

Owen Marciano  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

The Transgender Oral History Project  
Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies  
University of Minnesota

December 16, 2015



The Transgender Oral History Project of the Upper Midwest will empower individuals to tell their story, while providing students, historians, and the public with a more rich foundation of primary source material about the transgender community. The project is part of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. The archive provides a record of GLBT thought, knowledge and culture for current and future generations and is available to students, researchers and members of the public.

The Transgender Oral History Project will collect up to 400 hours of oral histories involving 200 to 300 individuals over the next three years. Major efforts will be the recruitment of individuals of all ages and experiences, and documenting the work of The Program in Human Sexuality. This project will be led by

Andrea Jenkins, poet, writer, and trans-activist. Andrea brings years of experience working in government, non-profits and LGBT organizations. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting project, please contact Andrea.

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1     Andrea Jenkins             -AJ  
2     Owen Marciano            -OM  
3  
4     AJ:     So, hello.  
5     OM:     Hi.  
6     AJ:     My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project  
7             at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. Today is December 16, 2015, and I am  
8             actually on the campus of the University of Minnesota and today I am talking with Owen  
9             Marciano. So, Owen, can you state your name, your gender identity, your gender assigned at  
10            birth, as well as your preferred pronouns?  
11    OM:     Sure. My name is Owen Marciano and I was assigned female at birth and I currently identify as  
12             gender queer.  
13    AJ:     Gender queer, wonderful. So, can you tell me what is your earliest memory? Like the earliest  
14             thing you remember in life.  
15    OM:     Just in general?  
16    AJ:     It doesn't have to have anything to do with your gender identity, although if it is related to your  
17             gender identity, that's absolutely fine too. But I just kind of want to know what's the first thing  
18             you remember.  
19    OM:     It's a hard question to answer because I have a lot of really early childhood memories that  
20             flooded into my brain when you asked that question and I don't know which came first but they  
21             all kind of entered my brain at the same time.  
22    AJ:     OK.  
23    OM:     One of my earliest memories is of being with my parents and my sister, who is about . . . well,  
24             she's not about, she's exactly 17 months younger than me, and my brother who is four years  
25             younger, and he was a baby at the time. We were at a K-Mart for a family photo, as was our  
26             annual Christmas tradition.  
27    AJ:     Sure.  
28    OM:     And my sister wasn't smiling and my brother was crying and my dad pulled out a belt in the  
29             middle of the K-Mart to instill fear, enough fear to make everybody smile. It didn't work and I  
30             remember that photo hanging on our wall forever and ever afterwards as an example of  
31             children defying their parents and it was often talked that way. Most of my early childhood  
32             memories are full of terror.  
33    AJ:     Oh boy.  
34    OM:     But in that photo, I am smiling. I think even by then I had learned how to play the game to avoid  
35             being punished and I remember trying to nudge my sister like, "You just have to smile even  
36             though you're sad and then it will be over."

- 1 AJ: So you must have been about five then if your little brother is four years younger and he was  
2 already on the planet.
- 3 OM: Yeah, I was five or six at the time. So that's the one that came into my brain.
- 4 AJ: That's the one that kind of sticks out for you.
- 5 OM: It sticks out, yes.
- 6 AJ: Where did you go to elementary school?
- 7 OM: I went to a school called St. Lawrence, it was a Catholic elementary school in Rochester, New  
8 York.
- 9 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 10 OM: Which is where I'm from. Yeah, it was a pretty . . .
- 11 AJ: How do you spell that?
- 12 OM: St. Lawrence?
- 13 AJ: Oh, St. Lawrence. It's pretty easy to spell.
- 14 OM: Yeah, not too bad. I talk kind of quickly though, sometimes people don't understand what I'm  
15 saying.
- 16 AJ: Yeah.
- 17 OM: It was a pretty . . .
- 18 AJ: So you went there all through elementary?
- 19 OM: Kindergarten I went to a public school because there wasn't space yet, I don't think, in the  
20 private school that my parents wanted to send me to. I don't actually know the story about  
21 that, I know they wanted me to go to a Catholic school. So 1<sup>st</sup> grade through 8<sup>th</sup> grade I was at  
22 St. Lawrence.
- 23 AJ: Oh, wow – a good long time.
- 24 OM: It was a long time, yeah.
- 25 AJ: What was the experience like? You were born assigned female at birth, so you were probably  
26 socialized in that same way.
- 27 OM: I was.
- 28 AJ: How was that experience in Catholic school?
- 29 OM: Are you asking in terms of gender specifically? Or do you want me to talk generally about what  
30 it was like?
- 31 AJ: I guess generally but a lot of times people have . . .

- 1 OM: Gender is related for sure.
- 2 AJ: Yeah, gender is related to those kinds of issues or concerns.
- 3 OM: Before I answer your question, the reason that I asked that is because I don't have a traditional  
4 narrative around my gender identity.
- 5 AJ: That's perfect.
- 6 OM: So it was not an issue for me. OK. So my school was really conservative politically, as were my  
7 parents. And a very wealthy group of people, it was a high tuition school in a relatively wealthy  
8 suburb of Rochester. It was on the west side and more of the money was on the east side, so it  
9 wasn't one of the fanciest, but for our side of town and for our community, it was a pretty . . .
- 10 AJ: Relatively speaking.
- 11 OM: Relatively speaking, it was a pretty wealthy group of folks. Our uniforms were red, white and  
12 blue – it was kind of gross . . . I didn't know it at the time, but as I look back at it. I was really  
13 isolated. I was undergoing a lot of emotional and physical abuse at home that was unrecognized  
14 by anyone in a place of authority at my school.
- 15 AJ: And you didn't talk about it?
- 16 OM: I didn't talk about it; I didn't know that it wasn't normal. I thought that that was how dads were,  
17 just in general, so I assumed that my experience was shared amongst my classmates. And so I  
18 didn't understand why they all thought I was so weird. I don't know exactly what I was doing  
19 that made me feel so weird to them, but I was really an outcast in my class for I don't know  
20 what reasons. Some of them might have been I've always been kind of heavy, so I remember  
21 being made fun of for being fat, I remember being made fun of for being poor – I was on a  
22 scholarship. Our family was, by no means, poor, but you wouldn't know that based on how  
23 relatively we were to . . .
- 24 AJ: To the rest of the community.
- 25 OM: Yeah, the community at my school. And I didn't have the right clothes and I didn't have  
26 whatever. Our teachers were very strict about following rules and there was a huge, huge, huge  
27 emphasis on our grades from before I can remember. I remember feeling a lot of pressure  
28 around performing academically and I would get punished at home if I got anything below an  
29 "A". So I worked really hard to get straight "A's" as much as I could, and I did most of the time.
- 30 AJ: Sure.
- 31 OM: So that . . . it was hellish, honestly. It was horrible.
- 32 AJ: And it had nothing to do with gender expression or gender identity or any of those things.
- 33 OM: I didn't start expressing my gender as anything other than traditionally feminine until I was in  
34 graduate school. At that time . . . and I didn't experience any gender dysphoria until I was an  
35 adult. So, what I mean when I say I don't have that narrative is I didn't grow up with any  
36 weirdness about my gender. I did feel weirdness about my body, in general, in terms of its size

- 1           and what I could and couldn't do with it. I felt that around wealth and class stuff and not having  
2           the right clothes, that kind of stuff.
- 3    AJ:     Sure.
- 4    OM:     I can go back in my memory and recognize ways my gender had been policed and encouraged to  
5           move toward feminine, but it was not in congress for me at the time.
- 6    AJ:     Got it.
- 7    OM:     So that wasn't a source of pain or anything. Where I was feeling like I was failing as a human  
8           being was if I didn't get an "A" or if I didn't get invited to the party or if I didn't . . . that was kind  
9           of where the pain was for me.
- 10   AJ:     Some of the other issues that many of us experience growing up related to social standing and  
11           relationships.
- 12   OM:     Yes. I do remember, there was a boy, named Mike . . . I won't use his last name, who I was close  
13           friends with in very early years – 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and it turned out in later life that he did  
14           come out as gay. When we were friends in school, we didn't know that about one another, but  
15           we both liked to play with Barbies and neither of us liked the physical activity stuff that  
16           everyone else was doing. We were both kind of outcasts, so he was certainly outcast from boys  
17           because of gender things – he was not interested in the things that they were interested in and  
18           then he would rather do "girlie" things. So he and I used to hide from the other children and  
19           play Barbies together under the jungle gym where they couldn't find us or that sort of thing. I  
20           do remember, when I'm thinking about – in like trainings that I've done about gender or  
21           whatever, my earliest lesson about gender roles, I remember a time where they found us, the  
22           other boys who were playing football, found us and pulled him out physically and started  
23           beating him up because he wasn't playing. And after that, he no longer hung out with me and  
24           started to try to fit in with the boys. I remember feeling deep, deep loss and I still feel sad about  
25           it. He was one of my only allies in that place and then because of gender violence, I lost my  
26           friend. And so, for me, that is probably my earliest and most vivid memory of what it means to  
27           go outside of those gender norms.
- 28   AJ:     Those gender norms, so to speak.
- 29   OM:     And what the consequences are for that.
- 30   AJ:     So talk about the first time that you realized you were different from the gender you were  
31           assigned at birth.
- 32   OM:     It wasn't until I was in my early 20s and I moved to New York City to start a graduate program in  
33           higher education.
- 34   AJ:     New York City?
- 35   OM:     That's right. I actually like that commercial. So, before that point I knew that I was different  
36           politically from my entire family and that I was an ally to LGBT people, was kind of what made  
37           me different from the rest of my family. And I had come out by that point as . . . I didn't use the

- 1 word queer, but as a queer. So I'd come out as a lesbian first and then bisexual. It was because  
2 I didn't know what those words meant or what the language meant. So . . . I can't remember  
3 what I was talking about.
- 4 AJ: You were in graduate school; you came out to your family.
- 5 OM: Yes, that's right.
- 6 AJ: You had various identities.
- 7 OM: So my graduate program . . .
- 8 AJ: Where did you go to graduate school?
- 9 OM: It was NYU and it was in the Steinhardt School of Education, higher education program – student  
10 personnel administration was what it was called. At that time, I don't know if it still is but at  
11 that time, it was a practicum-based program. So I was admitted academically but then I had to  
12 go on to campus and interview for a job in a student affairs position and I also had to get a job. I  
13 was admitted academically and then I had to get hired in order to go into the program, so that  
14 was kind of how it worked. I had never . . .
- 15 AJ: And then you had to have a job beyond that too?
- 16 OM: No, I lived on credit cards.
- 17 AJ: OK.
- 18 OM: The program paid my tuition so the only expenses – and books. So the only expenses that I had  
19 were housing and food really. I did get a stipend for working my 20 hours a week, so I got paid  
20 but it wasn't enough to live on.
- 21 AJ: Not in New York.
- 22 OM: I did end up, toward the end of my time there, getting a job at an LGBT bookstore, actually, in  
23 the village and tried to supplement my income a little bit. I'm still paying off the debt from living  
24 in New York City and that will be forever, I'm pretty sure.
- 25 AJ: Yeah, that's an expensive adventure.
- 26 OM: So anyway, I didn't . . . I had some friends who are LGBT and I had come out, but I hadn't been in  
27 any kind of queer relationships. I had always only dated cis men at that point. But clearly I  
28 knew I was attracted to, and was curious about, other genders and so I used these words to  
29 describe myself but I had not done anything.
- 30 AJ: Sure.
- 31 OM: So I didn't consider myself to be an activist either, at that point. So NYU changed a lot for me.  
32 So, when I went for my interviews, I came out – the LGBT Services Office was one of the places  
33 that was hiring the practicum students and I didn't know what to say to them, so all I did was  
34 say, "Well, I'm bi," and I just talked about being bi, which I was making up on the spot – I had  
35 never even talked about myself that way before.

- 1 AJ: Yeah.
- 2 OM: And they were not on . . . so we had this process where then, as candidates, we got to say which  
3 were our top choices for the sites we wanted to be placed at, and they did the same and then  
4 there was a matching process. I didn't list the LGBT Programs Office, or the LGBT Student  
5 Services Office, on my top 3, but I was their top choice and so they hired me, so I ended up  
6 being there. I was like, "Mmm, OK." That was when I met queer, gender queer and trans  
7 people for the first time and I was in charge of advising this student group called, "Fluidity," that  
8 was about gender and sexuality, in terms of non-binary kinds of things.
- 9 AJ: Even though you really didn't have language and/or real lived experiences.
- 10 OM: Correct, that is correct. It was a crash course. Luckily I was an open person and was excited . . .
- 11 AJ: Thank God for all of that training of studying hard as a kid.
- 12 OM: That's right. I just did a lot of listening as an advisor to that group, and really my role as an  
13 advisor was just to make sure that they got resources that they needed and help them navigate  
14 the university. So that I could do easily, and then just tried to form relationships with the  
15 younger folks who weren't that much younger than I was at that time in my life – just to learn  
16 about what that whole world was like. When I heard the word gender queer and understood  
17 what it meant, I was like, "That's me." I had had no questioning about my gender until I heard  
18 the word and heard how people described it. The way they described it was that I just don't  
19 want . . . what I heard most from that was people just didn't want to feel like they needed to fit  
20 into a masculine or a feminine box and wanted to recognize that actually we all have this  
21 freedom to kind of move around in our bodies and to move around gender and to question it. I  
22 was like, "Cool, that is the coolest thing. I've never questioned my gender before, I've never  
23 even thought about this for myself," and I totally began this process of really thinking about who  
24 I am in the world, what I want to look like. I had just kind of accepted that this was my body and  
25 it was not . . . that it was immutable. I had accepted that it was immutable so it was something  
26 that I hadn't put any thought toward.
- 27 AJ: Something which 98% of the people on the planet do, right?
- 28 OM: Correct. And my experience of gender . . . I mean I had been working . . . I had sort of come to  
29 identify myself as a feminist, I understood that gender essentialism was fucked up, I had these  
30 kind of understandings, but I also was sort of around a lot of people who . . . a lot of white  
31 lesbians, who identified as women who had this, "We are women and we can be whatever we  
32 want, we can express our femininity and whatever." So for a while that was great and that was  
33 enough for me, but then when I learned about gender queer and this whole world opened up to  
34 me, of freedom – that I could just sort of explore what it was like to wear masculine clothing and  
35 see how I felt and I realized that I really enjoyed it and that I actually felt stronger and more  
36 powerful and I didn't know I could. And so, that sort of began this physical transition, which I  
37 didn't start taking hormones until I moved here to Minneapolis in 2004.
- 38 AJ: 2004.



- 1 OM: And I changed my name in 2005, legally. So it happened kind of quickly and I just . . . to get what  
2 I want, or need, out of the binary systems that exist around us, I present pretty masculine in  
3 public, but I don't actually identify as a man and I kind of don't feel comfortable in all male  
4 spaces or men's spaces, generally. So I would rather occupy a space that is not either end of  
5 that gender spectrum.
- 6 AJ: So how do you feel when people refer to you as sir or him or . . .?
- 7 OM: The only way I can describe it is that it feels more accurate than ma'am or she.
- 8 AJ: That's . . . I get it, I totally get it.
- 9 OM: Literally when people ask, "What's your preference?" It's my preference, but ideally we  
10 wouldn't be gendered the way that we are.
- 11 AJ: Just be Owen.
- 12 OM: I would just be Owen – yeah.
- 13 AJ: Wow, that's pretty fascinating. So you've kind of talked about how your terms have changed  
14 over time, I think I had a question related to . . . prior to you hearing the term gender queer,  
15 were you . . . I think I heard you say you were identifying as lesbian, bisexual . . .
- 16 OM: Yes.
- 17 AJ: . . . in the feminist community. Were you sort of presenting as what we call a butch dyke or  
18 more masculine?
- 19 OM: I went back and forth, honestly. So when I was an undergraduate, my first two years were at a  
20 community college and I had to live at home with my family. And then my second two years I  
21 went away, to Binghamton. When I went away to Binghamton, I shaved my head immediately.  
22 It was a little bit like . . . a lot of the young white lesbians that I knew at the time were copying  
23 Ani DiFranco and shaving their heads.
- 24 AJ: That's right.
- 25 OM: So it felt like a gender statement but it didn't feel like a statement of masculinity.
- 26 AJ: Sure.
- 27 OM: But I definitely cut my hair and started to wear much more masculine clothing. I never enjoyed  
28 dresses so even though I was pretty femme when I was a kid, people did have to wrangle me  
29 into really traditional . . .
- 30 AJ: Ruffles and . . .
- 31 OM: Yeah, that was never stuff . . .
- 32 AJ: Patent leather shoes and . . .
- 33 OM: I loved the color pink and I still like it, but I didn't like wearing dresses and I didn't like dressing  
34 up in general – I honestly still don't like dressing up, I'd rather be comfy in my jeans. So I did

- 1 start to wear more masculine clothing but it didn't feel like a conscious choice that I was  
2 becoming more masculine in that moment or trying to. It felt, within the context of the  
3 community that I was in, like I want to express a different kind of femininity and I want to  
4 challenge what the ideas of femininity are by doing this stuff. I started having short hair then  
5 and then I grew it out and wore a dress once to a party and then I cut my hair again and wore a  
6 suit to the next one. There was a period of a few years during undergraduate and into graduate  
7 school where I was, actually, fluid about my gender and I just didn't know that that's what I was  
8 doing.
- 9 AJ: The language didn't exist.
- 10 OM: I didn't know how to talk about it.
- 11 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 12 OM: Or that there were others that were doing that outside of the white lesbian feminist, the  
13 handful of them that I had kind of found community with.
- 14 AJ: What challenges have you experienced as you have begun to, or since you've begun to express  
15 an alternate gender? And I only use the word alternate because, as we're talking about  
16 language there's not a really super-appropriate word for that right at this moment.
- 17 OM: Yeah, I totally get it.
- 18 AJ: So I'm not trying to be . . .
- 19 OM: I get that, that's OK.
- 20 AJ: . . . defensive or derogatory or anything like that, it's just . . . yeah.
- 21 OM: Yeah.
- 22 AJ: Or I could say your true gender identity, but I feel like gender is still fluid and in flux.
- 23 OM: Yeah, I really want to hang to . . .
- 24 AJ: So maybe your true gender today but tomorrow it may be something different.
- 25 OM: I really want to hang on to my right to change my mind. One of the things that I find  
26 troublesome about some of the ways that trans activism is happening on a national scale, it  
27 does feel like it still looks very binary – trans women and trans men, who kind of embody their  
28 new gender in a way that looks traditional for that gender.
- 29 AJ: Yeah, Caitlyn Jenner just said . . .
- 30 OM: Yes.
- 31 AJ: What was the quote?
- 32 OM: Something essentialist, I don't remember.

- 1 AJ: Yeah, essentially trans women . . . some trans people can make cis gender people feel  
2 uncomfortable by presenting like a man in a dress. She used the blasphemist term, “man in a  
3 dress,” in a *Time* magazine article.
- 4 OM: We don’t need that for our community.
- 5 AJ: So very much a binary sort of affirming, or conforming, statement.
- 6 OM: That’s what it feels like is more assimilationist and conformist than radical in terms of . . . we  
7 actually don’t have to interact with each other this way, we don’t have to set these kinds of  
8 strict standards for beauty or professionalism. There’s lots of different ways in which the  
9 gender presentation is policed in different classes and different communities, but it is in every  
10 class and community policed, it does look different in every one of those places. So challenges I  
11 think was your question since presenting my gender differently. I have a bit of a unique story, I  
12 think, because my coming out as trans and gender queer – I do identify with the term trans as  
13 part of a broader community, so I do sometimes use that.
- 14 AJ: Sure.
- 15 OM: But it’s always been in the context of an office or service specifically for LGBT people and so the  
16 LGBT Student Services Office was where I learned about gender queer as a word and what that  
17 meant, so my beginnings of experimenting . . .
- 18 AJ: And that was at NYU.
- 19 OM: At NYU I was surrounded by people who that was their work and that was what they did, and so  
20 I have these sort of arms around me. And so then . . .
- 21 AJ: So that was a welcoming environment.
- 22 OM: Mostly, yes. And then my next job after graduate school was at Colgate University where I ran  
23 their LGBT program as well, I was the first person to be paid to do LGBT work professionally on  
24 their campus, with LGBT students. And that was a super isolated place, I was really isolated  
25 there as a queer person, which was both good and bad. It was hard, I was lonely, I had  
26 depression pretty hard – I had a couple suicide attempts that year. But, it was also because I  
27 was sort of disconnected from NYU community, from my community in Rochester. I felt really  
28 free to just be who I was. I didn’t feel like I was beholden to a former version of me or that I had  
29 to explain myself in any way. So in a lot of ways, that one year that I was at Colgate in Hamilton,  
30 New York, was actually really freeing when I look back on it, because I did a lot of  
31 experimentation with binding and with my hair and using different names and just acting like  
32 that had always been my name. There were ways that I could . . .
- 33 AJ: There were no constrictions, no constraints.
- 34 OM: Exactly. So I did a lot of experimentation that year, which that was challenging given the  
35 environment – it’s a pretty conservative school, there’s a lot of Greek life, there’s a lot of white  
36 conservative money that funds the school and so it reflects the values that . . .
- 37 AJ: Is that a private school?

- 1 OM: It is a private school. And so, I felt a lot of backlash for the work I was trying to do on that  
2 campus and I think that that's how people expressed their frustration with me and my gender,  
3 was through what I was trying to use resources for to do on campus that was counter to the  
4 conservative politics of the institution. But it wasn't directed about my presentation personally,  
5 it was because of . . . so, again, I had this experience of like . . . I'm pretty sure if I wasn't doing  
6 LGBT-specific work and I was just walking around Hamilton, New York, like playing with gender  
7 that way, the heat I would have gotten would have been personal – it would have been personal  
8 about me. But because I was this sort of public figure there, doing this work that had not been  
9 done before, and that people were not in agreement with, that was where the backlash or the  
10 challenges were focused – around the work. And then coming here . . . in 2004, I came here to  
11 the U of M to work in the GLBT Programs Office, I was the Assistant Director under B. David Galt,  
12 who was the director right after Beth.
- 13 AJ: Under who?
- 14 OM: B. David Galt was his name.
- 15 AJ: B. David Galt, OK.
- 16 OM: So he was the second director.
- 17 AJ: G-a-l-t.
- 18 OM: That's right. He was the second director after Beth Zemsky left the position. And so again, I was  
19 surrounded by a community of people that understood that our work is about gender and  
20 sexual revolution or liberation in some way. And so again I felt those arms around me and I  
21 came and joined Gender Blur almost right away when I moved here. I found the queer, radical  
22 artists that I wanted to know and that was great.
- 23 AJ: What's Gender Blur? Tell me about Gender Blur.
- 24 OM: Gender Blur was a queer arts organization that was in existence for a few years before I even  
25 moved to the Twin Cities. So when I came, I came for kind of the end of Gender Blur. But the  
26 mission was an anti-oppression mission about working . . . I can't remember the language, I used  
27 to know it by heart. But working toward creative spaces that were free from all forms of  
28 oppression and it mostly focused on performance art. So we did a lot of cabaret shows where  
29 we brought . . . we tried to focus on queer artists, artists of color, gender queer or trans artists  
30 as well, and create spaces where we could gather and engage with creative work that was being  
31 made in our communities. I loved it, it was great. I met most of my friends, who are still my  
32 friends, from Minneapolis – they were somehow connected to Gender Blur in some way.
- 33 AJ: I remember this woman Andrea Jenkins . . .
- 34 OM: Yeah, she used to perform sometimes in her sexy boots, I remember. It was good times.
- 35 AJ: Wow, that's fascinating. So, you've had a not so challenging sort of history.
- 36 OM: It's not really the case though. So I did have . . . there were a couple of instances that I was  
37 working in the Programs Office where . . . one time I answered the phone and there was

1 someone, who I assume was a cis gender man – probably white, on the other end of the phone.  
2 I don't know those things for sure, but that's my guess. I answered the phone, "GLBT Programs  
3 Office, this is Owen, how can I help you?" And he was like, "Owen?" I was like, "Yup." He was  
4 like, "That's a boy's name." I was like, "Uh-huh, can I help you?" He was like, "Well I don't  
5 understand why your name is Owen and you're obviously a girl." I was like, "Let me just back  
6 up, you called the GLBT Programs Office." He was like, "Yeah." "Do you know what those  
7 letters stand for?" And he said what they stand for and I was like, "So you heard that last one –  
8 transgender." And he was like, "Ohhh." But I had to go through that – and he wasn't the only  
9 one, but that's the one that I remember most. And so there were some things like that, but also  
10 because of early childhood trauma from abuse from my dad and neglect from my mom, I had  
11 attempted suicide five times and the last time was right before my first testosterone shot. So it  
12 was in my first year here in Minneapolis, in that year 2005. It wasn't until I made the decision to  
13 completely cut off contact with my family all together that I was able to move out of suicidal  
14 state and start to really deal with depression and the effects that that early childhood trauma  
15 has had, which is something that I'm dealing with still. I think gender is definitely a part of that.  
16 I just was always different and weird and my dad didn't understand me and I'm pretty sure he  
17 has some . . . something like bi-polar or something that's undiagnosed and he was self-  
18 medicating and he was mean, he was mean. And so my challenges are big, but I don't know that  
19 I could say that they're about me being trans. I think that they are really connected to mental  
20 health stuff and family violence and all of that. And definitely some of the violence that I  
21 experienced from my dad was gender related, about me not adhering to gender roles, but those  
22 instances were minor compared to . . . it was mostly about my grades and whether or not I was  
23 being a good role model for my younger siblings and mostly whether or not I was interrupting  
24 his football game or whatever else was bothering him at the time.

25 AJ: So what about involvement with institutions like the medical industry or the criminal justice  
26 institutions – or even educational institutions? You've had a pretty significant academic career  
27 and I know those places can be sort of rigid around identity too.

28 OM: That's true. Actually my legal name is not what's on my diploma from NYU and I keep worrying  
29 about how I have to change that. I don't remember what the requirements are but I keep  
30 looking it up and then being like, "Oh, that will be hard," and then I forget what it is. So I'm  
31 pretty sure I'm going to need to do that at some point. But as a student, I didn't . . . other than  
32 how gender is policed in general, I didn't feel like I was targeted because of my gender  
33 expression or anything like that. Medically though, I could tell a story. It is a lifelong journey,  
34 this one. When I first started menstruating, I had a very irregular period – like maybe I got my  
35 period like three or four times a year at most, and when I did it was super heavy and really  
36 painful. There were days when I couldn't walk, the pain was radiating down. My mom had  
37 ovarian cysts so I always assumed that I had something going on in there. Every time I went to,  
38 certainly before 18 but even after 18, every time I went to a gynecologist, and I always only  
39 went to women gynecologists, they would tell me that my period was irregular because I was fat  
40 and I needed to lost weight and they would sort of brush off any of my complaints about pain –  
41 especially when I was younger and it was a new experience. "It can be painful and  
42 uncomfortable and this is normal," and all of that.

- 1 AJ: This is normal, this is how it is.
- 2 OM: So again, I just thought it was normal and then I internalized all of that fat shame and felt afraid  
3 to ask about it to other providers and that sort of thing. But I forced myself to several times  
4 throughout the years because it really was a significant issue. When I did get my period, it was  
5 bad and I couldn't function – I couldn't go to work, I couldn't go to school and I felt like there  
6 was something wrong with me because I couldn't do those things. When I was 18, I started  
7 requesting a hysterectomy – at that point I knew that I didn't want to birth children, I just knew  
8 that about myself. So whether or not that's connected to my gender queerness or whatever,  
9 that was just a thing that I knew about myself and I was like, "I'm having all this pain, I don't  
10 need this, take it out." And no doctor would do that for me. They told me that I would change  
11 my mind later and they didn't want to be responsible for that, and they just didn't . . . they  
12 didn't recognize my . . .
- 13 AJ: There were no forms you could sign or anything?
- 14 OM: Anything – I would get to a point where I would be talking in circles about what was happening  
15 and I'd keep getting back, "Well, you need to lose weight," or whatever it was. And then even if  
16 I did, it didn't change anything – whatever. But they were very quick to prescribe me hormones,  
17 right? Birth control to regulate all of this – so depo provera, lots of different kinds of hormones.
- 18 AJ: Sure.
- 19 OM: And they did work to suppress the periods, but usually not the cramping. So even though I  
20 wasn't . . .
- 21 AJ: The blood flow was lessened . . .
- 22 OM: Yes, and I had a lot of . . . they were like high, high doses of estrogen, or whatever it was, and so  
23 I had a lot of shit going on in my brain about . . . because these hormones were all over the place  
24 and they kept changing them from year to year because it wasn't addressing the issue. And all  
25 this time no one ever did an ultrasound or anything to figure out what was going on. Every time  
26 I would bring up that my mom had cysts, they would say, "That's not it, it's because you're  
27 overweight." Whatever. So just a couple of . . . just last year, after being on T for a long time,  
28 which had also helped with that and had alleviated . . .
- 29 AJ: Testosterone.
- 30 OM: Yup, testosterone, and had alleviated the cramping, they started to come back and I was at a  
31 point where I was getting two periods a week while on testosterone with a full beard. And, the  
32 cramping was . . .
- 33 AJ: Two periods a week?
- 34 OM: Yes. And the cramping was so intense that I was taking tons and tons of ibuprofen and self-  
35 medicating a lot, just to get to work or whatever. And so I finally did just take a deep breath and  
36 go to my new doctor and say, "Look, people have been telling me forever that I won't be a  
37 candidate for a hysterectomy unless I lose 100 lbs and they won't consider it," and he just kind  
38 of was like . . . he's the first male doctor that I talked to about this, and he was like, "That's

- 1 ridiculous and none of that is true, and I'm going to refer you to this gynecologist." So then I  
2 went to a new gynecologist and it was the same sort of thing, but the opposite assumption. So  
3 she saw me looking like this and I said, "I'm thinking about a hysterectomy," and she was like,  
4 "Well, of course you are, you don't need that." Like – you'll never . . . so I never told her that I  
5 didn't want to have children, but she just made the opposite assumption.
- 6 AJ: Right.
- 7 OM: But it was working for me in this case so I was like, "OK, great, take it the fuck out."
- 8 AJ: Right.
- 9 OM: So we just scheduled it and did it, and that was in May. And so afterwards . . .
- 10 AJ: This past May?
- 11 OM: Yes, that's right.
- 12 AJ: Congrats.
- 13 OM: Thank you – so much better now. But afterwards she told me that there was a growth on my  
14 ovary, as I had suspected, that was larger than the ovary itself.
- 15 AJ: Oh my goodness.
- 16 OM: That my uterus was three times as large and six times as heavy as it was supposed to be, and  
17 that I probably was infertile from the beginning of my life.
- 18 AJ: And no one diagnosed this ever.
- 19 OM: So I asked her, "Would doctors have been able to tell that from an ultrasound or any other kind  
20 of test?" And she was like, "Absolutely, all they had to do was an ultrasound and they would  
21 have been able to see what was going on in there."
- 22 AJ: And nobody ever believed you.
- 23 OM: Nobody ever believed me, nobody ever looked at it, it was always just that I was too fat.
- 24 AJ: That's criminal.
- 25 OM: And when I was presenting as a woman, I didn't have the wherewithal to make that decision for  
26 myself, I would change my mind later and no doctor would be held responsible for taking my  
27 uterus away. And then when I went to a doctor and presented as a man, there was the opposite  
28 assumption – that I would never want to use that and, of course, we would take it out without  
29 even thinking about. So over a span of 20 years, yup.
- 30 AJ: So in many ways, your gender expression helped you overcome this physical challenge that you  
31 were having, albeit in a very sexist and . . .
- 32 OM: And accidental on my part. The two things were not connected to me so . . . yes.

- 1 AJ: Wow. Well, I'm kind of speechless. I'm glad you were able to realize the hysterectomy that you  
2 knew you wanted since age 18, but it saddens me to think that you struggled through that for  
3 many, many years without anybody ever really taking your own word for your own body.
- 4 OM: And I know that that is a common theme, not just . . . it's a common thing among trans people,  
5 women, folks of color. I see that, I see the articles that people write about their experiences  
6 trying to get pain medication and then not being believed about the pain. I think that that is . . .  
7 it's a specific way that I experienced what is clearly systemic and institutional in terms of sexism  
8 and transphobia being built into the medical system – for sure.
- 9 AJ: Wow. What are some positive aspects, other than you got your hysterectomy?
- 10 OM: Thank God for that. Positive aspects of being gender queer?
- 11 AJ: Yeah.
- 12 OM: I feel great about when I look at myself in the mirror, I feel good about how I look – that was not  
13 ever a thing. I always felt like I was critiquing. Not that I don't still do that, I definitely still worry  
14 about making sure my beard is trimmed or whatever, but I feel freer. I feel . . . I don't know how  
15 to describe it – it's a lightness of being that is lighter than before. It's like an affirmation of  
16 strength and the power that I have as just an individual human being in the world that I often  
17 feel stripped of but when I sort of assert my right to just wear what I want and walk in the world  
18 how I feel most comfortable that day, regardless of what comes at me, that is where I feel  
19 strongest and most powerful and most comfortable. And so I'm grateful to all of the young folks  
20 at NYU and here and at Colgate who continued to challenge me and talk with me about their  
21 experiences around gender – because that part of it as well, the community . . . that's a thing  
22 that maybe I don't talk about enough and didn't really mention, but the taking on of the word  
23 gender queer, and even earlier taking on the word lesbian, had less to do with how I felt inside  
24 and more to do with, "This is the community I feel like I belong in." And so when I . . . I think  
25 when I talk with young folks about identity, I feel like that is so valid, as valid as how we feel  
26 internally in terms of trying to find those words that describe us.
- 27 AJ: Yeah.
- 28 OM: And so for me, being around trans folks and activists around gender and being around people  
29 who care about working at intersections around justice, that is where I feel the most  
30 comfortable and most at home. And by understanding these words and understanding more  
31 about myself and how I wanted to be ideally in the world and kind of trying to work more  
32 toward that instead of just accepting what most people just sort of accept, the more people I  
33 found that sort of contradicted all of those early childhood things – from being outcast in school  
34 and outcast from my family and being the weirdo, like I found myself amongst a bunch of  
35 weirdos and we're all weird together and we're cool with it and we love each other for it. For  
36 me, that's the most amazing thing about coming out and being a part of this community. That's  
37 really what I love most.
- 38 AJ: Wow, that's beautiful.
- 39 OM: Thank you.



- 1 AJ: I think you've kind of touched on this, but describe your current relationship with your birth  
2 family.
- 3 OM: Yeah, it doesn't exist really.
- 4 AJ: Doesn't exist.
- 5 OM: So . . .
- 6 AJ: Chosen family, have you . . .?
- 7 OM: I have quite a large chosen family, sort of spread out across the country.
- 8 AJ: Nice.
- 9 OM: Yeah, so that . . . I didn't really say this before, but coming to Minneapolis, I always intended  
10 that it would be temporary and that I would move back to the east coast at some point. But, I  
11 found such an amazing community of people here that they became my family and it's very  
12 difficult to think about leaving because I've left my biological family and that is still a painful  
13 thing – every single day.
- 14 AJ: Absolutely.
- 15 OM: I work really hard to give as much as I receive in this community and so it would be really  
16 difficult to leave that. And that, I think, is a good thing – that I feel this sense of belonging, this  
17 sense of home that I was missing really throughout my childhood and my life up until that point.  
18 So . . . yeah.
- 19 AJ: And then you've talked pretty extensively about medical interventions. Hormones, you  
20 mentioned. Hysterectomy.
- 21 OM: So I've been on testosterone, I did the hysterectomy – thank goodness. And I'm still trying to  
22 decide if I want to have top surgery or not.
- 23 AJ: OK.
- 24 OM: And I go back and forth all the time and since I go back and forth all the time, I haven't taken any  
25 steps toward doing it. Again, I feel like if I . . . I think that my resistance is I feel like if I made that  
26 decision it would be for other people's comfort and not for me. That's how it feels right now  
27 and so again, I'm resisting that and I don't want to do it right now.
- 28 AJ: Do you get crap for it at all?
- 29 OM: No. I think because I'm larger . . . what I've heard from people I've been close to when I ask,  
30 "What do you think people think about me walking around like this or whatever?" What they've  
31 said is because I'm larger it just looks like a man with kind of fleshy breasts or whatever. And so  
32 I'm like, "OK, I can live with that, that's cool." I don't really feel a lot . . . if I feel like my shirt is  
33 too tight, I get nervous or . . . I'm careful about what I wear and I do feel like I'm protective of  
34 this part of my body in terms of how people see me.
- 35 AJ: Do you bind? Do you mind if I ask?

- 1 OM: I used to, but it so painful.
- 2 AJ: It's painful, it's harmful – isn't it?
- 3 OM: It can be, I think it can be. And it's annoying and I don't like . . . I mean, I don't like sweating and  
4 it makes you sweat. I just don't like that extra layer of whatever. I did try to do that and was  
5 binding daily in my first couple of years – like Colgate and here, but it didn't last. It was just too  
6 uncomfortable. So I understand that when people choose to do that it's because it's more  
7 comfortable than walking around without it, and I did not have that experience. For me, neither  
8 is comfortable, but this is more comfortable for me to not bind.
- 9 AJ: Got it. How long have you been doing testosterone?
- 10 OM: Since 2005.
- 11 AJ: When you moved here.
- 12 OM: I moved in 2004 and I was trying to get someone to give me testosterone for the first year – fat  
13 phobia in the medical industry, along with transphobia, meant I kept coming up against walls.  
14 But, after my suicide attempt, which was toward the end of 2005, I basically staged a sit-in in the  
15 psych ward and was like, "I'm not leaving until someone gives me testosterone."
- 16 AJ: Wow.
- 17 OM: And they did – a day later, and then I left.
- 18 AJ: Here at Boynton?
- 19 OM: It wasn't, it was at . . . not HCMC, Abbott Northwestern.
- 20 AJ: Abbott Northwestern Hospital.
- 21 OM: That's right. And none of the doctors there felt comfortable prescribing it to me, and so I told  
22 them to call the doctor who had refused me a couple of times. And I was like, "Just call her, she  
23 knows what to do." And she was like, "Fine," and so she ordered a prescription for me and sent  
24 it in.
- 25 AJ: Wow. So you talked a little bit about Gender Blur, which was an organization – an arts  
26 organization that really sort of grounded you in community and around gender identity. Are  
27 there other organizations that you've been a part of and, if so . . . like I know you've been a part  
28 of the Trans Commission here on campus?
- 29 OM: Yup, and the Trans Health Coalition. I used to be on the board for the Trans Health Coalition.  
30 The Transgender Commission here at the U of M, I was working in the GLBT Programs Office the  
31 year that Anne Phibbs formed it, that was in 2006. I've been a member of the commission,  
32 basically ever since – I'm not always active, but I'm on the email list. I was a co-chair with an  
33 undergrad student, a couple different undergrad students, for a couple of years.
- 34 AJ: What kind of accomplishments has the Trans Commission achieved on campus?

- 1 OM: Kind of a lot, they've done a lot of really great work. I think we credit the Transgender  
2 Commission with definitely the health insurance package that covers trans-related care for  
3 students, including both undergraduate and graduate students. And then also, once that was in  
4 place, the Trans Commission pushed for increasing the caps regularly so that more and more  
5 kinds of procedures or surgeries would be able to be covered through that. The Transgender  
6 Commission started the gender neutral restroom work that's been going on on campus, it  
7 started the mapping project and created the map for that, and has tried over the years, to  
8 various degrees of success, to partner with facilities folks, facilities staff and administrators  
9 around making decisions . . . so we did win the construction guidelines for new constructions  
10 and remodels include one gender neutral restroom per blah, blah, blah – people who would be  
11 in the building over time. So we were told that, but every time I try to find it in writing, I've not  
12 been able to find it. You should maybe ask Stef if they've been able to locate that in writing. So  
13 I feel like, "Sure . . ." but we did that push well before the TCF Stadium was built and we did win  
14 a bunch of gender neutral restrooms, so you can see a lot of gender neutral restrooms in the  
15 TCF Stadium.
- 16 AJ: Oh cool, that's awesome.
- 17 OM: So that was, I believe, the first building . . . one of first, or at least the first major building, that  
18 fell under that new construction policy for gender neutral restrooms. We still have a long way  
19 to go with that.
- 20 AJ: Isn't there like a wing of a dorm, or a dorm that's . . .
- 21 OM: Yup. So this fall, I think it was Fall 2014, was the first term . . . no, Fall 2015, was the first term  
22 that undergraduate students have a gender neutral . . . I can't remember if it's gender neutral or  
23 gender open, what the language is, but a housing option where gender is not one of the criteria  
24 used in roommate matching. So I'm not sure how big it is, how many beds it is – I can't  
25 remember off the top of my head, but that happened as part of . . . it was actually a person  
26 named Ben Nielsen who was a hall director in Housing and Residential Life, who really wanted to  
27 work on that and joined the Transgender Commission for some support. We worked together  
28 with Ben to make that happen. And so, I believe that the number of beds will be expanded  
29 going into next fall and, at some point, they're going to allow incoming freshmen that option.  
30 So the compromise that was made in the first year was that this option would only be available  
31 for returning undergraduate students, not for undergraduate students coming directly from high  
32 school – which I don't understand that distinction but that was what it was. So I believe that in  
33 the coming years that also will be taken away and it will be an option for incoming freshmen as  
34 well.
- 35 AJ: Wow, cool.
- 36 OM: Yeah.
- 37 AJ: That's a lot of great work.
- 38 OM: And there's more that I'm not thinking of right now. And Max Gries was one of the first co-  
39 chairs, along with Karin Anderson.

- 1 AJ: Karin Anderson, yeah.
- 2 OM: So they will have a lot to say about it.
- 3 AJ: Oh absolutely. I'm looking forward to speaking with both of them about it.
- 4 OM: MJ Gilbert has been a part of the Transgender Commission since its inception as well.
- 5 AJ: MJ works here on campus.
- 6 OM: She does, she's in Social Work – she's over on the St. Paul campus in Peters Hall.
- 7 AJ: So, we're at the love and relationship question now. How has your gender identity/expression  
8 impacted your romantic life?
- 9 OM: Well, I feel like the first thing I would say is coming out as gender queer and coming into a trans  
10 and gender queer community really opened up my options.
- 11 AJ: Oh wow, OK.
- 12 OM: Actually quite a bit. And I've started . . . my last relationship was a nine-year relationship that  
13 just ended a year ago with another gender queer/trans masculine person. And so, yeah. I  
14 started dating trans people, I guess, is kind of what happened, that was one of the things. I feel  
15 like my romantic relationships or sexual relationships are kind of all over the place and that's a  
16 residual from trauma from growing up. And so, there is a lot to say about that but I'm very  
17 reserved and so I've always been the kind of person who I really need to know someone before  
18 I'm going to get there, so I've never been quick to get in bed with someone or date someone.  
19 I've always known them for a while first. I sometimes just . . . we're really great friends and  
20 sometimes I'll have sex with my friends, but I have to really trust the person with my body and  
21 so in that way, I think, gender but also my size and just mental health stuff, I'm super careful –  
22 probably to a fault, and I end up feeling lonely a lot. It's not easy for me to be vulnerable with  
23 other people. I'm sure that some of that is about my gender identity but it's also all of these  
24 other kinds of things.
- 25 AJ: Right, how do you separate your body image from your gender identity from your physical  
26 health issues – or whatever? Yeah.
- 27 OM: And I think also because I moved here from the east coast and now I don't have contact with my  
28 family there anymore, my high school experience was much better than my grade school  
29 experience, but I'm not super in touch with . . . and most of the folks I am still in touch with that  
30 I went to high school with, don't live there anymore. So I've had this complete sort of  
31 separation from the community of people that knew me before I was trans. And so I don't have  
32 this experience that I hear some of my friends having about past partners getting freaked out  
33 because the gender is different and what does that mean about them. That might be happening,  
34 but I don't know those people anymore and I don't have that communication or those  
35 relationships. Sometimes I think about it and wonder – like, "What does so-and-so think about .  
36 . . .?" Because I dated mostly cis straight men when I lived there and I often wonder what so-and-  
37 so would think about this sort of thing, but I don't actually know. What feels to me like my adult

- 1 relationships started here in Minneapolis and really have been with other queer folks and other  
2 trans folks for the most part.
- 3 AJ: Wow, that's awesome – but at the same time, there's some challenges there too.
- 4 OM: Well, right now the challenge is that I've been single for a year and I don't know how I feel about  
5 if I want to date someone or not, but I would like to explore the possibility and I have no idea  
6 how to start. So, that I think is a challenge. I've tried to . . . people are always telling me, "You  
7 have to do it online now." So I've tried to create profile pages on dating sites and my gender  
8 stuff trips me up. It's not my . . . the way that I have to conform to their things.
- 9 AJ: Right, to their forms.
- 10 OM: To their forms, I haven't been able to complete one yet because I haven't figured out how I  
11 want to present in that kind of a virtual space. You have to answer questions about who do you  
12 want to have access to your profile – men, women, both, queer people. And I'm like, "Well, it  
13 depends." I don't even know how to like answer those questions. It's a challenge in that way,  
14 trying to figure out how to get out there, I guess.
- 15 AJ: What about women? Are you interested in dating women at all?
- 16 OM: Yes, and I have dated . . . so the LGBT folks who aren't trans that I've dated since I moved here  
17 have been femmes – women femmes for the most part. And physically my attraction leans  
18 pretty heavily toward queer femmes.
- 19 AJ: OK.
- 20 OM: I'm feeling weird that this is on camera all of a sudden.
- 21 AJ: This is really fascinating stuff, and it's so nuanced – we don't hear these stories, it's just not a  
22 part of our lexicon, if you will.
- 23 OM: Yeah, that's true.
- 24 AJ: So thank you.
- 25 OM: Yes.
- 26 AJ: When you think about the relationship between the L, the G, and the B, and then the T, what do  
27 you think about? What is the connection?
- 28 OM: The communities?
- 29 AJ: Yeah. Because you use the term queer, which in many ways sort of encompasses all of those.
- 30 OM: That's my intention with the word.
- 31 AJ: Exactly.
- 32 OM: And anyone who identifies as not straight and maybe not with those words. I understand, also,  
33 that some people are offended still by the word queer and that's not my intention to offend  
34 anybody, I'm not trying to call anybody a queer, but queer feels, for me, like the most

1 comfortable and most accurate kind of word to describe who I think of when I think of an LGBT  
 2 community – it's bigger than LGBT to me. So, I believe that all of our oppression stems from the  
 3 same place, it stems from sexism. I understand and live that queer, that trans people  
 4 experience, that oppression, in a very different way and we're under a microscope and our  
 5 visibility as queer, as trans people, becomes a target for that kind of oppression. But I do  
 6 believe that all oppression experienced by queer people, it comes back to gender oppression.  
 7 What I believe is that homophobia is an expression of sexism because it is a gender expectation  
 8 that a woman will be attracted to a man, that is part of her role as a woman is to have sex with  
 9 and be in relationships with men. And so when that doesn't happen, that is defiance of a  
 10 gender expectation. That is transgender to me. If I were to define the word transgender, that's  
 11 not an identity – not the identity transgender, but to transgress gender, that is what's  
 12 happening when someone is a lesbian or someone is gay, even if they are cis. And so to me, the  
 13 tension between . . . I'm going to say LG and then trans folks, and possibly also bi folks and trans  
 14 folks, feels really divisive to me. That tension feels like it's about a tension between wanting to  
 15 assimilate or conform to be able to gain access to privileges and power that might be withheld  
 16 from LGBT folks versus working to challenge that power and privilege would be held for some  
 17 people but not for others. So that is, to me, essentially what that tension is about, even if we  
 18 don't always talk about it that way or name it that way. So I think that in a lot of ways,  
 19 especially visibly trans folks and gender queer folks, visibly gender queer folks, sort of challenge  
 20 the work that mainstream, wealthier white lesbian and gay activists are trying to do because  
 21 really we're fighting against those systems and other folks are fighting to join those systems.

22 AJ: Even though they, as you stated, many of the issues that those folks experience is related to  
 23 gender and sexism.

24 OM: Right. And so if the work that I and others that I work with are trying to do around gender  
 25 liberation overall, if that work is successful then all of that oppression will kind of dissipate,  
 26 including the homophobia, because we'll recognize that it's not OK to put people in those boxes  
 27 by gender in any way, to any extent.

28 AJ: Yeah.

29 OM: So, for me, that's what makes the most logical sense.

30 AJ: I love it. So, last question Owen. I love this expression of working towards . . . I think gender  
 31 liberation, you said. Where do you see the transgender community, if one exists, 50 years from  
 32 now?

33 OM: That's such an awesome question. I think there are multiple transgender communities and . . . I  
 34 mean my hope . . . my hope in 50 years is that we, as trans and gender queer people, can be  
 35 integrated into work that is happening across lots of other forms of oppression as well and that  
 36 we can be seen, that our history of work and leadership in those struggles can be seen, by the  
 37 larger communities, that's one hope that I have. For example, the Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P.  
 38 Johnson folks who really sparked, and the folks at Compton's Cafeteria who really were trans  
 39 women of color, for the most part, who were fighting to survive on the streets in major cities –  
 40 that we can really recognize and honor that the work that folks like that have done and continue  
 41 to do is really revolutionary work that crosses all of those boundaries, that really seeks to

- 1 address things like racism and classism simultaneously with things like gender and sexuality. So  
2 one hope that I have is that we'll be seen and recognized and celebrated - within ourselves,  
3 within our own communities, within LGBT communities more broadly, and with just the world in  
4 general. That our histories will be able to be recognized and validated and seen, that is one  
5 major hope that I have for us. So this project is really important to me.
- 6 AJ: I think that's a big part of helping to create that.
- 7 OM: I think that you're right, I think that we . . . it's in some ways on us as trans folks to try to be  
8 more visible, but in other ways we don't always have the power to do that because we don't  
9 control those processes.
- 10 AJ: Sure.
- 11 OM: Yet. Not that I'm seeking to take control, I'm just seeking for shared power.
- 12 AJ: Absolutely.
- 13 OM: That's another hope that I have. And I hope that we will be able to just stop categorizing people  
14 in only of two ways. I think it's ludicrous to think that of all of the billions of people on earth  
15 that all of our bodies, as vastly different as they might be from one another, have to conform to  
16 one of two gender categories. I mean when you really think about that . . . so my hope is that  
17 our systems will change a little bit to reflect the diversity that already exists and has always  
18 existed among human beings across the world.
- 19 AJ: Always existed.
- 20 OM: So that's another hope I have is that not only we will be recognized but we'll be counted, we'll  
21 count. I would like that for us.
- 22 AJ: Owen, I just want to say thank you for taking the opportunity to sit down and share some really  
23 deeply personal things but some really important, I think, ideas and issues and particularly  
24 information around some of the work that's been happening here on campus and the work that  
25 you've been doing on other campuses around the country. Thank you so much.
- 26 OM: Thank you for the opportunity. I really appreciate it. I hope someday I get to turn the camera  
27 around on you and hear all this about you.
- 28 AJ: One day.
- 29 OM: One day.
- 30 AJ: All right.