**“What it feels like to be transgender” –by Lee Mokobe – TED talk**

[**https://www.ted.com/talks/lee\_mokobe\_a\_powerful\_poem\_about\_what\_it\_feels\_like\_to\_be\_transgender/transcript?language=en**](https://www.ted.com/talks/lee_mokobe_a_powerful_poem_about_what_it_feels_like_to_be_transgender/transcript?language=en)

**Questions:**

1. **What imagery (sensory details) is evident in this poem? Write the senses in the margins.**
2. **Can you find the allusions?**
3. **There are many metaphors in this poem. Can you find them and label? What are the comparisons?**
4. **Review the title. So…. *What does it feel like to be transgender*? What are the obstacles/conflicts? Discuss in your group and then record your answer in point form on the poem.**

The first time I uttered a prayer was in a glass-stained cathedral.

00:17 I was kneeling long after the congregation was on its feet,

00:20 dip both hands into holy water,

00:22 trace the trinity across my chest,

00:24 my tiny body drooping like a question mark

00:27 all over the wooden pew.

00:29 I asked Jesus to fix me,

00:32 and when he did not answer

00:34 I befriended silence in the hopes that my sin would burn

00:37 and salve my mouth would dissolve like sugar on tongue,

00:40 but shame lingered as an aftertaste.

00:42 And in an attempt to reintroduce me to sanctity,

00:45 my mother told me of the miracle I was,

00:48 said I could grow up to be anything I want.

00:51 I decided to be a boy.

00:55 It was cute.

00:56 I had snapback, toothless grin,

00:58 used skinned knees as street cred,

00:59 played hide and seek with what was left of my goal.

01:02 I was it.

01:03 The winner to a game the other kids couldn't play,

01:05 I was the mystery of an anatomy,

01:07 a question asked but not answered,

01:09 tightroping between awkward boy and apologetic girl,

01:13 and when I turned 12, the boy phase wasn't deemed cute anymore.

01:18 It was met with nostalgic aunts who missed seeing my knees in the shadow of skirts,

01:24 who reminded me that my kind of attitude would never bring a husband home,

01:28 that I exist for heterosexual marriage and child-bearing.

01:32 And I swallowed their insults along with their slurs.

01:35 Naturally, I did not come out of the closet.

01:38 The kids at my school opened it without my permission.

01:41 Called me by a name I did not recognize,

01:43 said "lesbian,"

01:45 but I was more boy than girl, more Ken than Barbie.

01:47 It had nothing to do with hating my body,

01:49 I just love it enough to let it go,

01:52 I treat it like a house,

01:53 and when your house is falling apart,

01:55 you do not evacuate,

01:56 you make it comfortable enough to house all your insides,

02:00 you make it pretty enough to invite guests over,

02:02 you make the floorboards strong enough to stand on.

02:06 My mother fears I have named myself after fading things.

02:11 As she counts the echoes left behind by Mya Hall, Leelah Alcorn, Blake Brockington.

02:17 She fears that I'll die without a whisper,

02:19 that I'll turn into "what a shame" conversations at the bus stop.

02:22 She claims I have turned myself into a mausoleum,

02:25 that I am a walking casket,

02:27 news headlines have turned my identity into a spectacle,

02:30 Bruce Jenner on everyone's lips while the brutality of living in this body

02:33 becomes an asterisk at the bottom of equality pages.

02:37 No one ever thinks of us as human

02:40 because we are more ghost than flesh,

02:42 because people fear that my gender expression is a trick,

02:45 that it exists to be perverse,

02:47 that it ensnares them without their consent,

02:49 that my body is a feast for their eyes and hands

02:52 and once they have fed off my queer,

02:54 they'll regurgitate all the parts they did not like.

02:57 They'll put me back into the closet, hang me with all the other skeletons.

03:01 I will be the best attraction.

03:04 Can you see how easy it is to talk people into coffins,

03:07 to misspell their names on gravestones.

03:09 And people still wonder why there are boys rotting,

03:12 they go away in high school hallways

03:14 they are afraid of becoming another hashtag in a second

03:17 afraid of classroom discussions becoming like judgment day

03:21 and now oncoming traffic is embracing more transgender children than parents.

03:28 I wonder how long it will be

03:29 before the trans suicide notes start to feel redundant,

03:33 before we realize that our bodies become lessons about sin

03:37 way before we learn how to love them.

03:39 Like God didn't save all this breath and mercy,

03:43 like my blood is not the wine that washed over Jesus' feet.

03:46 My prayers are now getting stuck in my throat.

03:51 Maybe I am finally fixed,

03:54 maybe I just don't care,

03:56 maybe God finally listened to my prayers.

04:01 Thank you. (Applause)