

Living Bridges Project Transcript

What Was Lost Excerpt: On Being Queer and Trans On My Own Terms

[Music]

VOICEOVER: The following audio is part of the Living Bridges Project, an anonymous story-collecting project documenting responses to child sexual abuse. For more, please visit LivingBridgesProject.com.

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STORYTELLER: I think what is important for me to say as well, is that like I'm queer and I'm transgender, and that like, when I was talking about some of the things that I didn't want people... Like one of the barriers for me to be sharing my child sexual abuse is that, peoples' responses to what it means to be a queer and transgender person who's a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Because, like, nobody ever asks like how you identify or how you feel about your experience as a queer and trans person. They just say, "Oh, you must feel this way because, because of your past." But some of the things that I've honestly been, like, writing about and making, like, art about and thinking through my own story of childhood sexual abuse is that, there's nothing wrong with like the agency of saying that maybe, consciously knowing that there is perhaps a connection for me. But that there's, but that connection is like on my own terms, and like, that is a choice that I make, that I, that there's nothing wrong with like choosing to be queer or transgender as a response to how I feel about my childhood sexual abuse.

Not that that's like how I feel all the time, I mean I have like a beautiful queer and trans community that has like, formulated how I feel about being queer and trans. But now that I'm like an adult, and I'm sort of like in the middle of, you know, I'm in my thirties, I'm thinking, yeah, if there is a connection for me about being queer and trans that has to do with childhood sexual abuse, then that's something that I should also be aware of, and have and know that I'm making choices around, and it is not necessarily like a negative result. Because I feel really lucky to be queer and I feel really lucky to be trans and like I feel really blessed. And so, that when I'm making that association, I'm thinking, oh, my like beautiful queer life now, it, you know, some of that has a relationship to my childhood sexual abuse, and what does that mean for me? So I guess I wish people would also like, ask the question about what it means so that, so that we can have a conversation about it.

When I think about like media, or like stories and art about it, I hear, some of the things I hear from like the fucked up side are like, "Oh, you're queer, you're trans or you're gay because you were abused when you were a kid." And so, when I hear, when I personally hear that, sometimes I think, "Yeah!" And that's a great thing! I'm like, "Yeah, maybe I am!" But I'm very, I have a lot of agency about my queer and trans identities. So, if I have agency over being queer and trans and that I'm choosing constantly to have, to be in communities that are, like, with my queer and trans friends and family, to be, you know, be like out or open about it, if that is a result of childhood sexual abuse, then for me that's a positive outcome, or a positive experience. Or the way that, you know the way that I think about it

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is, I absolutely have a choice to, to make commitments to being queer and trans in my queer and trans communities.

I mean, the first time I ever even thought about it a little bit, was like, I went, I was at a, some sort of storytelling or poetry theater event. And there was a trans woman, a Pacific Islander trans woman, who was telling the story about her first sexual encounter with her uncle. And she was saying that when she was a kid, that that was the first time she ever felt somebody loved her for who she was. And when I heard somebody else say that, I was like, "Whoa." What are the connections between childhood sexual abuse and being trans and being Pacific Islander or Asian or a person of color, and like, what's happening in that person's community and family, and what her thought around it was? And I just, there was like a lot happening for me in that very, it was a very short story, but it was the very first time I ever thought like, what are the connections for me as a trans person, and how I feel about it.

And because maybe the first time I heard a trans person tell a story about childhood sexual abuse and it wasn't negative, maybe that's part of what, like, what has shaped my thinking around it too. Is yeah, that the very first time I heard another person's like art about it was not necessarily a black/white negative explanation.

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