

Hayden Mora
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

September 26, 2016



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.

Andrea Jenkins
jenki120@umn.edu
(612) 625-4379

1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 Hayden Mora -HM
3
4
5 AJ: So good morning – still, we have like 10 minutes left.
6 HM: Right.
7 AJ: Good morning, my name is Andrea Jenkins.
8 HM: Good morning, Andrea.
9 AJ: I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project at the Tretter Collection in GLBT
10 Studies at the University of Minnesota.
11 HM: Very cool. It's a pleasure to be chatting with you this morning.
12 AJ: The pleasure is all mine. Today is September 26, 2016. I am in the nation's capital.
13 HM: My home.
14 AJ: Washington, DC, and we're at Potter's House, I believe.
15 HM: That's right.
16 AJ: Which is an amazing bookstore, coffee house, event space, community space.
17 HM: Community space, yes. That's right.
18 AJ: Hayden, how are you doing?
19 HM: I'm doing pretty good, my friend. I'm very happy to be here with you this morning. It's a lovely
20 fall day, I think it's the first week of fall so things are finally cooling down. We've got some
21 things at the White House later today.
22 AJ: Yeah, that's kind of exciting.
23 HM: Yeah. So it's good, it's a good Monday.
24 AJ: Right, wow. Hayden, why don't we just start with you stating your name, spelling it so that we
25 make sure that we have that spelled correctly in the documentation, state your gender as you
26 claim it today, your gender assigned at birth, and your pronouns?
27 HM: Got it, let's see here. Hayden Mora, so H-a-y-d-e-n M-o-r-a. My gender is male, I was assigned
28 female at birth, and I use he/him/his pronouns. Although sometimes, I believe that gurl, g-u-r-l,
29 is gender neutral.
30 AJ: OK.
31 HM: So I also answer to that.
32 AJ: OK, cool. I go by gurl – g-u-r-l.
33 HM: Yeah, I think.

- 1 AJ: There's also grrl, g-r-r-l.
- 2 HM: Yes.
- 3 AJ: It's sort of queer.
- 4 HM: It's all right, I'm open to it.
- 5 AJ: Yeah. So I'm just so thrilled to have this opportunity to talk to you, Hayden, as one of the
6 leaders in the political realm of the transgender movement. And your proximity here to some of
7 our nation's most powerful policymakers and many of the organizations that are fighting for
8 equality throughout the country. It's an honor and pleasure.
- 9 HM: Right back at you.
- 10 AJ: Hayden, just to get us sort of digging a little deep here . . .
- 11 HM: Yes, lets.
- 12 AJ: . . . tell me, what is your earliest memory in life.
- 13 HM: Wooo, my earliest memory in life? Let's see here. I think my earliest memory . . . so I grew up in
14 East Boston.
- 15 AJ: East Boston. OK.
- 16 HM: East Boston, in a working class, poor family. We were on welfare, waiting on Section 8, and I
17 remember spilling milk. We had these ghastly orange linoleum floors and I think that I was not
18 supposed to be trying to get my own milk but I was, and I remember sort of struggling with the
19 carton and watching the milk wash over the cup and thinking, "I'm in trouble." But, yeah, that's
20 probably my earliest memory. I don't know what happened before and I don't know what
21 happened after.
- 22 AJ: Because milk is kind of a . . .
- 23 HM: I know, it's rich – it's multilayered.
- 24 AJ: Yeah.
- 25 HM: That's why I go to therapy.
- 26 AJ: Wow.
- 27 HM: So yeah, spilling milk.
- 28 AJ: Well, don't cry over the spilled milk.
- 29 HM: I feel OK about it, I don't know how everyone else felt about it at the time, but I was OK.
- 30 AJ: How many siblings?

- 1 HM: To my knowledge, I have two sisters and a brother. Two of them kind of cycled between . . . or
2 for many years, cycled between missing rehab and jail. The other one is pretty stable but I'm
3 pretty distant from my family.
- 4 AJ: Is that right?
- 5 HM: Yes, but to my knowledge . . .
- 6 AJ: Is that related to your gender identity?
- 7 HM: Yeah, for sure. I think it's related to a lot of different things. For me, trying to build a healthy,
8 happy, functional life . . .
- 9 AJ: You needed to pull away a little bit?
- 10 HM: Yeah, at a certain point I realized I only have so much energy and I wanted to put it into places
11 where I got energy back. I was always really different from my family – I was queer, I was lefty, I
12 was many, many things. But when my stepdad passed away, I think in some ways it gave me
13 permission to finally come out as trans and I took a step back from my family and that has
14 remained true for a couple years now.
- 15 AJ: Wow. Tell me a little bit about elementary school and . . .
- 16 HM: Hugh Roe O'Donnell Elementary School in East Boston.
- 17 AJ: Hugh . . .
- 18 HM: I think it was Hugh Roe O'Donnell Elementary School in East Boston, Massachusetts.
- 19 AJ: Can you spell?
- 20 HM: I don't know.
- 21 AJ: H-u-g-h R-o-e or something.
- 22 HM: I think, I'll Google it later. I think it was R-o-e O'Donnell, yeah I think so. Elementary school? I
23 was a weird kid. I had a denim jacket – bright blue and yellow. Those were East-y colors, I had
24 my name embroidered on it.
- 25 AJ: Right.
- 26 HM: Got into a lot of fights, I was a really smart, smart kid, but also in trouble all the time. And,
27 always saw school, elementary school included, as an escape, like a place that was . . . I don't
28 know, I felt much more seen there. I had close relationships with a number of teachers. Yeah,
29 so I was in trouble a lot but also got a lot of validation for being smart, testing well or whatever.
30 And I think it actually felt safer than home in many ways.
- 31 AJ: Did you . . . were you sort of male-identified in school or at least maybe not using that label but
32 . . . a tomboy, for lack of a better term?
- 33 HM: I didn't have language for it, but yes I was a tomboy, I was always in sort of dingy dungarees,
34 despite my mother's desperate attempts to keep me clean – sort of covered in mud and playing

- 1 with the boys. That was actually one of the core conflicts with my mom was around my gender
2 expression. I think it was in elementary school that I started packing a backpack full of boy's
3 clothes that I could change into when I got there.
- 4 AJ: Is that right?
- 5 HM: Yeah.
- 6 AJ: Did she send you to school in plaid skirts and . . .?
- 7 HM: Dresses, the whole thing. And there was a lot . . . there was a very complicated dynamic in my
8 family but the most difficult part of it, for me, growing up was the insistence that I dress like a
9 girl, be a girl. And I think for my mom, in her own way, she thought that I needed to do that to
10 be safe. I think her belief is that if a cis gendered woman doesn't attract a man that she can
11 never be safe or stable. I think she thought, for her little girl, if she didn't start behaving or
12 conforming in a certain way that she'd never be safe. That fueled a real intensity to her
13 rejection of my gender expression and identity.
- 14 AJ: Wow. You talked a little bit about home environment, two parents in the house?
- 15 HM: Nope, dad was a bookie. Dad was an undercover cop and then dad was a bookie, then dad got
16 arrested twice by the same undercover cop. My dad was really good with numbers, that's what
17 I'll say. And so he . . . my parents got divorced but he was in jail most of my life growing up and
18 then he . . . he was HIV-positive and actually got out of jail the first week of my sophomore year
19 of college, and was actually killed in a police chase . . . which is just to say my dad was pretty out
20 of the picture. My mom met my stepdad in a bar she worked at and married him in Vegas and
21 we moved to the Florida Keys at a certain point for a few years, it was quite a detour.
- 22 AJ: That was different from East Boston.
- 23 HM: We lived in a house on the water, we lived right on the ocean. It was really quite different. So
24 for most of my life, it was just my mom and then when I was about 12 or 13, until I left home, it
25 was my stepdad.
- 26 AJ: But your siblings are from the earlier marriage?
- 27 HM: I was an accident. Yeah, my dad told my mom he couldn't have kids – they are Roman Catholic
28 and Italian. So, it turns out, when I came along my siblings were much older than me. I grew up
29 with their Rolling Stones albums and paraphernalia, but they were long gone out of the house.
- 30 AJ: *Brown Sugar* . . .
- 31 HM: Oh yes, I told you . . . no, I grew up pretty much like an only child.
- 32 AJ: OK. How have your siblings sort of dealt with your gender transition?
- 33 HM: It's hard to say, I haven't given them much of an opportunity in some ways. My brother, David –
34 lots of good things about David, but struggled with heroin for many, many years and we've just
35 never . . . I think the last time I saw David, we were at a pawn shop, I'm not sure why, but that
36 was about 15 years old. So that was a long time ago. My sister, Chrissy, she's been in recovery

1 but on Methadone for many years. She was definitely struggling with active addiction when I
2 was a little kid. She's pretty physically abusive and verbally abusive, and even though she's
3 worked to make amends, I've taken a big step back. And then my sister, Debbie, is sort of the
4 one that got away, in a good way, in my family, and created a safe space for herself, but when I
5 came out as . . . unlike being queer, when I came out as queer it was a transition period – like
6 college, whatever, whatever. But I had been queer for many, many years before I came out as
7 trans, I was in my early 30s. I had also just gotten sober and it was a very fragile time – I felt
8 very fragile, more fragile than I had felt in years. I just felt like I couldn't have anyone near me
9 that could hurt me and might be likely to hurt me. Even though my sister Debbie was, is, an
10 amazing person and a huge part of why I survived in many ways, she also had a very definitive
11 view of who she thought I was. I remember when I told her I was an alcoholic, which was a big
12 deal for me, her first words were, "You're not an alcoholic."

13 AJ: You're just from Boston.

14 HM: That's right. And it turns out that just because my sort of alcoholism looks different than my
15 family's alcoholism, I was just the first functional alcoholic in a long line of dysfunction. So I just
16 felt like I needed some distance. The only reactions I remember was Debbie found out, I think
17 on Facebook, and she started sending me these really intense text messages – lengthy, lengthy
18 text messages, saying you're clearly on hormones and this is very dangerous, you're making this
19 all about you – to which I ultimately replied, "This actually is all about me." And took some
20 distance. So that's really the last that I heard. My mother recently wrote me a card addressed
21 to Hayden, so that is the name that I use. Some progress.

22 AJ: Yeah.

23 HM: Progress, not perfection.

24 AJ: I have a poem in my latest book called Mama Calls me Anna, which is . . . that's kind of a big deal
25 with parents, particularly mothers, who are able to sort of make that transition.

26 HM: We talked about that spilled milk, it's clearly an issue. Moms, I think, are such a huge deal – and
27 it's strange, it's almost like . . . I did the same thing when I came out as queer. I essentially just
28 took a huge step back and I sort of said, "I won't be in your life unless you can hang with this."
29 I've sort of done that, I've repeated that in a more dramatic way coming out as trans – which in
30 some ways is very sad, so that exchange of sort of my mother's acceptance has been done
31 almost completely non-verbally and with very little context – literally, a card. So it's kind of . . .

32 AJ: It's a step.

33 HM: It's a step, that's right – I recognize progress in all forms.

34 AJ: When did you first realize, Hayden, that you were not the gender you were assigned at birth?

35 HM: Good question. I was the first person in my family to go to college and I remember being . . .

36 AJ: Where did you go to college?

- 1 HM: Brandeis, just outside of Boston. I remember in my sort of queer studies and gender identity
2 and my critical theory English classes, all the narratives around trans people that I encountered
3 were folks that said, "I knew when I was three." And that really wasn't my story and sometimes
4 I wonder if I had a limited amount of imagination and I needed to distribute my imagination in a
5 way that was focused on getting out of poverty, abusive home life, and I just . . . I was a bit of a
6 realist in some ways and I never imagined like that was possible for me.
- 7 AJ: Sure.
- 8 HM: So it wasn't . . . I knew I was a tomboy, or different, and when I found the identity of butch dyke
9 or butch lesbian, it was sort of, "Well, this is good enough," right? This was good enough to sort
10 of walk the world, date who I want to date, be sort of seen. And it wasn't until I got sober when
11 I was 31, that I started thinking about the issue of gender identity and expression. There was a
12 moment where I was like, "Ugh, I'm Jewish, I'm a leftist, I'm a socialist, how many marginalized
13 identities do I want to pile on here?" And then I just thought, you know, in this sort of search
14 for authenticity and happiness, you may as well go for broke, right? And so I decided to explore
15 and I encountered narratives on the internet and excerpts in books that were a little bit more
16 like mine and I sort of slowly moved into the identity. But I'd say, for a long time what kept me
17 from fully claiming sort of myself was I didn't think I was allowed because I didn't have that
18 narrative of, "When I was 3 years old . . ." So I thought, "Well, that's for someone else."
- 19 AJ: That's interesting, that sort of trans identity has become this singular narrative – though it's not,
20 which is why we are doing this particular project is to really expand the narrative of trans
21 identities.
- 22 HM: Yeah, and I think that's so important because, I tell you, if I had encountered trans folks that
23 were like me or trans folks that were unlike me but that taught me that there wasn't just one
24 way to be, it could have saved me maybe 12 or 13 years of struggle. So I'm very thankful for this
25 project – yeah.
- 26 AJ: Well, I'm glad you were able to come to that recognition for your truer identity, if you will. And
27 then, I mean I don't know how you sort of feel about it, but it doesn't negate who you were
28 before . . .
- 29 HM: For sure, that's right – yeah.
- 30 AJ: . . . it's just a revelation of the broader you.
- 31 HM: That's right, I totally agree with that assessment.
- 32 AJ: And hopefully I'm not putting words in your mouth.
- 33 HM: No, no – it's funny, my partner is a therapist and she's very affirming, and we had a conversation
34 just a couple of months ago where I realized that . . . I was a lesbian for 18 years and I process
35 everything. We process, we have t-talk once a week – she leads and talks about my blah, blah.
36 But despite a lot of communication and a ton of skills and access, I realized in this conversation
37 that somehow she had come to believe that she could never reference my life being socialized
38 as a woman, or moving through the world as a woman, ever – and if she did, she would

1 somehow negate my identity. And I finally said, “Georgie, that just sounds exhausting.” I
2 couldn’t even . . . I can’t do that.

3 AJ: I can’t do that.

4 HM: I’m like, “I was there, I’m OK.” And it was such a relief for her to be able to bring in that part of
5 my life, some of which she knew me for. So, I say that just to say, “Yeah, for me, this is part of
6 my journey and it’s a continual process of coming more fully into my authentic self.”

7 AJ: Sure. Wow. What challenges have you sort of encountered on this journey, particularly since
8 you have become more fully Hayden?

9 HM: Yeah, challenges. I think in the beginning, you know, I worked really hard to find . . . I did a lot of
10 work to be able to get myself to go to therapy. I think therapy is a good thing. I had a great
11 therapist, but she just didn’t have the sort of analysis or consciousness or knowledge to help me
12 navigate this part of my journey. And that was really, really challenging. She had a very sort of
13 way too essentialist, feminist notion of gender and she, in the beginning, I think kept trying to
14 get me to love myself as me as a woman – well intentioned, but really harmful. So that was a
15 challenge. Family stuff was a challenge, but in some ways being able to step away from my
16 family so I could fully come out and I could live my life was a long time coming, blessing. So it
17 was a good thing. You know, it’s not like when I came out as queer in that it’s a very public
18 experience. You start taking “t”, or I started taking “t” in this case, your body starts to change,
19 there was sort of this desire to run away to a cave for a couple of years and come back on the
20 other side. And so, particularly in the sort of more in-between phases . . . in so many ways, I had
21 moved through the world in a way that just said, “Don’t look at me, pay attention to my words,
22 watch me dazzle you with my brilliant presentation and charisma, but just don’t look at me –
23 God, don’t look at me.” I just felt like I would die if anybody looked at me. Coming out as trans
24 and transitioning medically, as I made the decision to do, means people do look at you, and that
25 was excruciating – constantly excruciating. Sometimes folks were looking, but most of the time
26 they weren’t, but for me, I was just so hyper aware of those physical transitions and that
27 experience – and there was that period where the sales clerk says, “Sir,” and the person putting
28 stuff in the bag says, “Ma’am.” You just sort of white knuckle through that and hope someone .
29 . . you know, they won’t mis-gender you. I was in my 30s, my last job had been running a \$50
30 million political program, I was used to having a lot of confidence in a lot of ways, and it was
31 strange to have these simple daily interactions just be so devastating, you know, because my
32 sense of self, which I had cocooned and hidden and compartmentalized for so long, suddenly it
33 was front and center. With my partner, who identifies as a queer woman, sort of going through
34 that experience and figuring out what does my transition mean for her identity, for our
35 relationship, so that was hard, but I am very lucky to have someone who loves me very much
36 and is a great communicator and willing to work through those things. I’d say today, look I’m a
37 middle class white trans guy, one of the first things that happened to me when I transitioned
38 was I started making \$40,000 more a year. And so having a . . .

39 AJ: Maybe I should become a white trans guy.

40 HM: Transitioning into privilege, I’m just saying. But, learning . . . I socialized as a woman, moved
41 through the world as a woman, as a feminist, have an analysis and being on the other side of

1 that is just often a very strange experience. But within the broader context of the trans
2 community, it's relatively difficult to get me into the 1%, but coming out as trans did that
3 immediately.

4 AJ: Wow.

5 HM: I am surrounded by people that I love and some of the most brilliant, resilient, impactful people
6 I've ever been near that are trans and that are living on the edge, in every possible way. Two
7 weeks ago I was coming out of a work meeting and I ran into these three young Black trans girls
8 here in DC who I know, and they didn't have a safe place to go that night. I know, my cell phone
9 has city council members and attorneys and policy makers and the EDs of all the orgs, and I
10 could figure out a place to get them for that evening but I could not fix the structural issues at
11 work that led to them not having a place to go. So I got them a safe place for a couple of nights,
12 but a couple of them . . . two of the three of them are HIV-positive, they didn't have access to
13 their meds. I couldn't figure out how to get a voucher for them. So I say all of that to say that
14 what's challenging now, I think, is just figuring out how to navigate that reality in a way that has
15 integrity and honors the sort of love and authenticity . . . authentic love that I feel for my friends
16 and for my community.

17 AJ: Wow. How do you work on those structural issues, Hayden? And, I guess, specifically talk to me
18 about Trans United.

19 HM: Sure, yeah. It's a pleasure. Well Trans United is a 501c and 501c4 organization. I came out of
20 the labor movement, I spent 11 years in the labor movement, and one of the most powerful
21 experiences that I had was folks coming together across difference – not erasing those
22 differences or weren't living in a post-racialized world doing a union organizing drive in
23 Louisiana. But rather, through struggle and through coming to know each other, seeing and
24 understanding our differences, our different experiences and what they've meant, coming to
25 love one another, and coming to really realize the power that we had collectively. The union
26 movement really radicalized me and really taught me, showed me, how folks who everyone else
27 discounted, actually had tremendous power if we could unlearn the racism, the misogyny, the
28 xenophobia, all the shit that gets in the way that divides us. So sort of take that lesson, and if
29 we did that, we could take on the biggest, most powerful orgs in the country and we could win.
30 And so, applying that lens to sort of the trans community – you know, our community faces
31 tremendous trauma, we're tremendously fragmented. You hear the phrase, as we do in many
32 oppressed communities – crabs in a barrel, all the time. One of us gets up, we reach up and pull
33 them down.

34 AJ: And fifteen people try to pull you down – like crabs or whatever the analogy is.

35 HM: That's right, whatever it is. It's because we come from such a place of feeling as though we are
36 living in scarcity and there's only one or two safe spaces for a few of us, so we sort of have to
37 get ours. The purpose of Trans United is to try to create an alternative framework and another
38 way of being. So it brings together trans leaders across demographic identity, across
39 experience, across regions, across political areas of focus, and it brings us together to have one
40 unified and strong voice on the issues that matter to us. And so, on the political side, the last
41 two years have been full of reports on explicitly anti-trans legislation, bathroom bills.

- 1 AJ: Sure.
- 2 HM: But to me, it's issues like HIV, issues like AIDS, issues like violence, criminalization. Those are
3 political issues, those are . . .
- 4 AJ: Precarious housing.
- 5 HM: All of it – poverty. Those are the results in large part of choices that people have made, a lot of
6 those folks . . . a lot of those people are politicians that folks have elected. And if the trans
7 community is going to have any say over these issues – HIV, AIDS, violence, criminalization,
8 housing, poverty, and bathroom bills, then we've got to have political power, and that's what
9 Trans United is about. It's about building a political power – trans folks, our allies, our families,
10 folks that love us and everyone on, as our friends at HRC would say, the right side of history.
- 11 AJ: OK.
- 12 HM: That's the political side and then the c3 side is about building organization and leadership. We
13 have these incredible leaders, predominantly trans women of color, that are out there doing a
14 mix of advocacy and direct service, they're saving lives every single day. They have almost no
15 access to formal or informal capital, relationships, grants, technical assistance. Our job, and our
16 responsibility, is to knock those doors down and bring those resources to bear and to support
17 that leadership.
- 18 AJ: Wow.
- 19 HM: It's the best work I've ever done, hands down.
- 20 AJ: And how did Trans United form?
- 21 HM: Well, the real story is, in part, that one of the only things that makes me any good at the work is
22 that I've talked a lot to different folks. A lot of times those different folks don't talk to each
23 other and often they have judgments around each other.
- 24 AJ: Sure.
- 25 HM: And I spent a long time trying to get different leaders in the trans community to see the same
26 brilliance that I saw in them in one another, and I failed. And, there's a woman, for example, in
27 this country that does incredible work with queer trans youth that are really living on the
28 economic margins – so she's doing more direct service work. She happens to be a trans woman
29 of color. There's another woman who's a trans leader in our movement who focuses on policy
30 work. Both of these women are brilliant, they are miraculous. Their impact is almost
31 immeasurable. Of course they have flaws, just like you and just like me.
- 32 AJ: Absolutely, they're humans, right?
- 33 HM: But I spent years . . . that's right, they're still human beings. They're miraculous and I could get
34 them to see the brilliance in each other. I really feel like if we, as a community – if the trans
35 movement, trans communities, if we're going to come together and really change things, we've
36 got to be able to see one another, appreciate one another, and work together. I couldn't do
37 that in my individual life, I couldn't do that . . . I just hated it. So instead I tried to, along with

- 1 many other brilliant folks, yourself included, create a structure where collectively we could
2 create a space and create the conditions where we could see each other and appreciate each
3 other, work together, and aggregate the power that we do have collectively as a community.
4 That's really where it came from.
- 5 AJ: Wow, that's a good story. A little bit more personal, and you've mentioned a little bit about
6 this, but to the extent that you feel comfortable, what medical interventions have you
7 experienced on your way to becoming Hayden?
- 8 HM: I've been on "t" for a number of years now.
- 9 AJ: Testosterone?
- 10 HM: Testosterone, yes – that's right. And I have not had any surgical interventions – top surgery,
11 because I'm a baby, but actually because . . . you know, you want to . . . or I want to sort of be at
12 a certain fitness level when I have top surgery and what I'd say is I'm very lucky – I'm the
13 managing partner in a firm. At night I get to leave work and the community that I love, but
14 figuring out the balance between the work that economically sustains me, the movement work
15 that spiritually nurtures me – my partner, health and fitness, is a challenge. And so, I haven't
16 been in a place where I have felt healthy and fit in the way that I want to be to get top surgery.
17 And then bottom surgery, what can I tell you Andrea? If I'm going to pay \$100,000, I want it to
18 be nine inches and to dance on command – right now, it's extensive, it's dangerous, it's . . .
- 19 AJ: And that's probably not a reality.
- 20 HM: No, I think it's because it's mostly cis gendered men that are surgeons and they're like, "This is
21 too miraculous to ever re-create in a lab." But, in all seriousness, I think that different trans men
22 and masculine of center folks make different decisions, but for me, so it's a level of risk and
23 expense, and then the best case scenario don't line up to make it feel really possible for me, in
24 some ways. So, for now, we'll put that on the counter.
- 25 AJ: But if the Superman cock does emerge . . .
- 26 HM: Yes, I'm telling you – nine inches, it dances, \$100,00 . . . I'll find it.
- 27 AJ: You're going for it.
- 28 HM: I'm a great fundraiser. That's right, you can use this footage.
- 29 AJ: Thank you so much for your honesty.
- 30 HM: Of course, we've got to talk about it.
- 31 AJ: I know that that is a sensitive question, particularly . . . genital surgeries and all of that does not
32 determine the person who we are.
- 33 HM: Yes.
- 34 AJ: But I do think it's sort of important to talk about.

- 1 HM: Oh yeah, and it's so culturally charged. It's part of why there's so much transphobia particularly
2 among friends of mine who identify as butch lesbian, in part because as a butch dyke you're told
3 your whole life, "Essentially you just want a dick, right?" So then if you come out as trans and
4 you say, "Actually I do identify as male," it's almost as if, at some level, from an archetype
5 perspective, I think some people feel like they're betraying the sort of community they were a
6 part of and they're almost sort of signing off on that sort of critique of identity. Yeah, it's super
7 charged and it's super challenging. We've got to be able to talk about it.
- 8 AJ: Well I appreciate it.
- 9 HM: Yeah. Because I've got nine dicks at home, every size – it just depends. On Tuesdays to the left .
10 . . it's not like I don't have options.
- 11 AJ: So you've got the one you want.
- 12 HM: That's right, I'm just saying.
- 13 AJ: Or you have several of the ones that you want . . .
- 14 HM: It's abundance economy at my house, that's all I'm saying. That's right. But still, I'm
15 aspirational.
- 16 AJ: I hear you. Was there a specific moment, person, organization that has had a significant impact
17 on your gender transition? Like was there one dude that you met that was like, "Wow, that's
18 me"?
- 19 HM: You know, the first trans person that I ever even . . . I think this speaks to my desperation to
20 myself somewhere, the first trans folks I ever, ever met that had a career, did similar work to the
21 work that I did – Donna Cartwright, who is an older white trans woman in the labor movement.
22 I met her through Pride at Work and that was enough for me to give myself permission to come
23 out. I just thought like, "Oh, you can have a career in this movement, you can do the stuff that I
24 love and want to do." I just had never seen that – so Donna Cartwright. She's a labor organizer
25 and leader with Pride at Work, she lives in Maryland.
- 26 AJ: And a trans woman.
- 27 HM: Yup. I just needed a little bit more information and then I took it. Yeah. No, I didn't meet . . .
28 and that's one of the challenges too, is coming out as professionally trans.
- 29 AJ: Right.
- 30 HM: And it's something that I've had to work really hard at, which is to sort of anchor myself in
31 community with other trans – trans men, trans masculine of center folks that are peers. There's
32 not a lot of organizing and infrastructure around trans masculinity and trans men, I think that's
33 something that's just beginning to get built.
- 34 AJ: Even, I mean there was like *Original Plumbing*.
- 35 HM: Which I used to call spare parts . . .
- 36 AJ: Spare parts.

- 1 HM: By accident and everyone gets so mad. I told you about my drawer.
- 2 AJ: Yeah.
- 3 HM: I mean I think *Original Plumbing* is a great example but, you know, there is very few either brick
4 or mortar or very few . . . this is changing, but very few places or spaces for trans men and trans
5 masculine identified folks. There's even less for gender non-binary and gender diverse and
6 gender expansive folks. And again, I think that's beginning to change. Here in DC there is a
7 young Black trans guy named Achim Howard, who is putting together a group called Trans Men
8 Rising; Carter Brown, down in Texas, Black Transmen, Inc. So it's out there but . . .
- 9 AJ: I think about Jamison Green who started FTM International or something.
- 10 HM: I don't know about the international, but maybe I should call him. It sounds fancy.
- 11 AJ: It has waned, this was quite a while ago. But it still exists.
- 12 HM: Yeah, I'm sure it's out there, there's definitely stuff out there and we just have to . . . we're just
13 building the infrastructure of this community.
- 14 AJ: Man, your eyes really lit up when you were talking about your partner?
- 15 HM: Oh yeah, she's great.
- 16 AJ: I think you mentioned to me that you're engaged.
- 17 HM: Yes.
- 18 AJ: How long have you guys been together?
- 19 HM: We have been together for four years. Before that, we had known each other for two years, we
20 had become best friends.
- 21 AJ: So did you know your partner through transition or . . .?
- 22 HM: Yeah, my partner knew me as Lori. I had long hair and I identified as a woman. That's how we
23 got to know each other, and that's how we started dating actually.
- 24 AJ: Really?
- 25 HM: It was within the first . . . my partner was the first person I told. Georgie was the first person I
26 told. We were at the same place, actually, that I asked her to marry me and we were having
27 coffee. I sort of blurted out, "I think I might be trans," and she said, "Yeah, that makes sense."
- 28 AJ: Oh wow.
- 29 HM: She knew, but yeah. And that's something that we've worked on together.
- 30 AJ: So you transitioned in relationship.
- 31 HM: Yes, yes.
- 32 AJ: That's incredible.

- 1 HM: I'm very lucky. She's a therapist, she's super committed. We worked really hard on the
2 foundation of our relationship around communication and creating space for one another, we
3 read books together, we chat for 90 minutes a week about it. We have t-talk and . . .
- 4 AJ: T as in trans?
- 5 HM: Or testosterone. She had a lot of fears. I remember when I first started transitioning, I was
6 going to the gym a lot, I was taking "t" and I could tell that she didn't like that I was going to the
7 gym and I was like, "Who doesn't like that I'm going to the gym? This is a miracle." And so I was
8 like, "Baby, it seems like you don't like it when I go to the gym." And I realized she had this idea
9 that since I had started taking "t" that I was sort of this juiced-up Superman that just needed to
10 hit the weights or I would hit someone.
- 11 AJ: Right.
- 12 HM: Like I was sort of barbarian that suddenly was going to see her in this hyper-gendered way in
13 which I objectified and de-humanized her not in a nice way and desperately needed to go to the
14 gym to get out all that aggression. I was like, "Baby doll, there's a part of me that wishes that
15 was true, but I've got a mix tape to get me motivated, I've got my Red Bull, I'm still barely
16 getting to Equinox, let's be real here." But there was this perception that testosterone would
17 change me into sort of rigidly masculine stereotype, which has some appeal, but we really had
18 to talk through that. It was intense, and there still are moments with things that come up that
19 can be triggering for her. But yeah, we worked through it.
- 20 AJ: That's beautiful. I love that – t-time.
- 21 HM: Yeah, every week. Come on over, we have guest speakers.
- 22 AJ: OK. Oh really, OK.
- 23 HM: Panel discussion next week.
- 24 AJ: Wow, that's hilarious. The first time I met you, Hayden, you were an employee at the Human
25 Rights Campaign.
- 26 HM: That's right.
- 27 AJ: And I was a little skeptical at that moment.
- 28 HM: Fair enough.
- 29 AJ: But you were really trying to move things at HRC.
- 30 HM: Yeah.
- 31 AJ: HRC and, quite frankly, the broader LG community, has had, let's just say some difficult
32 moments relating to the trans community.
- 33 HM: Yup.
- 34 AJ: What do you think the relationship is between the L, the G, B and the T?

- 1 HM: Well, I think it's complicated. I think it's a truth to be made rather than revealed. I think we're
2 in a moment of tremendous uncertainty and plasticity in terms of how our community, broadly
3 envisioned, what we will become and how we will relate to one another. Before HRC I was in
4 the labor movement for 11 years. I went to HRC, in part, because I tried to figure out where
5 could I have the most dramatic impact on the movement. I thought this institution, \$50 million
6 a year budget, is a giant in the LGBTQ community context and if we can shift them a few inches
7 to the left, it's like shifting Wal-Mart, you have consequences all the way down the line. I'd say
8 that I think my greatest failing as an organizer, and this example I think is relevant to your
9 broader question, was what the labor movement taught me was there's nothing wrong with
10 self-interest, which is to say I didn't start talking to white workers in rural Louisiana about cross-
11 racial solidarity or gender parity or equity. I started talking to them about wages and benefits.
- 12 AJ: Right, because that's what matters to them.
- 13 HM: That's right, that's what is right there. And that's real. So there's nothing wrong with self-
14 interest and by extension, there's nothing wrong talking to white cis gendered gay men who are
15 middle class, upper middle class, about marriage. It's important, it matters to them. Right? I'm
16 for that. But the challenge and the problem and the missed opportunity is when that's where
17 we stop the conversation.
- 18 AJ: Right.
- 19 HM: And I think the missed opportunity at the Human Rights Campaign and other places is, we get
20 folks attention around self-interest, we organize around self-interest, but then we use that as an
21 opportunity to create a transformative experience where we learn about others. I think about
22 trans women of color and I believe trans men, HIV and AIDS, and the generation of older gay
23 men who survived the 1980s right now, there is nobody in the world that can better see or
24 understand what is happening for this community, than those men. I mean, it is . . . it might be
25 2016 according to the calendar, but it is like 1982 for trans folks with HIV and Aids. Right?
- 26 AJ: Right.
- 27 HM: Inhibitors, prep, pep, that is a whole box of unicorns that have got nothing to do with real life,
28 there is no access . . . those drug cocktails, prevention, all of it – none of that is real. I say that
29 just to say here are two communities that are radically different on the surface, but actually
30 have a profound intimate and unique shared experience and if we create opportunities for us to
31 see one another, I believe that those much maligned older white gay men would show up and
32 be there and act in solidarity. But, we have to create opportunities and spaces to get folks the
33 information and create opportunities to build relationships. I mean, that's part of the work that
34 I do, that I want to do with Trans United and other places, but it's also . . . what is that movie
35 with Will Smith? Was it *Hitch*? You come 90, I come 10. Do you know what I'm talking about?
- 36 AJ: Yeah.
- 37 HM: What I'm saying is that for groups like the Human Rights Campaign and others, I think they have
38 a tremendous responsibility to come 90, which is to say to do better work, to deepen their
39 understanding of the issues that are facing the trans community – not as observers on a field

- 1 trip but by folks who are inextricably bound up with our community but also employing more
2 trans folks in leadership roles and decision-making roles and executive roles.
- 3 AJ: Sure.
- 4 HM: I'm still the only trans person that has ever even been on the executive team of the Human
5 Rights Campaign, and that's unacceptable and that's got to change.
- 6 AJ: Why did you leave?
- 7 HM: Oh, why did I leave? That's a great question. I have some documents . . . no. I left for a couple
8 different reasons – two that I'll share. The first, at a certain point, I think, I ran up against the
9 framework of the institution and so I was able to move over a quarter of a million dollars to
10 trans-led, POC-led, sometimes trans POC-led organizations. I was able to start employer
11 resource groups, gender queer, non-binary, folks of color, etc. I was able to make a lot of
12 changes – but only so many changes. At the end of the day, I just ran up against the model of
13 HRC and I didn't want to spend most of my life translating the urgency and the life and death
14 reality of my community to people that were different than my community, who sometimes got
15 it and sometimes didn't, and the consequence of which way they went was dramatic. I didn't
16 want to spend my life as a translator, I wanted to spend my life as a builder and architect. And,
17 the other reason is that the truth is, and I think that this is relevant maybe perhaps for other
18 trans folks in these institutions, I just got so tired. I just got so tired of trying to make the case of
19 trying to explain that it's not that trans folks didn't care about ENDA, that employment non-
20 discrimination was a nice idea, but if we just look at the evidence and the data, these folks had
21 never been employed, would not have the opportunity to be employed. So we like ENDA like
22 we like unicorns. It sounds like a nice idea, but right now we are trying to figure out where
23 we're going to eat next.
- 24 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 25 HM: And it was just exhausting. I let myself become exhausted and I couldn't move in the space as
26 my best self and sort of be who I wanted to be in that sort of constant state of conflict. And so I
27 wanted to try to create a different sort of space for myself.
- 28 AJ: Some burn-out.
- 29 HM: Yeah, and those are choices I made. And that's the thing is that, for me, that translation work is
30 really important, but it's not the work that I want to do every day. I want to be building
31 infrastructure led by trans folks for trans folks, working in ally ship and coordination with others.
32 But I want to be building rather than begging – most of the time.
- 33 AJ: Well I have to say, you look healthy and happier.
- 34 HM: I am so much happier. I mean, I'll tell you this – this is some of the hardest work I've ever done
35 and it's the best work I've ever done. I've done a lot of different organizing, but the work with
36 Trans United and the work with leaders around the country . . . it's just incredible. I mean these
37 folks are doing such incredible work, and even if it's 11:30pm and I'm tired and Georgie is
38 upstairs, when I get off the phone I feel more filled up and more excited because these folks are

- 1 doing . . . I mean, they're just . . . the work they're doing isn't just changing lives, it's literally,
2 technically actually measurably saving lives and changing the world for all of us. So, anyway, it's
3 the best work I've ever done.
- 4 AJ: So, I've asked this question of everybody I've interviewed, but you are probably more informed
5 to answer this question just based on your involvement with groups like Trans United, and being
6 sort of in the seat of sort of policy wonkiness that is Washington, DC.
- 7 HM: Yes.
- 8 AJ: What is the agenda for the trans community and what do you think the agenda should be going
9 forward?
- 10 HM: Well, you know this, Andrea, there's not really a trans community, per se. There are a series . . .
11 there are multiple communities that identify under the broad umbrella of trans. They have
12 different, I would argue related, interests. The prioritization of those interests has caused some
13 tension and I think that's OK and we should acknowledge it. For me, I believe in . . . when you
14 think about the agenda, I think about what's our theory of change . . . so just to back up, for me
15 the theory of change is if we organize for the most, for and with, the most marginalized and if
16 we changed conditions for and with the most marginalized, it just turns out we make things
17 better for everyone.
- 18 AJ: But not just the trans community, but everyone.
- 19 HM: That's right. So if black, queer, HIV positive trans women and girls and non-binary folks, are
20 safe, have access to health care, are not by virtue of their identity condemned to a life of risk
21 and poverty, then life is better for everybody including the white cis gendered gay men with an
22 HRC backpack you still gets called faggot when he walks down the street.
- 23 AJ: Right.
- 24 HM: In his neighborhood, because he doesn't present in the way that is expected of a rigidly
25 masculine person. So, you asked me about the agenda and I said . . .
- 26 AJ: So it's around gender expression?
- 27 HM: Yeah, it turns out we all have one. And so the trans agenda, so (1) I'd said multiple
28 communities, different, but I would argue, related priorities and interest; (2) I'd say, for me, I
29 think that not just from a moral perspective but from a strategic perspective, if we anchor the
30 work with the most marginalized and if we do it in a way that builds power, I think that benefits
31 everyone. So for me, the trans agenda is plural and includes not just the baseline prerequisites
32 of non-discrimination and narrow RFRA's, the sort of formal extension of legal equality, but it
33 includes, really, the core issues of equity and of power. So for me it's about fundamentally
34 changing the dynamics around HIV and AIDS, around criminalization, around immigration,
35 around housing, around poverty. And, it's about doing all that work in a way that centers the
36 most marginalized and builds our power collectively as a community.
- 37 AJ: Wow, well stated. Hayden . . .

- 1 HM: Andrea.
- 2 AJ: We're coming to the close of this conversation, at least our audio/video portion of this
3 conversation, is there anything that I haven't asked you that you have a burning desire for me
4 and many, many other people who will see this video 72 years from now to know? And, if
5 there's not, or even if there is something that you want to share, what is your vision for the
6 "multiple trans communities" in 50 years?
- 7 HM: I'll say two things . . . I'll try to say them succinctly. The first is, it's the same thing that gave me
8 hope and it was also the most challenging part of the work in the labor movement, which is to
9 say there are more of us that benefit from changing things than there are from keeping it the
10 same. In fact, right now in this moment, with all the folks that would benefit from
11 fundamentally changing, not just how resources are distributed but how power is distributed,
12 people that in direct tight and clear alignment from an interest perspective, if we just made the
13 decision that we were going to change things, we could – there's enough of us. Challenges –
14 racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, sexism, all of it, and trauma. The first thing I
15 would just say is that to the degree that we as trans folks and as leaders can do the work to heal
16 ourselves, to take care of ourselves, and to try to see the complexity in one another, to try to
17 love one another, to try to accept ourselves as humans and forgive ourselves for humanity and
18 to see others as human, I think to the degree that we are able to do that as multiple
19 communities coming together, is in direct proportion to the degree of progress that we'll make,
20 what we'll achieve and how quickly we'll achieve it, and that is so crucial, because you know this
21 – the consequences of a slow pace and of what we don't achieve is the loss of friends that we
22 love and have lost and lives that are constrained by fear and oppression and it's unnecessary.
23 And I say it just to say that the greatest agency that we have . . . we talked about Washington,
24 DC – it's not the White House or Congress or any of these big organizations in Washington, DC,
25 it's us, and it's our ability to see each, to love each other, to love ourselves, and to try to work
26 through complexity. I think that that's the first thing, and then the second thing is just . . . we're
27 on the other side of achieving same sex marriage equality and it took 20+ years for the pundits
28 and pollsters and the people that read cross tabs to decide that gay and lesbian could speak for
29 themselves when they were talking about this issue, and it turns out when gay and lesbian folks
30 speak for themselves, remarkably it moves folks – people get that, people can see themselves
31 reflected.
- 32 AJ: Sure.
- 33 HM: Unfortunately, most of the portrayals of gay and lesbian folks were middle class, white . . . very,
34 very rigid idea of what folks could and should look like. I think with the trans community in this
35 movement/movements, we have an opportunity to have a much bigger conversation about
36 race, about class, about gender, and to really sort of bust open the doors. I hope we do that and
37 I'm committed to doing that and I want to say that we'll check in 72 years, that Trans United will
38 be a force for doing that. So if we turn out to be accommodationists, incrementalists,
39 unimaginative sell-outs, then you play this tape and . . . I don't know, I'll owe someone some
40 money. But thank you so much for this opportunity to have this conversation, Andrea, and
41 thank you so much for your brilliance and your leadership in this community.

- 1 AJ: Wow, well thank you, Hayden, for this conversation. You know, we've known each other for
- 2 close to four years now but to get this opportunity to get some deeper insight into your
- 3 background, your thoughts, your relationships, your commitment has been nothing less than
- 4 inspiring.
- 5 HM: You know I have to kill you now. Thank you, Andrea, I really appreciate it.
- 6 AJ: Thank you, have a great day. Until we meet again, my friend.
- 7 HM: Very good.