* As a child, I was quite expressive, emotional, and easygoing
* I knew I was different
* I remember vividly a time in elementary where during lunch I planned to practice WWE moves with the boys and play house with the girls
* Like a sitcom I had a two-timer date
* Cliché, right?
* Running Back and forth I played
* Until I was caught red handed and found myself in a tug of war
* “He’s a boy he SHOULD play with us and the girls “so what he can choose whatever he wants and he wants to play house”
* Eager I spoke “why don’t we play together?”
* Confusion in their face they collectively said NO
* I guess playing home with WWE wrestlers wasn’t fascinating enough
* The separation between genders was always amusing to me.
* Everyone has their own gender norm to comply with
* Breaking the mold is frond upon
* We are pushed even before birth into these gender norms
* Through Gender reveals and catchy gender specific shirts, “future lady killer” and “lil miss princess coming through” real shirts btw
* It becomes an issue when others begin to ridicule, bully, and shame
* And this often comes from adults
* Not long after I found myself in a questionable situation
* Family, Friends, and Strangers told me HOW I needed to act
* I was Policed by people saying “don’t walk and talk like that” “act like a man”
* Often, I was pulled to side and given advice on how to be confident the RIGHT way
* The manly way!!
* In Hispanic cultures, there is only one right way to be a man. You must be a hard worker, knowledgeable in “manly” things such as sports, cars, and handy work and always take care of your family
* It’s not that I didn’t have pride in manliness, but the easiest resolution was to repress anything related to femininity
* I wanted to, NO NEEDED to fit in
* When I was a teenager, I was often self-compensating for my masculinity
* Downloading myself with being stoic and emotionless
* Panicking at the thought of anyone thinking I was anything but masculine
* Aw that dog is cute. “Cute” dude that sounds being gay”
* PANIC
* The anxiety of these pressures between chrematistics of boy and female became overwhelming
* Sadness took me in deep now having to think before any action that I took
* Dying on the inside desperately wanting someone to tell me “Its ok to express yourself”
* THEN CHANGED WHEN I CAME OUT
* I played Ultimate Frisbee in college, and I was the played loosely. I wasn’t the best athletic, but man was I great at cheering from the sidelines
* A TYPICALY STORY Boy meets boys from our opposing team
* That developed into a friendship and eventually lead to a kiss
* WOOOSH
* Everything changed. IT all didn’t matter. I was free.
* I came out with a vengeance
* HEY I’m Tony and I’m bi nice to meet you
* The confidence overwhelmed me
* But wait this is a story about gender not sexuality
* But it was one of my 1st steps in healing
* In college I found my tribe
* The people who would give me love that I had never previously received
* Their space to allow myself to explore and grow free of judgement
* We were each other’s family and healers
* There is even one of them in the audience here to support me
* However, after coming out I STILL struggle with my toxic masculinity
* I still felt that I needed to be with men who look and act like men and women with acted like women
* Men couldn’t be too feminine
* And women couldn’t be too masculine
* Still not recognizing the self-hatred I had towards my locked-up femininity
* Then I learned about drag
* I was in Aww. Enamored by The self-confidence, the elegance, creativity of these performers
* I had a Jealously and crave of their free gender expression
* I wanted NO I NEEDED it
* It started with a bit of lipstick
* And then I decided to try heels
* I went on Amazon to find a pair
* However, My masculinity was still causing me trouble
* Because I was looking for the highest heel
* Thinking phff this will be easy no biggie
* I was veryyyy wrong. I look like a baby giraffe
* But did it make me feel fantastic
* My femininity started to drip like a leaky facaut
* Quickly going back to my sexuality
* Now it was time to talk to my parents
* With my dad, we I were having an argument when I got frustrated and I came out of spite
* Turns out it didn’t matter to him and said You will always be my son
* Thanks Dad
* My mom was next
* When I came out, she didn’t understand “Por Que hijo”
* I made sure to stand my ground stick to my guns and say “mom, this is who I am”
* Coming out was one thing but gender expression was another
* My mom was a women of traditional gender roles
* Beautiful, poised, affectionate, loving
* I admired how she carried herself and hoped that I could have many of the qualities and characteristics that she displayed
* Men and women are still categorized to have different traits
* Men are supposed to be Assertive, Logical, Completive, and Dominant
* Women are supposed to be passive, sensitive, and nurturing
* However
* These traits belong to EVERYONE
* Do not believe you are incapable of these traits
* The moment I knew she expressed my playfulness with gender was when
* I went with her to the mall, and she bought me my first pair of heels
* The heels I am currently wearing
* Tears running down my face with a smile saying “Thank you mom, I love you”
* Following that she said “Ill tell you what my mother told me”
* WHERE THEM WHILE DOING CHORES
* That was 6 years a go
* Now here I am telling the story of my queers to family, friends, colleges, students, and strangers
* But what was once these tears showed shame, depression, and loneness
* has turned into the quality that brings me the upmost confidence.
* In therapy, they told me that you think about child self and tell them what you wish you wanted to hear from someone.
* I envisioned holding the hand of my younger self and telling them “Its ok to express yourself”. You will grow to be the self-confident queer person you were meant to. And you will love yourself deeper than you could ever imagine” You will heal and you will overcome
* So, I encourage you there is no shame in exploring gender. Where you’re part of the LGBTQ+ community or hereto cis gendered human

Thank you for your time