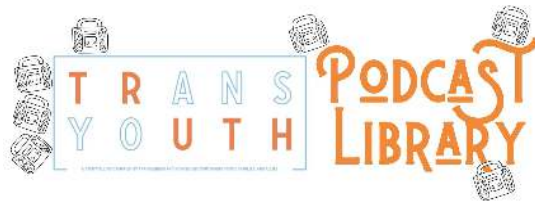
**Dexter** [01:54:75] Cultured!

**Mulani** [02:00:05] To start off the conversation, I'mma open with a question. What are your experiences being POC and trans, and how has that affected your thinking of gender?

**Sam** [02:12:25] So, I'm going to start it off. My name is Sam and personally, I grew up with my father mostly, besides my mother. And my dad is from Mexico, and him growing up he had a parent who was more like, "you can't cry because you're a man, you can't do this because you're a man. You can't, like, act a certain way, dress a certain way or else you'll be perceived as someone who is..."

**Mulani** [02:41:61] Weak.

**Sam** [02:42:58] Weak, yeah, like Mulani said, weak. And um, just... yeah, not as strong as everyone else. Just like, I guess, more feminine, err... And what people think of feminine, they also come with - they also think of the word gay as like, an insult towards communities. And for me, seeing my dad, I guess, grow up in this idea that being a man was a certain way and being female was a certain way, it definitely impacted me because I learned about what being gay and being straight was before I thought - before I guess experienced my own, like, figured out my own trans identity. So for me, it was like, I thought I was a lesbian, I decided I would like, try to dress more butch for myself cause I never thought that like, I guess... For me, being a lesbian never truly fit me. But once I learned that being trans was a possibility and I guess, feeling the way the opposite gender or sex was a way that wasn't, I guess, wrong, I explored that part of, I guess, myself and what that meant for me. Although looking at like, the past me and now, it's two very different things because I grew up wearing basketball shorts or dressing a certain way in order to be perceived as a man. But now I'm more so like, I can wear a crop top, I can wear this and still feel comfortable even though, my dad has constantly told me, "Oh, why are you wearing this?" Or "why are you acting a certain way if you're trans?" And I think that's very detrimental to me and how I feel about myself. So yeah, that's how it's like, gotten me to think about gender. It has made me think, I guess, negatively, about myself but, I guess, like, yeah it has made me think negatively of myself, but like, right now I'm just dressing the way I want and not really caring what other people think. And what's where I'm at right now personally.



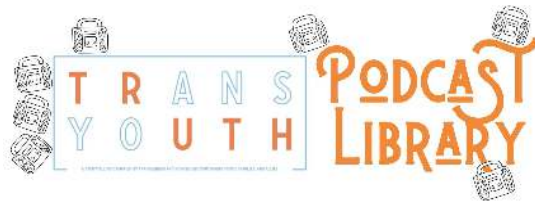
**Mulani** [04:56:45] Do you think your father's upbringing, um, upbringing on toxic masculinity affected the way he raised you? Or do you think it made your transition easier since he was brought up on toxic masculinity and he feels that masculinity is more accepting and more affirming?

**Sam** [05:20:00] I feel like, because he was brought up that way, like, it made me think that I had to be that way even though it was never how I truly felt. Because now I can like, wear a crop top, I can wear a pair of shorts, I can like, literally wear whatever I want and feel comfortable. But like, a few years ago, like, I would choose to dress like, not in a crop top, like baggy tee shirt or like, some basketball shorts in order to just like, I guess, feel more masculine because of the way that he was phrasing these, um, pieces of clothing, or like what he was influenced by, from his father.

**Mulani** [05:58:90] I feel kind of similar but in the opposite, um, with being, uh, being a trans woman. Um, my mother, I felt like, had this idea of the woman she wanted me to be. And so like, I feel like, I wouldn't say I have a femininity cause I feel like, that's toxic masculinity talking. Um, I feel like I was pushed to be super feminine and really, I guess, the ideal soft, not heard but seen, woman. Um, that kinda hindered the way I felt like I wanted to express myself. Um, I don't know....

**Dexter** [06:45:51] So like, kind of what you were saying Sam. Like, I don't really have any experiences with a parent figure like, pushing toxic masculinity. Cause I'm Latinx, um, so like, toxic masculinity is a huge thing in Latinx culture, um, and community, just because of how like, hardcore and conservative the religious impacts and the religious views are on like Latino people and their beliefs, um, especially men. So like, just the gender roles in general in that community are really like, pushed heavily. But I've just been thinking about it and it is like, so hard to feel visible as a trans person who is also a Latinx man, like how I identify cause on one hand, I can be white-passing enough, like during some seasons, to where people would just assume that I'm a white person, like a spicy mayo. Um, but other times, like when I have my tan, I'll be visibly Latino and then since I'm on testosterone, my hair is growing in thicker and I'm getting like, a thicker mustache and I recently got an eyebrow slit so I'm starting to look like a real bad hombre out here. And I feel like, when I go out in public, if people are seeing my Latino side, they're seeing me in like a demonized stereotype like, "oh the dangerous Mexican coming here to pillage your village and murder your crops," you know.

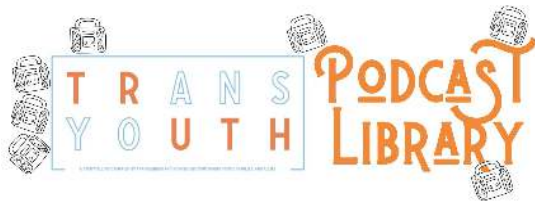
**Mulani** [08:21:51] Not pillage your village.



**Dexter** [08:25:41] Like if they are seeing me as Latino, they're seeing it as like, a dangerous thing. And I feel like because of that, I either have to hide my identity with masculinity and come off as more feminine so people aren't scared of me because I'm Latino or I have to come off as more like, white-passing so people don't see the scary Latino stereotype as the first thing they see about me - like, being Latino and also being masculine and being aware of that presence.

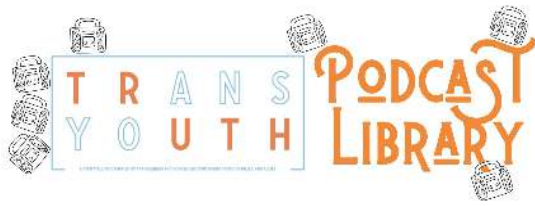
**Jayy** [09:02:75] Um, so I kind of similarly relate to like, Mulani's experience. Um, so I grew up in a mixed Asian and white household. My mom is an immigrant from Korea, she's mixed Korean and Japanese, and my dad is very white. And I grew up mostly relating to my mother, um, and I feel like, that's where a lot of my femininity comes in because I was so close to her, I was adopting a lot of her traits. Um, I was a very quiet child growing up, I was very obedient, I was the like, perfect feminine ideal of the American experience because my mom had raised me more closely than my father. But because of that, um, because my mom is an immigrant, because my mom is Asian, being trans, being queer, being gay even never felt like a possibility to me because I didn't feel like that could relate to my Asian heritage, because I didn't feel that Asians could be part of other identities. Um, and so it was a struggle trying to even find my other identities and then having to hide those to protect myself, um, and just try to say that it's because my mom raised me that I'm more feminine and it's not because I'm nonbinary that I'm more feminine.

**Mulani** [10:32:42] I totally agree with you, um, the not wanting to like... never really fit into that cultural part cause I felt like, growing up I was raised in the church, so from the age of like, six I remember every Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday I was at church. Um, we had Bible study, we had praise and worship, we had Sunday service, um, every Sunday, never missed a day even when we're sick, we were dragged out of it to go to church. Up until the age of like, I think I was like, fourteen is when I stopped, um, and that was around the time that I kinda started experiencing my sexuality or... and like, my gender identity and what that meant for me. Um, and to do that, I had to leave the church. But leaving the church means, in the Black community, leaving your family like, and leaving the community cause they're so heavily tied together and like, I didn't know... I felt like since there's... since the church is so heavily and religion is so heavy in the Black community, it was like, either choose to be you or you choose, I guess, your family or like loved ones to like be there, but like, you're going to be sad and not truthfully who you are. And so I felt, I guess, a void for a long time, um, until I found my chosen family, as one does in the queer community, for ones who do get disowned or for ones who just need another figure in their life to help them through this difficult time of finding their identity. I believe, through my chosen family, my idea of gender expanded. Um, I saw a spectrum of different gender identities and sexualities and just walks of life different, um, and it really expanded cause



I came from a really like, you're either gay or straight and bisexual is not a thing. So like, what are, what are you? And I was being forced and I was often being told, because people think it's either black or white, that I'm gay. So I felt like, in the first few years of, I guess, coming out - I feel like I came out a few times. I first came out as bisexual then I was like, I'm androgynous and then it was gay and then it was like, I'm crossdressing or whatever. And now it's like, I'm trans, but basically I finally got there, took me some time but I made it, but um, it took a long time. Um, for me, I knew... so, my auntie who raised me, I wasn't raised by my mom, which is crazy, but um, auntie raised me, who raised most of the kids in our family, um, and her siblings' kids and her nieces' and nephews' kids too. Um, but she told me I was trans one day - I came home from school, um, and she watched Dr. Oz and there was a trans person on there and she was like, "they reminded me of you" and she was like, "you're trans." I was like, is she... first of all, I think she didn't do it to be like, enlightening like "I accept you," she did it to be like, malicious. Um, but I was like, "no I'm not, leave me alone." I went to my room and so I was like, "what is trans?" so I Googled it and... first of all, I went on YouTube and I found this creator, Kat Blaque (shoutout to you!), I've been watching for a long time, back I think, you were still in college or you were almost ending college by the time that I found you. But I feel like you, and I wanna say Gigi Gorgeous was coming out at that time, they were like, still, I guess, in their, um, cover gay phase of like, not really knowing who they are yet, but like, coming out slowly but surely, which really helped. Um, but even then I was in denial, I was like, "I'm not that, I'm just gay like everybody says I am," cause I felt like it was... gay was becoming more accepting at that time. Like we, I think it was around 2012 in Seattle, we just passed our referendum 74 that same-sex marriage can be allowed... 2015, I believe, is when it became nationally for everybody, right? Um, and so I was like, well gays are just now getting their time to shine like, "I'm gay, let me be gay, um, why are you trying to dictate what I'm trying to be? And I feel like, it was more me fighting against her than me fighting against myself. Cause I was like, I don't wanna listen to you, I don't wanna be who you're telling me to be, because I was trying to be, I don't know, rebellious and fight against what was being told because I felt like, a lot of it was really malicious and rude - and my upbringing was very harsh, like, she was not a nice person. So I think if it came from a different person, I might have taken it in more and actually like honed in and like, said "yeah, I am" and I could have said to myself earlier, but it took my best friend dying (**Trigger warning**), it took my best friend dying to really open up my eyes to see that life isn't worth living if you're not really living your truth. Um, so it took a couple months after my friend died for me to realise that, but ever since then I started living as Mulani, as, you know, who I am, who I am, how I've always been, been afraid to be. Um, so yeah.

**Sam** [17:11:49] No, and I can relate to Mulani when she says it's hard when someone is telling you who you are because when I was in middle school, personally, I got told that I was a lesbian,



I got told that I was gay because it seemed that I was different from everyone else around me, which definitely impacted the way that I acted towards people or how I interacted with people just in general because I didn't want to be labeled as 'the gay kid.' And I felt like that was like, not the label to be at the time.

**Mulani** [17:45:71] Cause it's so isolating.

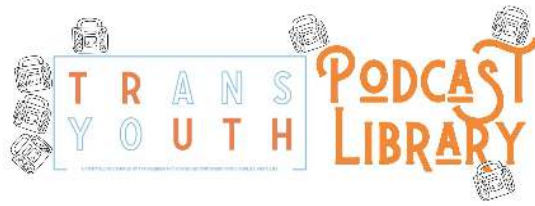
**Sam** [17:47:71] Yeah, you feel alone because no one ever talks about it... like, no one ever says that it's okay to be gay or it's okay to be queer or trans or however you identify. And for me, I was like, thinking, "yes I'm a lesbian, yes I'm a lesbian, yes I'm a lesbian" but once I reached high school, it was so different because there was people who were open to be themselves and living their truth like you said. And I was like, "okay, then who am I?" But like, no one could tell you that you were trans or that you were gay. They could say - they could put that label upon you but that doesn't mean that's who you are. So basically when I got given this like, gay label, or being a lesbian, personally, I was like, for me, I was like trying to live that truth when I knew that wasn't who I was. And how that personally affected me, I was like, I guess, even then it's okay to be gay, but it's not okay to be trans. So that's where like, I think, for us it shifts between me and Mulani because personally I was like... I wasn't ever told that I was trans, I was told that I was gay and that's what I had believe because I thought it was, I guess, more okay than it was to be trans. So for me personally, I tried to forget that I was trans, just like never think about it, because I thought it was so like, wrong and disgusting to be that way even though I personally know now that that's not true and I am living my truth. And I think it's very important to be living your truth, even if it takes time to figure out who you are.

**Mulani** [19:25:61] I wanna say, how has the patriarchal standards of femininity and masculinity shifted the way, like shifted your want to come - like want to transition? Cause I felt, for me, like, there's always people who continue to be like, "oh girl, don't transition, you won't ever be able to pass" and like, "oh you're not fishy enough" or "you'll never be - I don't see it for you." Have any of those things ever came up from outsiders? I know like, we always have like, our dysphoria or we hear from ourselves, but have outsiders put that in your ear for you?

**Sam** [20:07:75] To tell us we needed to transition?

**Mulani** [20:10:01] Yes, or that you don't need to transition. Like, try and talk you out of it cause you won't be passable.





**Dexter** [20:16:81] I know that, um, for me personally, like I struggle a lot with my sexuality and the way that intersects with my gender identity because I am, um, I'm already POC and trans, which is like, difficult enough. But I'm POC, trans, and I identify as like, a gay male and a large amount of gay males are like, really problematic, um, especially you know, the majority white cis gay dudes. Um, it's just, it's just not fun cause you think about gay culture and there's all these like, positive things but like 99% of gay-related activities and events and all these other things are just dominated by white cis problematic gays, and they either don't know how to talk to you because of your identity as a POC or they don't know how to talk to you because of your identity as a trans person and like, it's just problematic all the way around.

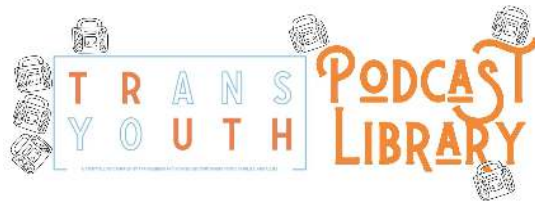
**Mulani** [21:16:20] How do you navigate those spaces?

**Dexter** [21:18:20] Like, I just don't know, like, it's difficult navigating those types of spaces because you have to either relinquish one identity to claim another or you just have to like, find community with people who aren't like that, who get what it's like to have multiple intersecting marginalized identities.

**Mulani** [21:39:86] Those are hard to come by.

**Jayy** [21:42:50] I can definitely relate to that, um, and I find that it's very different in like, a gay space than a queer space for me. Um, because there's, there's a youth group back in Burlington, Vermont where I'm going to college and it's kind of centered and like, advertised as like, a 'gay space' for LGBTQ+ youth, but it's very much 'gay' and not 'queer' because it's so white-centric, so base-level understanding of what identities are, that there's no room for me as a trans non binary Asian person to really fit into that kind of space. Um, and like Dexter said, you have to find someone that has those two intersecting identities to really find community and that's what I've had to do at my college, is I can only really relate to queer people of color at my campus, which is very to find when it's like, over 60% white in a 95% white state. There's not really anyone for me to find community with and it's hard to navigate those identities that are so essential to my being.

**Mulani** [23:04:55] Totally relatable. Thank you, Jayy, for continuing the conversation. Thank you, Sam and Dexter. We're gonna be ending the conversation here. I would like to hope that you guys continue the conversation, um, in communities, at home at dinner - like, answering these tough questions. We're not gonna grow or progress if we don't have these tough conversations. Nobody likes to have them, they're very awkward, there can be tension, but they're needed in the progression and towards our liberation for all. Thank you all for listening to



Part Two, The Cookout. Hope y'all go check out our website, [ourtranstruth.org](http://ourtranstruth.org), and you can go there and share your stories, see some of our stories from our alumni to our current members and hopefully... you get involved. I hope to see you next year. Thank you!

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