

MAJOR! transcript

voice over, crowd chanting: What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now! What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!

<music, sound of car engine starting>

Beck VO: I think she's so many people's only safety net

Bo Derek VO: there's been times where I went hungry and she brought over food for me, you know, she would go to the store and buy food.

Grace VO: And I could call Miss Major and she always picked up the phone when I called, no matter what time it is

Valerie VO: We get to call her things like sage, right? Wise. Even though she's cussing folks out and spittin tacks.

Melenie VO: I know Mama, she's a dirty little vixen. She really is. She plays innocent but she's not. Not by the least.

Tumeka VO: She's a phenomenal woman. When she was in her 30s and her in 20s she was advocating for transgender rights. And to this day she still does that.

Smitty VO: Major's told me she really doesn't care whether you call her he, or she. She's a mother, she's a father, she's a grandmother, a grandfather. She's a little bit of everything and she's really doesn't care.

Malachi VO: Her methods and her legacy is frightening to the powers that be.

Angela Davis VO: She is our leader! She is showing us how to do this work, so thank you so much Miss Major.

Major VO: I don't know why I'm still here. I guess I still have stuff to complain about, bitch about, and try to change as much as humanly possible. And wake people up to who my community is.

Major VO: We have to look out for one another because we're all we've got. The rest of the world really doesn't give a shit whether we live or die. And the thing is, when the dust settles, I want a whole bunch of transgender girls to stand up and say I'm still fucking here.

Title screen: MAJOR

Title: For over 40 years, Miss Major has been fighting for the rights of transgender women of color.

Title illustration: Justice

Title: 2013 Oakland, California

Major: I met Angela Davis years ago, so I'm excited to talk with her again on an even more personal level since this is for the TGIJP. So I think it's going to be really exciting.

Major: This brunch, I'm so nervous. But I can't afford to be nervous or they're drive me really crazy

Melenie: These Mama

Major: So I have to .. uh, no.

Melenie: But that one is really pretty.

Major: Those make too much noise. [laughing] No. [laughing] These are my girls, they work with me, they're my daughters. They're Janetta and Melenie. So it's been good. They got here a little bit earlier than I was expecting, so we've been running around, puttering ever since then.

Major: Hand me the pill thing up on the top shelf. Oh god, all these damn pills. These are for my heart and my kidney because I'm a transplant person. I got a new kidney in '08 from a dear friend of mine from Los Angeles, Thom. And so now I'm on these forever.

Janetta: But that's okay, as long as we have you forever.

<instrumental music>

BobbieJean VO: She had one of those Batman Cadillacs with the fly wings in the back [laughing] and we all went out to eat and she takes off on Howard and 6th Street like a bat out of hell. And we're just flying down the street, and I'm like oh my God, so Shania said "Hold on girl! Mammy be drivin!"

Beck: I think a lot of people have a lot to say about how Major drives. My current take on it is I try to close my eyes as much as possible,

Title: Beck Witt is a trans man who was Miss Major's partner for 4 years and remains her closest companion.

Beck: although she has slowed down a little bit some. But prayer is really what I've found is the most successful thing in dealing with her driving.

VO Beck: <phone ringing> Hey Sweetie

Melenie VO: <answering phone> Hey Beck! Hi Mama's driving right now.

Beck VO: Oh okay, I was just gonna to say hello and I love her, and I'll see you guys soon.

Melenie: OK, are you on your way there too?

Beck VO: Not right now, but soon.

Melenie: OK we'll see you soon. OK, love you sweetie

Beck VO: Okay, bye.

Janetta VO: No driving and talking on the phone!

<music, people talking and laughing>

Melenie: Hi everybody, I'm Melenie Eleneke, I'm one of the Project Coordinators at TGI Justice

Janetta: And my name is Janetta Johnson, I'm one of the Program Coordinators at TGI Justice. And I'm going to talk a little bit about what we do at TGI Justice.

Janetta: We do political education, we empower transgender people, gender queer, gender variant, intersex people to advocate for their selves within the criminal justice system.

Title: Miss Major started working with TGIJP in 2006.

Title: She retired as executive director in 2015 and passed the baton to her daughter, Janetta Johnson, who now leads the agency.

Major: Our mail nights are a couple times a month, we get people to come over and help us read the mail and then answer it and send them what they need.

Janetta: Mail night was primarily set up to just send information and resources. We've become a surrogate family to a lot of people in prison. You know, they constantly when they write us they're like "hi family, how are things going, give everybody in the office a hug." And no matter what we send them they always respond back and say thank you.

Trisha: Even just one sentence, hi how are you, means a lot to the girls that are in there, that doesn't get anything from their family.

Kathy: The work TGI does is very important because nobody else does it. The girls in prison, the boys in prison, they take a lot of shit.

Title screen with VO: Transgender women are overwhelmingly housed in men's jails and prisons, or put in solitary confinement for their supposed "protection"

Kathy: You know, they take shit from the corrupt guards, they take shit from the inmates, they take shit from every angle and it's nice to have somebody in your corner.

Melenie: And ladies and gentlemen, it is my esteemed and privileged honor to introduce Angela Davis <applause>

Angela Davis: So, good afternoon everyone. It is really wonderful to be here at this gathering, and when I was asked to participate I said absolutely. Because this is one of the most important organizations in the country that addresses issues of trans women in prison, largely trans women of color, but that of course is the disproportionate, there's a disproportionate number of trans women of color behind bars. But in the process, shedding light on so many aspects of the prison system and the prison industrial complex that we would otherwise not be aware of.

Major: We're at the office at TGIJP, Transgender Gender Variant and Intersex Justice Project. Well, what we do is that we work on trying to get rid of the abuses and the suffering that transgender women of color go through in the prison system.

It started with Alex Lee, he saw and noticed things were going on when he was going to law school, and then he started TIP and then from that evolved into this, as things went on and changed. I came along pretty early in this and just worked with him a lot.

When he left I became the executive director. So the exciting thing for us was, we were the first black transgender-ran organization that was involved with social justice.

BobbieJean Baker: Don't many trans women once they're released from prison actually come into an agency that advocates for prisoners. So it's a challenge trying to get people involved. But Major is very persistent. Very nagging. And every time she see you: Queen! We need to talk girl. I know you just got out, you're trying to get your life together, stuff's going on for you and all that, but you need to come back over here, help read some of these letters, talk to some people who are still there.

Alex: So prisons are basically a concentrated torture situation for a lot of trans women.

Trisha: I was ridiculed. I was raped by the inmates and the officers who worked the penitentiary.

Billie: If other inmates see the prison guards disrespecting us, then they feel like its carte blanche that they can disrespect us too. People will pass you around, people will buy you and sell you, without you even knowing it. I myself, I've never been to prison, but I've been in jail a few times. And once that doors slams, it's open season, you know you're a marked person.

Bo Derek: They don't want to give you your hormones if you're a transgender woman. They don't want to keep you away from the people who want to rape us because we're easy prey.

Alex: So, numerically I think there are more people who fall under the umbrella of gender variant or gender non-conforming who are actually sitting in prison or jail because their gender presentation their gender identity makes it hard for them to participate in legal economy activities.

Janetta VO: When you can't get a legal job, you have to turn to street economics in order to survive. You still have to survive. We have to be housed and fed and clothed.

Malachi: I think there's this huge mythology of "It's murderers, and rapists, and people to be scared of" and it's our brothers, our sisters, our aunties and it's everyone in between. If rehabilitation or ability to succeed in this world is really your goal, then our people could be much better taken care of in different settings, I believe.

Title with VO: The number of people incarcerated in the U.S. has increased 500% in the past 30 years.

This is largely as a result of the war on drugs, mandatory minimum sentences, and the rise of private, for-profit prisons.

The US incarcerates more of its population than any other country. Combining the number of people in prison and jail with those under parole or probation supervision, 1 in every 31 adults is under some form of correctional control.

Together, African Americans and Latinos comprised 58% of all prisoners in 2008, even though they made up approximately one quarter of the US population.

Morgan: And so people are being literally criminalized, made criminals for how they're surviving. And we have to look at what kind of society sets people up and says "Well, you don't have what you need, you didn't pull yourself up by your bootstraps so we're gonna punish you for it. And whatever you do, you're kind of gonna do wrong."

Malachi: A lot of the girls and the guys are put in solitary confinement.

Janetta VO: Transgender women end up in the SHU solely based on the fact that they are transgender and a lot of times the officers just don't want to deal with us. So if there's any problems that come up, the simple solution for them is just to put us in the SHU and call it for our own protection.

Title: shu = secure housing unit, a.k.a. solitary confinement

Major: I'm signing the petition to show support for the people in Pelican Bay in the SHU with their hunger strike for their five demands, which are reasonable demands

considering the shit that they have to go through. And then be a part of everybody's making sure that they stop this shit that they're doing, and so, that's what I'm about to do now.

Major: One of our members who has been in the SHU since her incarceration in the federal prison up in Oregon, and the atrocities and stuff that are happening up at Pelican Bay are going on in most of the prisons in the country.

Title with VO: Janetta Johnson spent 3 1/2 years in federal prison for a non-violent drug offense.

She spent 6 months in the SHU.

The United Nations considers solitary confinement in excess of 15 days as torture.

Janetta VO: Even when I was in the SHU for that very short period of time, I was being harassed and sexually violated by one person, and then basically I had to not complain about anything because if I would have complained about anything they would have kept me in the SHU for my safety.

Janetta: The courts already gave you a sentence, but it's almost like each guard and each warden, they have their own sentence that they want to put on you, to further marginalize you and disenfranchise you and take away your value and your worth.

Janetta VO: In the SHU you don't have access to early release programs, you don't have access to any rehabilitation, any educational opportunities. The meals are cold. It's very cold in the SHU. They're damp. There's moisture all over the walls. You get one blanket and one sheet and one pillowcase and it's extremely cold, you have to sleep in your jumpsuit. So many people have different mental health issues, and it's like you got to get used to all these screams and yells and cries for help. And it's just like, you'll go crazy in there. You'll go crazy in there.

Janetta: I was at a prison where I was the only transgender person, and I can remember a lot of times calling Mammy because I was just having such a difficult time and sometimes I just needed to hear her voice to give me the strength to move forward from one step to the other. So I often called her and she supported me 100%. Since I've been out she's been there for me 100%, she immediately got me involved in TGIJP.

Lala: Major walked me through a lot of it and it is what it is and do what you have to do to stay safe. So she relates and she understands and she just accepts. It's what every family should be. It's the definition of unconditional love, no matter what.

Grace: Coming from Africa and being broken and so forth, Miss Major, she gave me hope. She showed me how to be a lady. She showed me how to dress. From people calling me a football player now they call me look at that sexy bitch.

I'm a product of TGI Justice. And now when I write the children that are in jails and prison and they read my story and see I did three years in immigration prison and I did one year in San Quentin. And I made it through.

BobbieJean: I've seen her sit up there and buy money orders, and put money on people's books, go see them. I'm like, you don't even know these people! Yes I do, they're trans, and they're in jail. That's enough.

Major: And that spend a mile in my shoes, fuck my shoes. Wear my dress, my wig, my hair, my perfume, and then go out there. And after you get beat up a couple of times and you come back here to catch your breath, you may not even be safe in your own home because the motherfucker you sleeping with didn't get high and he's gonna kick your ass because you don't have enough money. We need to make the girls feel safe. Especially TGIJP, because we understand what it's like, we have three girls who are helping me to run this who just got out of prison. And we're trying to help other girls, to get them in that position. Because it is so empowering to stand on your own two feet with nobody holding you, and there you are. You know what I mean, goddam it that's the most wonderful thing you can think of.

<jazz music>

Title illustration: Roots

Major: I was born in Chicago Illinois in 194mmmm. My mother's name was Edgar Mae Griffin Gracy. My father's name was Leroy Rudolph Gracy. They called my father Honey, that was his name. And my mother, most people called her Lulu.

On my birth certificate, it's Major Gracy. And I took on Griffin because that was my mother's maiden name. And I wanted her to be a part of who I was. So I'd heard that in Latin countries you had both names, so I thought oh okay, that will work for me! <laughing> And then I liked the way it sounded, Major Griffin Gracy, that's so cool. So that's how I wound up back at being Miss Major.

I don't remember what year it was, but I'm 73. I've had six different birthdays, all of them in October, all around the 25th, the only thing that changed is the year, from 40 to 49, so somewhere in there is an age I'm actually at. And who cares.

My sister and I were really closed, she passed away. And I was very close to my mom even though she couldn't understand my transitioning stuff.

I remember going back after I'd been on hormones and had breasts growing, and flashed her [laughing] and she fainted! [laughing] I was so surprised I stood there looking at her going "Oh my gosh! She fainted! What am I supposed to do?" [laughing] So of course my dad came and chewed me out, which was highly understandable.

Major VO: The theory was that it's a phase. I'm going to grow out of it, as I turned 40 [laughing] and then 50. It's a phase. He's gonna grow out of it. I woulda wondered – I would get tired of telling myself that. But they held onto that until mother passed away. She still was sure that next year was gonna be the year I became the man I was supposed to be. And it was so hard explaining to her, "I am the man I'm supposed to be." I'm lovely.

Major VO: My sister couldn't handle it at all, Cookie was five years younger than me. And it was just so much trauma for her. And when I would send pictures back I'd send them to my sister to see how I was doing in New York and what I looked like and what was going on. And it was just so heartbreaking when she burned all those pictures. And my mother never got over it. She had like three boxes full of pictures. And every holiday, well we're gonna put them in a book [laughing]. No one ever bought a book, and they never left the box.

So Cookie told mother one year that she was going to do it for her. Mother got all excited and Cookie came back and put a bunch of ashes in front of my mother on her table. Mother goes "Oh, what is this?" "Oh, those are your pictures." And she turned around and walked out.

Title: Miss Major has no family photos or pictures from her youth.

Major VO: So, that was between them. I had my own issues with my folks. It be what it be.

Major VO: Cookie killed herself when she was 26. In Peoria, Illinois. It was pretty devastating, there was nothing I could do to help her or save her. And I would have liked to.

My dad made a mistake of telling me one day that, "Well, she took the easy way out." That's not easy. I'm sorry. You can say that all you fucking want to. That is not an easy thing to do. Because I think there's an innate thing in us to want to live, see the next day.

Oh my god, when I transitioned, it was years in the making. It's not something that just happens overnight. You think about these things, you have these feelings that you just can't shake, you just can't get away from them. I happened to be of course at home, my mother and dad were out. And I went to my mother's closet and put on one of the little dresses that would fit, and was flitting around the house. And then I ventured into the backyard, and then I went to the garage door, stood by the door panting, that I'd come to the garage and someone might have seen me, and then I ran back into the house and stuff.

Major: And it wasn't until I met this older queen in Chicago, her name was Kitty, and she dressed me up and showed me how to put on make up and stuff. And it was kind of like the movie with Natalie Wood, the Gypsy movie where she gets dressed up in that scene, and she's so surprised how pretty she was.



<film clip: Natalie Wood>: I'm a pretty girl, Mama.

Major VO: that's exactly what happened to me, you know. When Kitty was through with me and I looked at myself in the mirror, I was absolutely dumbfounded, you know. It was like "there's Major! where the hell have you been?" [laughing]

Tracie: Being transgender women, and being transgender women of color, and coming out in the late 60s and early 70s, there was a landscape already out there, the landscape itself was not healthy at all, there was the street, there was the clubs, there was the stage, and there were pageants. And then coming from home, whether we were put out, whether we left, whether we were treated violently, or however, this is what we brought to our new environment. And many, many trans women of color leave home early in life

Title: one in five transgender respondents experienced homelessness at some time in their lives as the result of discrimination or family rejection – the National Center for Transgender Equality, Blueprint for Equality (2015)

Tumeka: I ended up leaving home at 18, I was given \$200, a car, and told to never come back unless I come home and be a man in public and be a girl inside the house. Well, I can't do that, I have to be me 24/7. So I've been disowned, cut off, and I've been alone, I've done a lot of things, nefarious things, that I am not proud of. But nor would I have changed if I could go back in time and change. I would not change it because it helped me grow and become who I am today.

If my family loved me, I wouldn't have probably been a prostitute. I wouldn't have probably been a booster going into stores stealing to survive. I probably wouldn't mess with this dope dealer or this pimp, or something, because they were the only one that wasn't ashamed to show me love in public.

Alexis: So, I got to live me, though, for now. And this is who I am, and this is who I'm going to be. You don't get a chance to choose.

Andrea: That's true, it chooses you. I tried to tell my mother that, who was a therapist. And also a gangsta.

Valerie: Don't pick on us therapists!

Andrea: And also a gangsta.

Andrea: And she used to wake me up in the middle of the night with a gun to my head and say you know I could kill you right now

Valerie: Oh that was my father, did they know each other?

Andrea: And she would say you know I could kill you right now, you know they kill Black boys, you know I could say you were breaking in. And I'd be like!

Trisha: I was thrown out to the wolves. And a lot of children committed suicide as we may remember.

Valerie: My father wanted me to be his son, oh poor thing. And he was a career Navy man. And he loved putting a gun to my head. And at first it was I'll kill you and kill myself. And then when I turned around 14, 15, he went into this "I'll kill you and do the time." And I thought now wait a minute something's changed right there. You get to live, something's happened.

Smitty VO: when Major came around, they called her Mama Major. She was a, just a warm welcoming Mama.

Trisha: I seen a couple of the girls and through other people either call her Granny or Mom. So I asked her, I said do you mind if I call you Mom? And she said no I don't sweetie, so I started calling her mom.

Malachi VO: One of the reasons that I call Miss Major "Mama" is because, when you're around Miss Major, she will stop the whole world to look at you and to really see you. And she is able to see the pain that you carry and the joy that you carry, and there can be like 5000 phones ringing and a foundation officer that's like waiting, and she's gonna be like ok you need to wait, because I'm taking care of this person. You just want to fold in her arms and sit there for 30 years because you feel safe there and you feel seen there and beautiful. And I think, our people don't get to feel that a lot.

Grace VO: And I would be so tired, and I would say Mama put my bags in the trunk of your car because I got no place to stay, and Miss Major would take me to the New Pacific and rent a hotel there and say sleep miss thing. From there I knew that someone cared. And whoever this woman was I knew that was my mother and I asked her to please be my mother.

Melenie: And Mama, anyone who is really close to her and who loves her and she loves and chooses, she's very dysfunctional with us. All of us. And so if she's not, if she doesn't give you grief or jabs at you or whatever, you don't mean as much to her as someone that she does jab and play around with, and you know, Mama how she is. "I'm gonna do no matter what," So, it's very special for me.

BobbieJean: I said I need someone to walk on this journey with me. And she said, I don't want no more children, I've got enough gay children. I said well I don't need no Mama, I do need a grandmama, because I already had a gay mother. And so she said, Ok, just don't treat me like no grandmama, I'm not old and shit. But I'll be your granny. And so a relationship ensued from there.

Morgan: I don't call Miss Major Mama but I do call her the Anna Wintour of TGIJP, because she's our editor in chief. And in the way that the editor of Vogue is so clear on

her purpose, Miss Major is really clear on her purpose, which is to love all of us and to fight for all of us. And she's really powerful and clear in that purpose.

BobbieJean Baker: she's been very instrumental in keeping focused on school, obtaining the necessary certification and knowledge and training to do this work that I'm doing. And she never wants to hear the words "I can't". Because you can.

<1950s instrumental music>

Major: Like when I first got kicked out of college, I was just stunned. I thought, wait a minute – don't they need a minority? [Laughter]

Major: I graduated at 16 and so I wanted to get out of Chicago so I went to Minnesota 'cause I had an aunt who lived there. And Minnesota was just – they had the white boys of doom in Minnesota. Corn-fed, thick, tall. Oh I thought going there I would just be the queen of the ball, child. A black girl with all these white boys around? It'll be wonderful.

Major: So I was there, I was unpacking my stuff and I only took a couple of dresses – one little pair of shoes, two wigs for evening when I would zip out. My roommate found that stuff when I was in one of my classes and when I came back my stuff was sitting on my bed. So I say “What, you wear dresses?” [laughs] He said, “No, I was looking for something and I found those, and whose are those?” “Well, they're mine, stupid, they're in my closet, they're mine.” So he told everybody on our floor that I wore dresses. The cute boys didn't pay it any attention. They said, “Well, if you do that, do you cook?” “Yeah, I can cook.” “Oh, well you know there be a kitchen at the far end.” So I fixed breakfasts and lunches and you know - “I have some soup and sandwich in my room.” [Laughter]

The dorm patron or whatever the hell he was, he came in my room telling me, “Well, you know this shit's gotta go – we're not having this here.” And you can't tell me what to do. I'm grown. I don't know what your issue is. And so I went to class, came back like a week later, they had all my stuff packed up, had it by the door – when I opened up my dorm door – and a little note on it. “It was really nice having you hear and the experience of meeting you was really different. Bye.” And off I had to go.

Title: Miss Major was expelled from two different colleges for wearing dresses.

Major: it's so funny to think of what I missed, if I could have gone, what could I have done? Could I have still held onto my transgender self and still done something? You know. So now when I see one of the girls and they say, “Oh, well I'm late. I gotta go to class.” Inside I dance around like Snoopy in summertime. Hey! Yeah, goddammit! You going to school! [Laughter]

Tracie: And I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my life, I had no experience, I had no job experience, and I wanted a career. So Major said, well you know what I want some implants, I want a new pair of implants. So I'm going to go to City

College to the financial aid office to get a loan and get surgery, come go with me. I was like oh my god I'm not going, because believe it or not I was so, so afraid of going out in public, because of the harassment I had experienced all my entire life. But I went, because Major was with me. Major was walking next to me. And we walked throughout the whole campus, financial aid, the classrooms, the parking lot, and then we left.

Long story short, Major did not go to City College. I went to City College. And I realized some years later that she had walked me through that process for my being comfortable. And that was one of the first times that she was really so, so supportive of me.

[00:33:50.03] Title illustration: History

<1960s instrumental music>

Title: After she was expelled from college the second time, Miss Major moved to New York City in 1962.

Major: New York was wonderful. New York was the place to be at that time. Everything was changing, people's attitude about stuff was different. Women were starting to burn their bras. One of the best things that I really enjoyed about the 60s, was hookin'. Hookin' was fabulous in New York then. You know, the girls would be walking down the middle of the street flipping grapes and catching them and you know, licking on hotdogs and stuff at the corner. And the tricks were just everywhere. It was fabulous. And you made good money, which was the best part about it.

Title: 2014 Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley California

Major: My generation went through a time of we'll be out hooking, you can only go out in any amount of safety between midnight and 3:30am, that was it. And then you had to learn, after you learned to paint properly and wear the right dress and find shoes that you were comfortable in, how to run in them, change clothes, leap over cars, pop up on the next corner with a new wig, another dress and a different pair of shoes, and watch the police run by chasing you. That took work! I'm sorry, that's a job! <audience response>

<burlesque music>

Major: I got involved with a couple of drag shows back then, the Jewelbox Revue and the Powder Puff Revue. And they would go on what's called the Chitlin' Circuit and perform, and it would be 25 men 1 woman was their guise. And the only woman in the whole little company was this guy named Stormé DeLarverie who was the male MC.

Major: And I was a showgirl because I was so tall

I knew Mal. I knew Mal really well. And she was their first black major act. And when Mal and I worked together to try to get together an act, they said they didn't want two black girls as major acts in the show.

We couldn't go up to the theater painted. We had to go looking like men. And we had to paint there, so that meant getting there three hours earlier than the show. And then we couldn't leave done. The young queens like myself and a couple of the dancers, "Miss Thing, I can paint at home. I don't need to be painting there around all them musty old white motherfucking queens." [Laughs]

Title VO: Throughout the 1960s, New York City Police frequently raided gay bars and arrested patrons. Cross dressing was considered a criminal offense.

Title: Miss Major was among the patrons of the Stonewall Inn on June 27, 1969 when a routine police raid ended in three days of uprising that catalyzed the gay rights movement.

Major: God, Stonewall was a wonderful place to be in. Because all of the things that, that you need to be around or see was there. There was older gentlemen there who were tricks and gonna to pay you money. There was trade there, you know boys that hooked over on Broadway or on 5th Avenue and would come there to spend their little bit of money and stuff. There were other girls there, there was an atmosphere of enjoying who we were, you know, in our space.

And one of the things I remember about that day was, I think they had just buried Judy Garland that day. And all I can remember about that is, she had a casket full of lilies that just brought you to tears when you saw it on TV. Why it was on TV I have no idea. Stonewall wasn't on TV and that should have been.

Title: 2010 Audre Lorde Project, New York City

Major: And what happened was that night, it was just a matter of they used to do that to us all the time. Just come into the bar, and the lights would come on and everybody would just stream out. Nothing ever really had to get said, because you knew just what had to happen, you knew that's what the routine was. And it was just a night that, it simply wasn't going to happen. It's just, it's a feeling that you get, like when you go to a movie and see something together and everybody ahs and gasps at the same time? That's the feeling, you just knew, everyone just looked at one another and sat down. Not leaving, not going anywhere.

Major: You know the girls, we can put up with some stuff, you know what I mean, but I guess it was just like at that time, we were done. Can't take any more, this has got to stop here. After that, you heard well someone threw a shoe, someone threw a beer bottle or whatever have you. I don't know who threw what, and it doesn't matter. All that mattered was we were bustin' the cops' ass.

And when the community at large got involved, all of a sudden it was white gay guys who had did this, and lesbians, and oh there might have been a drag queen or two there. Really? When we frequented that bar, you know what I mean, and hung out there.

Major: across the street is this little park. The most disappointing thing for me is in this park, they have statues to commemorate Stonewall. Two lesbians, two gay guys. And I'm sure the gay guys are trying to molest each other on the bench, and the lesbians are talking about moving in and getting a new cat. No transgender woman, and there should be one, and she should be flying in and getting ready to land.

Major: where are we when we were such a part of this? Where's the respect for the folks that have gone through this? Like Sylvia Rivera, and Marsha Johnson, you know fuck me, it's just, there were other people there who had a voice before this happened, who was trying to make things better. Girls of color. Friends, you know. And they just berated them and talked about them like they were drug addicts and alcoholics. And in going through this, they pulled this thing away from us.

Major: I understand that it was important that I was in Stonewall because I'm one of the last Black girls who were there that's still alive. That to me is a pretty amazing thing. But the thing is for me, it's not what I did, it's what I do now. It's who I help now. How I train my energies to keep the agency I work for going. You know, because there's girls in prison who need to hear from us, who need to know that somebody out here gives a damn whether they live or die. I want things better for the, for everybody. Not just my community, I want things better for everybody.

And if they would accept my community just for who they are, it would be better for everybody. We're the last bastion that you can talk about and ridicule and throw things at and beat up and it's okay. You know some of my girls have been attacked by four and five boys, and my girls went to jail, the boys went home. You know, how dare they make that assumption? We may not have started anything, you know? And if we happen to win that battle when they fight us, oh then we get a charge. [Laughs] Assault to commit murder. He started this shit! But they don't think about it. The legal system is off, the justice system is off, the police are off. I mean, California has some really great laws, yay. They have some laws that really want to protect my trans community, yay. Do the police read those laws? No. If they do something against a transgender person, are there any repercussions for what they've done? No. But for me, if you tap that wallet that they have, they'll stop fucking with my community. If they gotta pay cuz they did something to us, a fine, they're not going to do it anymore. They're not going to do it in prison, they're not going to do it when they arrest us, they're not going to do it in jail. They're going to leave us alone because they know that we have some power. Right now we don't have any power.

Major: We don't have any power.

[00:43:27.06] Title illustration: Power

Tumeka: I've had some negative experiences with the police department in San Francisco where I had to sue them. I was not on paperwork I had given up my number, and I had changed my life around and I was in love with this guy and he pulled a robbery in my building, and some guy seen him from behind and the police came to my house, and when they went to put handcuffs on him, I told them it wasn't him it was me. I ended up going back, and that's how I got my second number. But during that course, while I was fighting the case, the deputies that worked there repeatedly raped me for several months until I got tired and I decided to tell someone about it. They had to move me because they were afraid of retaliation from inside of the police department because this officer was well known and well liked. But I took numerous lie detector tests and passed and everything. And we ended up settling out of court. And that's how I ended up implementing transgender sensitivity training inside of the jailhouses, that was part of my settlement and that was the most important part of my settlement with the Sherriff's Department.

Major: One of the things I love about my community is we're a pretty tough fucking bunch of cookies, you know what I mean. We take the abuse that we get in the street from people and what goes on in our personal lives, from people that we think are going to love us anyway, like family, you know, and we still survive. So, in my heart I hope that, <criing> I'm sorry. That when the dust settles, my girls will be okay.

Title: 2008 Critical Resistance, Oakland, CA

Miss Major: I was in New York for Stonewall <applause>, right on. I was in Dannemora and Sing Sing, and after the Attica Riots, I got sent to Attica. Spent all my time in there in a cell getting to meet the guys who pulled this thing off, and listened and watched all the abuses they were putting those people through. They don't need an excuse, they just run through us. They run through our families, they run through our society, they run through who we are.

Major: I got arrested for robbing a john in New York, and then was sent upstate. I wound up going to Sing Sing first. I got out on parole, I went and stayed with some friends, and I shaved, of course. Got a little light foundation, and colored my hair, arched my eye brows, and lightly dusted, I don't think I was over painted, but I lightly dusted, and I went into parole and they said that I was trying to change my appearance in order to abscond from parole. And violated me right there on the spot.

Major: Then they sent me to Dannemora, which has a mental hospital on one side of the wall, prison on the other. Well they sent me to the mental hospital first. I had platinum blonde hair, about two inches long. My breasts had been developing because I'd been on hormones for years, and I thought I was the hottest young thing since white sliced bread <laughing>. Got in there, and they, ooh, did their best to break my spirit. They shaved me completely bald. They shaved off my eyebrows, they made me walk through the prison naked, you know. It was so uh, it was so hard.

Major VO: On September 12, 1971, there was an uprising by prison inmates of the Attica Correctional Facility, which was a maximum-security prison located in western New York. It ended with the bloodiest prison confrontation in American history.

For five days, thirteen hundred prisoners rebelled, took over the prison, and held forty guards hostage.

They made a list of demands, the prisoners, including improvements in living conditions and educational and training opportunities and centered into negotiations with state officials.

The negotiations failed and state police and National Guard troops seized the prison. In the course of taking it over they killed forty-three individuals, including ten hostages.

Major: I met Black and the guys who were from Attica who had got the riots started when they sent them to Dannemora to the hole where they had been housing me. That's when I got to meet them and talk with them, and developed some very lasting and good relationships with them. They opened my eyes to different things that were going on and really politicized me as to how I was helping the system to survive and not helping my community survive.

Angela Davis: I was just talking to Miss Major a few minutes ago and I noticed in the bio that she became politicized in Attica and I said I didn't realize that. And then we started talking and she was pointing out that Black, Big Black, Frank Smith was the one who really encouraged her to think about all of these issues in a much broader way. And so I said well, of course, it makes so much sense. We're all connected, aren't we?

Title: 2013 Desiree Sex Workers Convention, Las Vegas, NV

Major VO: yes dear?

Ceyenne: Hi Miss Major, in Attica, your acceptance, Frank BB Smith, was my stepfather.

Major: Oh how wonderful!

Ceyenne: So you're like the first trans person outside of him accepting me, that I probably heard a story about him.

Major: Listen, I'm thinking about driving up so you and I can go see Black's...

Ceyenne: When?

Miss Major: I'd like for you to take me to his grave. I want to give him my respect and let him know that I met you.

Ceyenne: Oh, yeah.



Miss Major: He was such an important part.

Ceyenne: by the time my mother got with him, he was already doing law work, he had got out of

Miss Major: That was after Attica.

Ceyenne: Yeah, that was after Attica. I had been hearing about her for years, but I had never actually the experience of meeting her, one, but ever hearing this story about Attica. All I knew was Frank was monumental in this whole riot thing. But that's as far as it went. Frank had never told me, he just said, "I had a friend who was like you, and believe it or not, I was locked up."

And it was Black that actually – 'cause I ran away – he came and got me; actually, he found me, don't ask me how. But he found me, and he sat me down and he explained, "You're a girl." And I went, "Huh?" and he said, "Well, you can't tell your mother this, but that's what's going on inside you. And you want to live this, that's why you're doing certain things your mother doesn't agree to. Like wearing her clothes, like wearing her heels." None of it made sense to me, he kind of put that picture together, and got me back into the house. But somehow him telling my mother how much stuff he had went through in Attica all related to Miss Major.

Miss Major: Yeah.

Ceyenne: And their friendship wasn't something that was sexual, it was a real friendship. I don't know, maybe it was.

Miss Major: Yeah, no – we just talked –

Ceyenne: You see, I had to jump back and look – [Crosstalk]

Miss Major: Yeah – we talked a lot, yeah.

Ceyenne: You never know up in Attica!

Melenie: It's momma –

Miss Major: Yeah, we talked a lot, because he's the one who made me politically aware of all the shit that was going on, and what I can do to get my girls together to go through it. So while he did what he was doing with this five percenters and the Muslims; I was working with the transgender girls in the prison. And we were together, he was really a wonderful, wonderful man.

Ceyenne: How were they with the transgender girls in prison?

Major: Shady as fucking shit.

Melenie: So normal.

Title: Following her release from prison, Miss Major returned to New York City, where she became friends with Deborah Brown.

Debbie: When I met Major, he basically was a loner. He did not trust many people at all. He always thought that somebody was after him, or somebody had a hidden agenda. But little by little, he began to open up.

Major: I was doing drag shows, and it was with this group, and one of the guys in the group introduced me to Debbie, and then Debbie and I slowly became really close friends, and then we started hanging out and stuff.

Debbie: Major always tried to build up my self-esteem, as a young, black woman. Major did a lot of shows. He was with a group called The Cherries. And I used to watch him intently, putting on the makeup. As a matter of fact, I think that's where I learned to apply makeup myself.

It was what I would call a really cool relationship that developed into so much more. It developed into camaraderie, and then it developed into love, and several years later, I would say a good five years later, we decided there should be something of both of us in this world. And we decided it was time that we moved in together, and we started a life together.

Major: At the time I had never slept with any women at all. And we were just sitting one day looking out the window at the Hudson, and the sailboats on it and stuff. I was holding her, and something came up and she started crying, I told her not to cry, I kissed her on the cheek, and bingo. You know. So it wasn't just as horrible as I had heard it was going to be, so I was like, oh, this isn't as bad as they told me child I'm going again <laughing>

Debbie: And the outcome was we had a beautiful, bouncing baby boy in 1978. And we still co-parent. Now, Christopher is 35 years old, but whenever there is something going on in his life, Major and I, we talk about it. This is what parents do. No matter whether you are transgendered or straight, bisexual, no matter what. You have responsibilities. And Major has always met his responsibilities when it comes to being a father. Major is an excellent father.

Major: Yeah, he's just the light of my life. And he was born heavy. You know how babies are all wrinkly and skinny and ugly and they go "oh that's so cute," they look like little rodents, you know what I mean? Ew. Christopher was a baybee, and his face was all smooth and lovely and kissable, it was just so wonderful. I mean who expected me to have a child, you know? That was just the most amazing thing going. And I lost a lot of girlfriends in New York, when I told them that Debbie was pregnant. Because they felt as if I had slapped them in the face or something, you know what I mean.

Major: We moved out here to California, He handled flying so cool. I got the kind of carriage for him where he was on my chest. And so people, if they looked they would see I had breasts and a baby. And a beard. <laughing> And was in a man's suit. Debbie moved out here, we stayed together for a while, and then it just didn't work, you know, and so she went back East to New York. And she left Christopher with me. You know, and I felt so honored that she did and lucky. So we drove there together, all three of us. And I stayed until she got an apartment and stuff there. Then I came back out here to California and then when I got back out here I thought okay, raising a baby is going to be hard, you know, I may know what to do but maybe I should see what other people are doing to help me do this.

Major: There was a group for fathers who were raising their children. So I went to go to this group. <laughs> Hmm. Needless to say I did not only not get in, but two or three of them came out to cuss me out at the door. It's like wait a minute, so I have tits, what is your issue?

Beck VO: Christopher was always really confident, "that's my daddy" even though people would see a woman. I feel like she's like deeply genderqueer in this way that someone will be like, you're a woman, and she's be like I'm a wonder woman, wonder what kind of woman I am. She's happy to be with her full beard and a dress. She just wants to be herself and be seen as herself.

Christopher: Daddy's just ... daddy's just daddy. I mean he runs the house, he talks a lot. He rules with his voice and not with his fist. I got a lot of love when I was a kid. I was definitely the most loved kid, like ever.

off camera: So the last time you were in a room with your mom and your dad at the same time was...

Christopher: About 23 years ago – no, too many. 23?

Major: Yeah.

Christopher: 23 years ago. Yeah. A long time.

Christopher: It was not good. We were in a diner somewhere here in New York and I mean I don't remember much of the conversation. At that time I was 12. I know there were not nice words happening and I mostly tuned most of it out. Most of my troubles today have absolutely nothing to do with my father. So I'm blessed. I'm blessed. I'm here for daddy's building dedication. I think it's a huge honor and it's nice to know that he's gonna be immortalized in a building. It's like, he's a building. Yeah. [Laughter] That's my dad. Yeah. You know the building around the corner? [Laughter]

[Off-screen singing] We're gonna sit at the welcome table, we're gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days hallelujah. We're gonna sit at the welcome table, we're gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days...

[Spoken off screen] We're gonna thank and honor our elders!

[Song continues] We're gonna thank and honor our elders, we're gonna thank and honor our elders one of these days.

Reina Gossett: We at the Miss Major Jay Toole Building for Social Justice know exactly who Jay is here for. Jay is here for people who have disabilities. Who have HIV and AIDS. Jay is here for the homeless people, people living on the streets or homeless shelters. Jay is here for queer people of color, trans and gender non-conforming people navigating the prison industrial complex.

Jay Toole: I was homeless, you know, and I was in my box and this thought would go through my mind: I'm gonna die in a box. No one's gonna know who I was. No one's gonna know I was on this earth. And then one fucking queer put their hand out to me, and here I am. Major, we have a fucking building named after us. Isn't that like amazing? [laughter]

Jay Toole: Me and Major talked in San Francisco a week and a half ago and we tried to figure out how long we've known each other, and it seems like it's 1964 [Woo! from audience] that we met. You know, we go back a little ways. I love this building. Our doors stay open, we help whoever walks through. And to be in the same space with Major. I love my community. You saved my life. Now go out and save somebody else's. [Cheers from audience]

Major: This is absolutely a wonderful thing that this is not a memorial. I'm actually alive to pay attention to this and I just want to say that I hope each and every one of you when you leave here and anyone says 'oh, I'm here about the GLBT...' no, no, no motherfucker. T comes first. [Applause and cheers]. I want you all to know that I love and care about all of my Black sisters out there whether I know them or not, whether they know me or not, I hope they hear about me, I hope they come here and get some services because this is the building to get the fucking services at. I love you Jay for all the years we've known each other and this is only the beginning. You all must continue fighting for us because I'm getting tired. My heels cannot take it. I'm in flats come to think about it. [laughter] So hang in there. Thank you so very, very much from the bottom of my heart. Thank you. [Applause]

<piano music>

Title: In 1988, Miss Major moved to San Diego with her longtime partner Joe Bob Michael.

Title Illustration: Struggle

Matt: when I first met Major the kind of work she was doing was just trying to survive, we were all at that stage at that point. And it's kind of there that I noticed the struggles that she had, she really, the prejudice to try to find work was just, very blatant, and very obvious.

<Music: C'mon, vogue. Let your body move to the music>

Matt: Major always seemed to find people who, or actually these people would find her, who were kind of struggling with their own self-identity. And she always seemed to have people like that as roommates. She'd always gather a group of new folks and she would teach them, build them up, show them how to paint, show them that they really are valuable, and that they're more than their past, and then send them back out into the world and we'd see them all over. Usually in San Diego performing, you know one minute they're practically a street kid, and then next moment, after a month or two with Major's tutelage, they're now performing with local drag troupes and making a living.

Major: Ok, well that was the end of the second show, but we have, an encore performance, a third show. Please child, we're gonna close the bar! [laughs] Be with you in just a minute, hope you enjoy the show. I'm Major we'll be right back.

Audience: all right girl

Tracie: She was elected as the head of a food delivery program people with AIDS. They would have a contest for a spokesperson. And the people, the guys in the community elected Major, but the corporation itself did not think she was a fit aesthetic for the organization, and she rode in the gay pride parade that year, and they put her in the back of the float. And that was so painful to see her. But she sat there on the back of the float with this enormous petticoat on. And her son to the next of her. Everybody just waved and waved and waved to her, you know, that was so empowering to see, that no matter what she was faced with she came out on top.

Beck: She had a significant other for many years, Joe Bob, in San Diego. And when he passed, she got the Veteran's Hospital to create an AIDS memorial garden, which was a big deal at the time, for like a Veteran's Hospital to really recognize that some of the veterans were dying of AIDS at the time.

Speaker: The idea for this garden originated in March of this year when we lost one of our patients, Joe Bob Michael. And his friend Major and I talked about, it would be nice to have some kind of living memorial to remember the patients that we knew and had loved and lost

Tracie: And to me that was like, oh my god, she's African American, she's a trans person, and she's six foot five, and she's walking in her truth. How wonderful that is. And it gave me strength to wish more for myself.

Smitty: Major has had three major loves in her life. She had Joe Bob back in San Diego, and she was his caregiver for many years before he passed. Shannon she was with for I think at least a couple of years. Shannon actually lived with Major and her parents in the Menlo Park house while she was taking care of her parents. And unfortunately he struggled with drugs and some other issues and he committed suicide at that house in Menlo Park. He hung himself in the garage, and unfortunately Major came home and found him.

Major: And then I met Beck, and he just caressed my heart and took all my pain away. [crying] I don't know if I would have made these last 10 years without him, you know?

Beck: I think Major is the only person I have ever been so deeply in love with. And it was kind of a slow build-up.

Smitty: There was a big age gap, and I thought oh lord Major! I got to know Beck, and there really was a beautiful love there.

Beck: Major had really good game, I think, like she really let me initiate a lot, like I knew she was really interested in me, but she also never really called me, and over time I would just call her every night and I'd pretty much talk to her and see her everyday probably for almost 8 years. She has such a solid core of sensing her own hotness in the world. And so she used to come to my apartment and she would try to do this walk for me that she felt was so sexy. And she's on dialysis, her balance was off so she'd literally be bumping into walls as she did this sexy walk coming to me. And it was just so endearing.

Beck: Major really was the one to break up with me. I really want to have a family and I think eventually she was like you're not happy and I think you should go out and find someone who's younger and live your life and get to do the things I've already gotten to do. So I eventually moved out and everyone told me that we would need more space from each other, we would need some sort of break, but we just never got that I don't think we ever really needed it. And we just love each other so deeply and want to talk to each other all the time, and we just are huge emotional and material support for each other.

Major: We're like two lesbians, we share a dog, he has her a week, I have her a week...

Beck: I hope that she'll live a long time and I think about having a home where she will also be there and having a partner and a family that will see her as a huge part of my life.

Title Screen: In the Spring of 2015, Beck and Miss Major moved into the same apartment complex.

Beck: I just kind of feel like we're a package deal and I think it's a pretty good package you know.

Title: Miss Major moved back to San Francisco in 1995 to care for her aging parents.

Title: She began working in HIV outreach and prevention, and became a well-known advocate and educator with the Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center (TARC).

Valerie: nobody knew that we existed. And they really didn't give a damn how we were treated. So we had to humanize ourselves to people to let service providers and governmental entities know that we're not just these glamour dolls or these mentally confused people or these white academicians who coincidentally contracted HIV or just happened to become homeless. That we were suffering. And just as they demonstrated a sense of urgency about white gay men, they needed to get up and demonstrate that same sense of urgency about transgender people. Whether you understood who we were or not was irrelevant. We'll get to that in the 2000s. You don't need to understand us. You need to respond. And, my work with Major was about saying to people, now here's how you're going to do it. You're going to put us on your community planning groups and you're going to listen to us! You are going to share power next to these freaks of nature that you're not comfortable with. You're just going to have to be uncomfortable, deal with it.

Sharyn: Major was in charge of the transgender drop-in center and she was a health educator. And of course, Major was known and loved by everyone. And if there was any problem, particularly with any of the women in the trans community, she was their go-to person, it was Mama, Miss Major, you know.

Guy: I met Major in the Tenderloin doing street outreach for HIV positive, mostly homeless folks. We often noticed that a lot of the people who could benefit from services were not coming. They were in the street and they were not necessarily comfortable coming into an agency. So we decided we should, we should go out. About three times a week we would park a van someplace and set up chairs on the sidewalk and hand out condoms and bleach and syringes, and offer HIV testing. So we kind of made it up as we went, there was very little direction, it was mostly from the funders and the City, they were with us mostly don't do that. This doesn't fit in the program or the contract or the funding stream. And what I really love about Major is that that just doesn't matter at all. You just do something that needs to be done and then you know, people either get it or you don't and funding comes or it doesn't.

Guy: These street clinics, they didn't really start until Major arrived. And she would always be late. And people would sometimes stop and talk to us. But it didn't start happening until some really big vehicle came. She would pull in and open her window and start cursing that there wasn't any parking and that we weren't in the right place and you know, she'd let us have it from the very beginning. And that's when clinic would start, that's when the girls would come and then we'd be on our way.

Valerie: It's an indictment when you're with Major, if you really know Major and what she's done. It makes you ask yourself now what am I doing? What am I doing again? Do I just want to be pretty? Do I just want to conform? What would I do if I really used my life as an instrument of social change?

Tumeka: She deserves to be recognized for what she does in our community. And it's just not here in San Francisco that she advocates. She's up, at her age that woman moves around like a 22-year-old girl. When she really should be sitting down. I've seen her sick and tired, legs hurting, legs swollen. Her eyes hurting where she can barely see. But she gets up and she's there. She's speaking, she's advocating, and I'm like girl why are you there? Aren't you sick? Yes I am but I have to do this.

Major: This is our lives, we live this each and every day, and imagine having to leave your house and worry every day if you're going to get back home because of someone else's bullshit. We have to stop it, we can stop it, you must stop it. Because I would love for the dust to settle, and all the transgender girls and guys in this world stand up and go I'm still fucking here!

Tracie: It was really challenging these last couple of years because she's had some insurmountable health issues where it appeared that the end may be near for her.

Thom: We had known each other for probably at least 18 years if not more. I found out that she needed a kidney, you know, with all the issues that she had. And of course I offered. And Major was a very, very dear friend of mine.

Billie: I lost my left eye to cancer, and Miss Major lost her right eye, so we used to joke about walking up and down the street, so she would be my left eye and I would be her right eye. But you know, we have to keep on going, we have to keep on going. And Major instilled that in me, never give up, no matter what, never give up.

Major: Whoo, I wanna see 80, 90, and 100. Now once I get there, I'm good to go. Willard Scott's gonna go, and Miss Major is 100 today. Yes, I can go now. [Laughs] One trans woman on Willard Scott's mouth. [Laughs]

Major: I still feel 35. And I can't do the things I used to do at 35, but I can still chase the boys I like to have and still do the things I need to do, and still have good enjoyable long lasting wonderful sex. Just because there's snow on the roof honey don't mean that the fireplace is out.

Major: Adjusting to being older and going through all the shit that you have to go through just to survive, have medical coverage, eat, live somewhere decent, get around and about comfortably, negotiate through society and be okay. They don't tell you that it's gonna be hard as fucking hell.

Malachi: For someone who's taught us so much and has survived this long and who's not done it for personal glory or money. And like, a bitch is broke you know. She hasn't built up a nice 401K. How do we think about our mandates to take care of our elders who have taken such good care of us. And if Miss Major has a building named after her, she damned well better have a place to live. How do we make sure that the rest of her life is as comfortable as she's made us powerful.



Melenie: I want her to be taken care of, and to you know, to not have to worry about things. And to have people to lean on. I think in our communities that's one of the saddest things is the isolation and the loneliness of aging.

Major: I feel very fortunate to be a 71-year-old proud transgender woman, hoorah <applause>. And it would be really nice if I had some girlfriends my age for us to sit and talk about the bullshit that they tried to pull on us back in 69, 65, 62.

Major: For me, when somebody dies, I always feel that if it's someone that shouldn't have died at the time that a part of me died with them. Just because no matter what you believe, we're all a part of each other. Period.

Title: Friends and family who passed during the making of this film.

BobbieJean Baker: How many of you know you're a vessel full of power? [audience cheers] Can we get this turned down some? Is it possible? Cause I'm loud anyway. You can hear me? [Audience: Yes!] Ok. [Singing] I am troubled but not distressed. Perplexed, but not in despair. I'm a vessel full of power, I've got a treasure none can compare. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Cast down, but not destroyed. I'm a vessel Hallelujah! full of power. I've got a treasure, from the Lord.

Title: Melenie Eleneke , age 53, died of a heart attack 9/9/2013

Title: Minister BobbieJean Baker, age 49, died in a car accident 1/1/2014

Title: Jazzie Collins, age 54, died of undiagnosed cancer 7/11/2014

Title: Alexis Dolleman, age 53, died of a stroke on 7/12/2014

Title: Elise Shiver-Russell, age 47, died in her sleep on 9/21/2014

Title: Kiare Newsom, age 42, died from long term illness on 2/2/2015

Title: Reported Murders of Trans Women in the United States during the making of this film:

Major: The loss of any girl is just really really rough. And then to realize that it doesn't have to be murdered or beaten up because someone disapproves of who they are, but through neglect and uncaring and doctors who don't really take care of us. It's kind of like a societal killing spree, indirectly. That they just feel as if well whatever they do to us, we deserve, we've asked for this. It, it builds and adds up.

If you let it it will carry you away, so you have to just figure out what your sense of grieving is, and then work with it, and keep them in your heart, cherish the memories that you do have. And if it's sad and you need to cry then go through whatever it is, and then get up that next day, get your shit together and go out there and just be who you are because that will make somebody pay for what they've done to the girls who aren't here to do that anymore. You have to go forward for them, is what I try to do. Keep going forward, because you've got to make a difference.

Title illustration: Light the Way

singing: Let your light shine bright. Don't ever give up the fight.

Title: Miss Major and TV host, author, and advocate Janet Mock were named Grand Marshals of the 2014 San Francisco Pride Parade

singing continued: you chose to be, so why not be free?

Janet: Yeah, I'm not from San Francisco, and coming into this space as Celebrity Grand Marshal

Major: Sure, yeah, yeah.

Janet: How would you advise me for the five minutes that I do have to speak? What would you advise me to say as someone who is from here, what do you think that these people need to hear?

Major: they need to know that we have substance, we have meaning, that this is only a step forward. This isn't the change that we deserve yet. In this congratulatory thing that you're giving me, realize that it is not where it needs to be, where we're going to push it to be and the community's going to help us all get there. No girl is gonna be left behind, and we're not throwin' any bitches under the bus. And you all are so powerful and articulate and marvelous and wonderful. And true spirits and souls, you know. Just knowing that you exist is such a blessing for me, personally. [tears up] So. I love you all so much. Thank you so much.

instrumental music

Pride MC [off screen]: Ladies and gentlemen Celebrity Grand Marshall, Janet Mock! Make a round of applause for her. [crowd cheers]

Janet: Forty-five years ago today, our forbearers, gays and lesbians, low-income queers, homeless youth, fly drag queens, and fierce trans women fought to live their lives openly, safely, and without restrictions. Legend says that in 1969 Marsha P. Johnson threw a Molotov cocktail into the crowd kicking off the Stonewall Uprising. Others say it was actually Sylvia Rivera throwing a brick at the police that served as a catalyst for our liberation. Regardless, it was unapologetic trans people who helped ignite our movement forty-five years ago and I am proud. I am proud. (cheering from crowd) to be a product of their resilience, their fearlessness and their brilliance. Yesterday I was lucky enough to share an afternoon with Miss Major Griffin-Gracy. I sat at her side yesterday and realized that she was and has always been the answer. It was Miss Major who told me to never forget that I am trans just as much as I am black, just as much as I am a woman. It was Miss Major who taught me to center my sisters in my work. She has always centered us, those of us most forgotten by LGBT movement leaders. For decades Miss Major, with little resources, no pay or accolades has taken care of our sisters behind bars, our sisters

working on the streets, our sisters searching for mothers. She is the blueprint for our liberation and has ensured that the path that I walk on, that we all walk on is less rocky because she exists. We must never forget that Stonewall was not a parade; it was a police riot. We must never forget that whole communities of low-income trans and queer folk were fighting for their lives that night. Our siblings are still fighting HIV/AIDS, our sisters are still banished to the darkness of street corners, our people are still being locked away and hunted down. We must remember. We must remember. We must remember. The memories of this day, of all of you standing here will serve as an enduring reminder of our legacy of resilience, of where we are now and how far we must move and journey together.

[01:24:55.00]

Hey. OK, first and foremost, Ma Major, you know there's nothing but love. I'm here as a Black trans woman. I'm still fucking here. What.

I'm still here.

<singing> I'm still here.

Through it all, I'm still fucking here.

I'm still here!

<two voices> I'm still fucking here.

<two voices> I'm still fucking here.

<two voices> I am still. Fucking. Here.

The dust hasn't settled, but I'm still here.

<chorus of voices> I'm still fucking here.

<chorus of voices> I'm still fucking here.

Trans Latinas! <chorus of voices> Aquí estamos!

I am still here.

<two voices> I'm still fucking here.

<two voices> I'm still fucking here.

<chorus of voices> I'm still fucking here. [laughter]

<chorus of voices> I'm still fucking here. <single> and I'm not going any fucking where.

<chorus of voices> we're still fucking here!

I'm still fucking here. Right here.

Seguimos de la lucha (We continue the fight) <both voices> I am still here.

I'm still fucking here.

I'm still fucking here.

I'm still fucking here girls.

<chorus of voices> I am still fucking here.

Major: I'm still fucking here

second speaker: I'm still fucking here, we here together!

Major: thank you! that's a lot of trouble [laughter] I love you so much.

end credits music:

Hello

You don't know me but you hate me a lot

Cuz I lost my fear, I forgot

Cuz you still have that fear in your heart

Still I love you no matter how we fought

Maybe I'm stupid, maybe I'm dumb

But I know that I'm not the only one

Someday we'll see the error of our ways

And we'll smile yeah, we'll laugh it all away

Til that day you can say what you want

Still I love you, yes I love you, still I love you, yes I love you, still I love you

Welcome

To this place that I found in a dream

where our hearts are bursting at the seams

Where the light that we shine never dies

And our souls have learned how to fly

No such thing as a fear of the dark

And our hearts are outside of the box

And our love yes, our love lights the way

And I know that we'll be there someday

Maybe I'm stupid, maybe I'm dumb  
But I know that I'm not the only one  
Someday we'll see the error of our ways  
And we'll smile yeah, we'll laugh it all away

Til that day you can say what you want  
Still I love you, yes I love you, still I love you, yes I love you, still I love you

Welcome  
Light the way, light the way, light the way, light the way