

Ash Scott
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

October 29, 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 Ash Scott -AS

3

4 AJ: So, my name is Andrea Jenkins, and I am the Oral Historian for the Transgender Oral History
5 Project at the University of Minnesota. Today is date is October 29th...

6

7 AS: Yep.

8

9 AJ: ... and... 2015. And I am here with Ash Scott. Uhm, and, Ash, why don't you tell us your, uhm,
10 your name, however you prefer to pronounce that, uhm, your preferred pronouns, gender
11 identity, and your gender assigned at birth.

12

13 AS: Okay, uhm, I am Ash, or full name, Ashely Scott. Uhm, everyone calls me Ash. Uhm, I also go by
14 Ashden, uhm, in the drag community. Uhm, I got by he's, male pronouns.

15

16 AJ: Mhm.

17

18 AS: And I was a female at birth. And, was that all of them?

19

20 AJ: Uh, gender identity.

21

22 AS: Gender identity. I am a man, male. Trans guy. FTM.

23

24 AJ: [Laughs]. Alright. Wow. Thank you. Uhm, so, Ash, tell me about your earliest memory. Like the
25 earliest thing you can remember. Doesn't have to be trans specific though if it is that's fine too
26 but just the earliest thing you remember.

27

28 AS: The earliest thing I remember. Uhm, I guess the earliest thing I remember is a feeling...

29

30 AJ: Mhm.

31

32 AS: ... of something wrong. Not being, not, something, I guess, that made that, that's not right and
33 trying to figure that out. Kind of an inconsistency, you know. Most people have a calm. I didn't
34 have a calm. It was kind of a turbulence.

35

36 AJ: Wow. How, how old do you think you were when you first recognized that feeling?

37

38 AS: Uhm, I guess I was about 4 or 5. My grandmother says I have an old soul so I've always, I've
39 always known things, I guess, above times than I should.

40

41 AJ: Huh. Where did you grow up?

42

43 AS: What time of the year? Uhm, it's usually, this is what I say most of the time. I'm an Air Force brat
44 so I was born in California, uh, Castle Air Force Base. Uhm, then we moved...

45

46 AJ: What Air Force base?

1
2 AS: Castle Air Force Base.
3
4 AJ: C.A.S.T.L.E.
5
6 AS: Yup. Just like a kingdom. [Laughs]. It's in Merced County so it was, uhm, northern California.
7 Uhm, we moved to Grand Force Air base.
8
9 AJ: Mhm.
10
11 AS: Uhm, and that's where my little sister was born. And then from there we moved here, uhm,
12 because my dad was an airplane mechanic through the military so he came on worked for
13 Northwest. Uhm, in the summers I was always in Louisiana or Philadelphia, which is where the
14 southern dialect, you know, comes out...
15
16 AJ: [Laughs].
17
18 AS: ... you know, a little bit and everything. And, uhm, yeah just kinda moved around but most of my
19 education was here or Iowa.
20
21 AJ: Here or Minnesota.
22
23 AS: Yeah.
24
25 AJ: Mhm. So where did you go to elementary school?
26
27 AS: Uhm, I went to elementary school, uhm, the first one I really don't remember but, uhm, started
28 third grade, uhm, Inner Grove Heights at, uhm, Pine Bend.
29
30 AJ: Huh. What was that like?
31
32 AS: Uh, so Inner Grove Heights, Minnesota it's very rural.
33
34 AJ: Mhm.
35
36 AS: Uhm, and it's very... non-diverse. Uh, it's a lot, it's a lot better now but when I was there it was
37 very non-diverse so I was the only African American student, uhm, pretty much in my classroom.
38 I think there were maybe one or two others possibly in the grade. Uhm, so it was very few of us.
39
40 AJ: So you didn't interact with them very much or...
41
42 AS: Not really. So, you know, I was kind of the "white black" person. [Laughs]. I was called that
43 because, you know I speak proper speech, you know, everything like that so like, "Oh, you're
44 not.."
45
46 AJ: Right. So people gave you a hard time about that?
47

1 AS: Yeah, very much. You know, if I came back, you know, came back...
2
3 AJ: White people or black people?
4
5 AS: Uhm, both, truthfully. I'd come back from a summer trip or something like that and I was in
6 Louisiana my drawl comes out...
7
8 AJ: Yeah.
9
10 AS: ... a lot more. I have to switch back. So, you know, they'll sit here and say, "Say this word. Say
11 this word."
12
13 AJ: Uhuh.
14
15 AS: And I'll just say it, you know, not, without thinking about it and then, you know, and then after
16 awhile I'd be like, "What's going on?" And I'd be like, "You know what, [laughs]."
17
18 AJ: Wow.
19
20 AS: I mean, it makes me unique so.
21
22 AJ: Yeah. Was there any, uhm, bullying going on in terms of being a black kid in a pretty
23 predominately white environment or...?
24
25 AS: Not too much, I mean, I've always been a...
26
27 AJ: Or your gender identity or anything like that?
28
29 AS: Uhm, throughout high school and everything, uhm, I really didn't have a gender identity. I guess
30 it wasn't really questioned or anything like that. And I really didn't know, nonetheless either.
31 Uhm, and...
32
33 AJ: You're not explicitly a girl or a guy. You're just kind of...
34
35 AS: No, I'm just me, yeah. Pretty much. Uhm, and, you know, I, I liked boys because I guess I was
36 supposed to...
37
38 AJ: Mhm.
39
40 AS: But it didn't feel right.
41
42 AJ: Mhm.
43
44 AS: Uhm, and I actually did question, uhm, you know, liking girls too much. You know, it's just, you
45 know, some idea, you know, friends and stuff like that. But truthfully, I really didn't have, I
46 guess, like sexual energies or feelings and stuff like that or worried about, you know, dating
47 people or, you know, being with, you know, this or that or the other throughout high school and

1 everything. Uhm, as far as bullying and stuff like that I had, you know, like a group of girls that,
2 you know, used to, you know, somewhat try to pick on me and everything like that, uhm, and
3 boss me around. You know, just because I was, I guess, a gentle giant, you would call me.
4
5 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
6
7 AS: Uhm, but you know, I was taught those were the ones to look out for. I mean I can handle
8 myself if I needed to but not, uhm, but I've always been, you know, I was like a 5'9" so I'm one
9 of the bigger guys. And I had the ability to fit into every single group, you know, every click that
10 there was.
11
12 AJ: Right.
13
14 AS: Uhm, in high school, so, you know, I was used as an asset by the teachers, you know, and people
15 came in, new people, you know, I introduced them around and, you know, show them the
16 school and stuff like that.
17
18 AJ: Say, say that again. You were used as a...
19
20 AS: Uh, what did I say?
21
22 AJ: What's the term?
23
24 AS: Uh, let's see. Messing me up [Laughs].
25
26 AJ: But I just want to make sure we get.
27
28 AS: Yeah, not quite like an instrument but, you know, I was beneficial...
29
30 AJ: Okay.
31
32 AS: ... to be able to, uhm, you know, introduce people to everybody.
33
34 AJ: So, you were an asset because you had these relationships.
35
36 AS: Yeah, very much so. Great communication and stuff like that.
37
38 AJ: Multiple groups and...
39
40 AS: So, uhm, it was, you know, everybody knew me. I might not have known everybody but they
41 knew me. [Laughs].
42
43 AJ: Oh wow.
44
45 AS: So, you know, I had a teacher that, uhm.
46
47 AJ: So you were kind of a popular...

1
2 AS: I guess, I guess so, but, you know, truthfully, I'm very introverted. I'm very, you know, I guess
3 not popular. Like I said, just me.
4
5 AJ: Mhm.
6
7 AS: You know, if I was able to be, uhm, I guess, if you say you could be anybody to let you know who
8 you are, I'd pick Steve Urkel.
9
10 AJ: Oh wow.
11
12 AS: You know, that's kind of who I am. Uhm, you know, in my drag persona is Stefan Urkel.
13
14 AJ: Oh wow.
15
16 AS: So, you know, we're two polar opposites but yeah.
17
18 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs]. Uhm, Stefan Urkel.
19
20 AS: Yeah.
21
22 AJ: Okay. So, and that's, uhm, is that Urkel's sort of alter ego?
23
24 AS: Pretty much so, yeah. When he goes into the transformation chamber that's his very cool
25 identity, you know?
26
27 AJ: Oh, okay.
28
29 AS: Got it, got it. The Rico Suave, you know, like the, so.
30
31 AJ: Yeah, you don't strike me as a, as an Urkel kind of person.
32
33 AS: [Laughs].
34
35 AJ: But I'll take your word for it.
36
37 AS: Yeah, yeah I can be nerdy, geeky, you know, all of the above.
38
39 AJ: Huh.
40
41 AS: I'm not super, you know, nose down, you know, what you... That's extreme but, I guess for the
42 most part.
43
44 AJ: What was the first time that you realized that you were not the gender you were assigned at
45 birth?
46
47 AS: Uhm, hm... that's a hard one. I guess specifically when I got that information and everything.

1
2 AJ: No, when you...
3
4 AS: Just had the feeling?
5
6 AJ: Like when the light bulb just hit you like wow, "This is not who I am. I gotta make some
7 changes."
8
9 AS: Uhm, the thing I kind of always knew, like when you asked what's the first thing that I remember
10 is that feeling.
11
12 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
13
14 AS: Uhm, and, you know, it was definitely in terms of something was off. Something was not, you
15 know, it was not right with me or something was amiss.
16
17 AJ: Mhm.
18
19 AS: Uhm, and, you know, always persevering to figure out what it was and everything like that.
20 Cause I think that the most comfortable that I could be in my skin was during Halloween or
21 something where I could pretend to be something else. And usually it was a vampire, a male
22 vampire at that.
23
24 AJ: Okay. The male Lestat.
25
26 AS: Pretty much, you know, Dracula. You know, so like that in, uhm, being a male of sorts, you
27 know, dressing in masculine clothes and stuff like that. You know, uhm, looking back I constitute
28 the way that I was raised was kind of as the older brother, uhm, with, but my parents, you know,
29 I don't think they actually knew how I was, you know, being treated and raised and stuff like
30 that. Uhm, so that's kind of always how I've been, you know.
31
32 AJ: Wow, okay. Uhm, so you describe yourself as a trans man. When did you come to use that
33 language [cell phone rings] and...
34
35 AS: Sorry, let me turn that off.
36
37 AJ: When... so when did you come to use that language and then how has that changed over time?
38
39 AS: Uhm, let's see, growing up I didn't even know about transgender. Uhm, and everything like that.
40 Uhm, and, you know, gay and lesbian I kind of knew about it but it wasn't like quite out there
41 especially, you know, being in rural Minnesota in Grove Heights. So I was like, okay. Uhm, it's,
42 you know, it took me awhile. It was actually coming out of high school, uhm, my senior year and
43 everything like that that I took up the, uhm, the term of being, uh, lesbian.
44
45 AJ: Okay.
46

1 AS: Uhm, to move forward this was what I was supposed to do and everything. And so, uhm, that's
2 how I identified for awhile. Uhm, but still something was amiss. It wasn't right.
3
4 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
5
6 AS: So I'm like, "Okay, what's going on? Is there something wrong with me, you know?" Uhm, and it
7 actually took about, uh, 5 or 6 years after that. Uhm, through the military and after that and
8 everything like that. So I got to Virginia and actually met a transgender, uh, guy, uhm, who did
9 drag, uhm, which was something that interested me and stuff like that and got me into drag as
10 well.
11
12 AJ: He was a performer?
13
14 AS: Yes. He, he was a performer, uhm, and actually got me, you know, my first number with him and
15 everything like that.
16
17 AJ: Oh wow.
18
19 AS: And, uhm, it was then, you know, described and seeing him and stuff like that. And he described
20 how he felt and stuff where, you know, there's just, you know, like an earthshattering thing.
21 Things just went off that just felt this like rush of relief that was like wow.
22
23 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
24
25 AS: That makes complete and total sense.
26
27 AJ: Wow.
28
29 AS: I guess that's when I actually know that, "Hey, you know, this is real."
30
31 AJ: So this is about 24, 25.
32
33 AS: Yeah, yeah, about that. About 23, 24.
34
35 AJ: Okay. Uhm, do you, uhm, what kind of challenges have you faced since you began to express
36 your true gender identity?
37
38 AS: Well, of course there is family and friends. Uhm, not too much with friends cause I don't have a
39 lot of very many like close friends...
40
41 AJ: Mhm.
42
43 AS: ... so not that too much, but, uhm, family was definitely one.
44
45 AJ: Mhm. How so?
46

1 AS: Moving through my, uhm, I guess my journey. Going through, you know, uhm, being a lesbian
2 first and stuff. I lost my mother, uhm, through that. She actually, uhm, left for about a year.
3 Uhm, we didn't talk because there was a big, uhm, confrontation that we had, uhm, that
4 revolved around my little sister. Uhm, which was the first time my mother ever raised her hand
5 to me.
6
7 AJ: Oh wow.
8
9 AS: Uhm, and I decided, I said, you know, "I need to leave."
10
11 AJ: Mhm.
12
13 AS: Uhm, for this. Uhm, cause they said, you know, I would, like I pushed it in their face all the time.
14 And, mind you, I'm not running around with, you know, flags, I'm gay this that.
15
16 AJ: Right.
17
18 AS: You know, and everything like that. You know, I'm still doing what I was doing and knowing
19 more.
20
21 AJ: Sure.
22
23 AS: And every time seeing me kind of like pushed the buttons.
24
25 AJ: Uhuh.
26
27 AS: Uhm, so I lost my mom with that for awhile. Uhm, but, you know, I've gained her back recently.
28 She's still, she's still working on it and still has her things but, uhm, it's kind of sad, I guess,
29 through my family and everything like that. And, I mean, I kept, I contribute this to being in an
30 African American family and stuff like that.
31
32 AJ: Mhm.
33
34 AS: Feelings and things like that aren't talked about. Uhm, they were never talked about when I was
35 growing up and stuff, you know. So it was like, how are you feeling about this and that, that was
36 never done. It wasn't until I got back from Iraq that I actually was asked, how are you feeling and
37 stuff and needed to. I started developing my feelings after I came back from Iraq.
38
39 AJ: Oh wow.
40
41 AS: Uhm, so actually, you know, that hindered them knowing who I was as a person.
42
43 AJ: Mhm.
44
45 AS: Uhm, and stuff like that. And, you know, that kind of made it sad because it is all, you know,
46 religion and stuff like that and suck it up and drive on. You know, you gotta be stronger than
47 that, you know, we go through all of this adversity and stuff and it's like...

1
2 AJ: Pray about it.
3
4 AS: And it's because of all of that, you know, made it more difficult, uhm, so it's, you know, kind of
5 one of those things where we don't talk about it but, you know, okay. But they use the line as
6 long as you're happy, you know, you're doing what you're doing, you know, to make it better in
7 their heads and their hearts...
8
9 AJ: Sure.
10
11 AS: ... when you know it's like okay it's more difficult. So...
12
13 AJ: So, so you had the, the, the really significant challenge with your mom. And thank goodness
14 things have started to sort of shift back around.
15
16 AS: Yep.
17
18 AJ: But were there other challenges that you experienced like, I mean, you mentioned that you
19 were in the military.
20
21 AS: Yeah, uhm...
22
23 AJ: How, how was being transgender in the military? And maybe you weren't out. I don't know but,
24 uhm, but you were still a trans person even if nobody else knew it.
25
26 AS: Right, yeah, uhm, that was during my lesbian time so I'm still GLBT friendly and all of that stuff.
27
28 AJ: [Laughs]. Right.
29
30 AS: Which we call a stud and all that stuff. So I was the male figure of the, you know, for the most
31 part so it was still in that, you know...
32
33 AJ: So you still had a male persona.
34
35 AS: Exactly. It was still more in that, uhm, tune. Uhm, when I joined the military I had short hair.
36 Uhm, my hair was about this short [places hand over head].
37
38 AJ: Wow, okay.
39
40 AS: And so, you know, I first came, you know, you get the drill sergeants all in your face.
41
42 AJ: That's pretty intense for a female.
43
44 AS: Exactly. You know, I had one in front of me, one beside me and stuff like that, and they're like,
45 "Hey, look what we got over here." And they're like, you know, what do you think, you know,
46 are you confused? Do you think you're a guy?" and stuff like that.
47

1 AJ: Uhuh.
2
3 AS: You know, "Did you cut your hair just because you joined the army?" and stuff and everything
4 like that. And I'm like, "No, it's just been cut like this for years."
5
6 AJ: Wow.
7
8 AS: And you know, this kind of hovered on me. I had to still be that because it was, you know, I
9 joined in 2003.
10
11 AJ: Uhuh.
12
13 AS: So it was Don't Ask, Don't Tell still everything like that. So it's not like I could be me, you know,
14 except that, you know, the dark corners and stuff like that.
15
16 AJ: Right.
17
18 AS: Uhm, especially in Iraq and stuff like that.
19
20 AJ: Mhm.
21
22 AS: Uhm, so, it, it was a very difficult thing because it's kind of like constantly being in a play or, you
23 know, as an act or something.
24
25 AJ: Hm.
26
27 AS: You're always wearing a mask.
28
29 AJ: Wow.
30
31 AS: Uhm, and not able to be something that you are. So you can't talk about things that are, you
32 know, hurting your heart or your feelings and stuff like that. You have to bury them because,
33 you know, you can't a mess. So if you're having a problem with, you know, a girlfriend or, you
34 know, a relationship or, you know, I'm sad because, you know...
35
36 AJ: Cause there's no one to talk to.
37
38 AS: Exactly. Mom's not talking to me or, you know, continues to do this and just not understanding.
39 You can't tell anybody that. So you have to constantly keep it to yourself. Uhm, so it's a very
40 difficult, uhm, sad and depressing, depressing time.
41
42 AJ: Wow. So you were in the military in 02, 03. Were you still in the military when Obama was
43 elected?
44
45 AS: Yes. Uhm, I was actually in Iraq in 04, 05.
46
47 AJ: Oh, okay.

1
2 AS: Uhm, so I actually, uhm, I actually got my, uhm, retirement as a disabled, discharged, uhm, in
3 the summer of last year.
4
5 AJ: Oh.
6
7 AS: So that's why I officially retired in the military. So I've been, I guess, in service for about 11, 11
8 years.
9
10 AJ: So, so you were there when Don't Ask, Don't Tell was lifted then.
11
12 AS: Yeah. Uhm, definitely was, uhm, at that time and in drill and everything, but, uhm, I still had a
13 lot of friends in there and that was, that was a great victory, that, you know, to be able to do
14 that. I mean, the close friends that I did have in the military and stuff, they knew about it.
15
16 AJ: Mhm.
17
18 AS: Uhm, and some were the same way. Uhm, you know, at the time I actually met a person I was
19 engaged to while, uhm, there.
20
21 AJ: Mhm.
22
23 AS: Uhm, in Iraq and stuff like that. You know, so to be able to find somebody who's, you know, kind
24 of like a lifelong friend and stuff like that. Also, being kind of gay and stuff like that, I accept you
25 for who you are and, you know, be through that type of, uhm, I guess, journey together. Uhm,
26 and to see, you know, it open up and stuff where you can now go in. Yeah, you can't go in
27 raising parades and stuff like that, you know, and...
28
29 AJ: [Laughs].
30
31 AS: ... have, you know, uniform with rainbow flags...
32
33 AJ: [Laughs].
34
35 AS: You know, you can't do that, but they would be like, "Okay, you know, they're people too." You
36 know, you can serve with these guys. And, you know, everybody who walks into a shower you
37 know they aren't looking at you just because you're gay or lesbian. Uhm, now watching the,
38 uhm, fight with the transgenders, uhm, is, is very, uhm, is very inspiring. And, and, and the, uh,
39 few guys that are actually doing it and, uhm, working for it, and the fact that they're even talking
40 about it...
41
42 AJ: Do you know any of these guys?
43
44 AS: Uhm, guys that are trans and in for...
45
46 AJ: I just saw this one guy in a magazine who was just beautiful. He, uh, a Latino guy.
47

- 1 AS: Yeah, ripped and in the army.
2
- 3 AJ: [Laughs]. Yeah.
4
- 5 AS: I forget his full name but, uhm, I follow him, uhm, through Facebook and stuff. And, you know,
6 watch the journeys and everything like that. I, I love knowing, I guess, uhm, other trans men.
7 Uhm, and this is because going through I've only known 1 maybe 2 others, uhm, throughout my
8 journey.
9
- 10 AJ: In the military or just in general.
11
- 12 AS: Uhm, just in general.
13
- 14 AJ: Wow.
15
- 16 AS: Truthfully. Uhm, and, you know, just found some in this area.
17
- 18 AJ: Uhuh.
19
- 20 AS: Uhm, so, you know, knowing their experiences and to be able to ask questions, you know, other
21 than on, you know, face to face in person to see these people and stuff like that and how they're
22 developing and stuff like that. And to be able to talk about relationships and stuff like that it
23 matters. And being able to do that now whereas opposed to when I wasn't able to do that...
24
- 25 AJ: Mhm.
26
- 27 AS: ... you know, because of Don't Ask, Don't Tell and because of, you know, how I was raised and
28 because of all of this other stuff where I had to keep it in to myself and try to figure it out. Being
29 able to is so alleviating. Like you let a lot off you, like I'm not the only one...
30
- 31 AJ: Mhm.
32
- 33 AS: ... out there that feels this way or that's having this problem or, you know, not only am I not the
34 only one but by talking with somebody else I can help them as much as their helping me.
35
- 36 AJ: Awesome. Uhm, do you think that the, the ban on transgender people serving in the military is
37 gonna be lifted anytime soon?
38
- 39 AS: Uhm, I think so. They're actually, they're working on it now. Uh, you know, it's in discussions
40 and, and is in the movement but I think it's, it's a monster of it's own, uhm, as far as, I guess,
41 transgender because there is so many polarities of transgender, uhm, that you could be on a
42 scale. So it's going to be the fact, okay, when is it this? Do they take a leave of absence, you
43 know, are we going to have to put a label on it that, okay, you have to be fully transition or
44 something like that when there is no full transition.
45
- 46 AJ: Right.
47

- 1 AS: You know, that's, that's a false that people think. Or, you know, fully transitioned. What is fully
2 transitioned? You know?
3
- 4 AJ: Yeah, what does that mean?
5
- 6 AS: And, they're going to have to, you know, scale that because, okay well do we stick you with
7 somebody in there who still has these body parts or something like that. Does that make it,
8 uhm, you know, okay for them? Is it going to put them in jeopardy, you know, and vice versa
9 and everything? And that's, that's the biggest obstacle I see that is going to be for, for them to
10 actually allow it. But if the military does find a way and does allow it that opens everything,
11 everything else up for transgenderism...
12
- 13 AJ: Yeah.
14
- 15 AS: ... as far as, you know, because that's, that's our high totem poll. You know, that's when, that is
16 accepted in the military then it automatically disseminates through everything else.
17
- 18 AJ: When, when, when black people were able to, to serve fully in the military is when, you know,
19 the push for more fair race relations in the country began and...
20
- 21 AS: Right.
22
- 23 AJ: ... women...
24
- 25 AS: Women serving and, yeah, exactly.
26
- 27 AJ: Yeah, you know? Now LGB, LGB people [Laughs]...
28
- 29 AS: Yeah. [Laughs]. Definitely, you know. The, the movement is going and stuff like that.
30
- 31 AJ: Even though trans people are LGB people too and straight too.
32
- 33 AS: Very much so. [Laughs].
34
- 35 AJ: Yeah. Or pan or omni or a or [Laughs].
36
- 37 AS: Yeah. The letters in the alphabet, yeah. Just am you.
38
- 39 AJ: Wow, so you're, you're discharged as a disabled veteran.
40
- 41 AS: Yes.
42
- 43 AJ: Do you want to talk about your... were you injured or?
44
- 45 AS: Uhm, I had a few things. Uhm, I was in, uhm, Balad, Iraq in 04, 05, uh, which they call...
46
- 47 AJ: Which part of Iraq?

1
2 AS: Balad.
3
4 AJ: Balad.
5
6 AS: Yes. It's a little bit underneath, uh, where the triangle is.
7
8 AJ: Mhm.
9
10 AS: Uh, and they call it Camp Anaconda or, uhm, they also called it, it was nicknamed Mortarsville.
11
12 AJ: Oh why?
13
14 AS: Uhm, and they called it Mortarville because the native people that, that had the, the, uhm,
15 issues would come up in their vehicles of choice and somebody would be in the back of the
16 pickup or in the trunk or something like that with it open. They'd go up to the gates, whip
17 around, and they'd shoot off a mortar. Uhm, so with those it's not targeted or anything like that.
18 It's just shot off. So where it lands, it lands. Uhm, so, you know, you constantly heard these, you
19 know, sirens and stuff and you had to get, you know, in place and everything like that.
20
21 AJ: Mhm.
22
23 AS: Uhm, so, uhm, you know, you had those and then you have your, uhm, road trips where you're
24 out of the, uhm, the area, anywhere, you know, escorting and stuff like that, like the
25 transportation battalion. And we, uhm, a lot of our units underneath were escorts to the big
26 trucks and stuff like that that would take food and water and fuel and all that stuff. And so, uhm,
27 we would, you know, be on road trips and they're were a lot of, uhm, bombing and, and things
28 like that...
29
30 AJ: Mhm.
31
32 AS: ... that would happen, uhm, for it. And, uhm, you know, to be as, I guess, into that. So I was,
33 uhm, walking home one day and one of the mortars came over the fence and, uhm, it hit, uhm,
34 I'd say about, uh, I don't know, like a quarter of a football field away from me.
35
36 AJ: Uhuh.
37
38 AS: So, you know, it was, it was decent close to me. It was enough for it that I felt the impact and it
39 knocked me over.
40
41 AJ: Absolutely.
42
43 AS: Uhm, you know, woke up in a, it was like, "Okay, what just happened?" Uhm, I had a lot of, I
44 guess, mental wars dealing with, you know, uhm, people above me that were not great. Uhm,
45 you know, uh, sergeants and stuff like that that were indignant and would use me for different
46 purposes and stuff like that. And I kind of got stuck in there. So, you know, had a bad time with
47 that. Uhm, having to deal with the, uh, stuff about Don't Ask, Don't Tell. You know, always

1 hiding, I guess. Uhm, you know, I got, uh, shot during a, uh, firefight or whatnot. Uhm, and it's a
2 kind of shot of hot brass coming off. I actually went and, uh, after you set off a few rounds, a
3 few shells they are really hot...
4
5 AJ: Mm.
6
7 AS: ... and got into my Kevlar in the back of my neck there and, uhm, sat there and burned the back
8 of neck there cause it seared into my skin, uhm, all the way until it doubled. So, uhm, those
9 were real fun times. I also had a, uhm, something, I caught something there [Indicates leg].
10 Some crazy kind of thing where, uhm, my tonsils swelled up to the size of shooter marbles.
11
12 AJ: Hm.
13
14 AS: The nice big ones.
15
16 AJ: Big, yeah.
17
18 AS: Yeah. And, uhm, it pretty much took off like my swallowing and stuff and made it hard to
19 breathe. Half of my face got swollen. I was on two different types of, uhm, uh, medications like
20 orally, and then also they had me, uhm, getting it through an IV and everything like that trying
21 to get it done. And, uhm, after a while I actually spent New Years in, uhm, 2004. New Year's Eve
22 and the Halloween party with an IV in my arm. I Snuck out and went to the party.
23
24 AJ: [Laughs]. To the New Year's Eve party or to the Halloween party?
25
26 AS: To the New Year's Eve party.
27
28 AJ: [Laughs].
29
30 AS: Uhm, and, uhm, a few days after that they actually, uhm, I went and saw an ENT, the, uh, Ears,
31 Nose, and Throat doctor.
32
33 AJ: Uhuh.
34
35 AS: And they're like, "Oh, no. Let's get you out of here." Uhm, so I got metabacked to Germany,
36 uhm, and actually spent my birthday in Germany. Uhm, because a few days after Christmas,
37 after New Year's.
38
39 AJ: Which day?
40
41 AS: January 6th.
42
43 AJ: Okay.
44
45 AS: Uhm, so spent that there, and I didn't even remember... they put you to sleep when, you know,
46 they fly you out. Pretty much you're on an IV. And I woke up. I was in a hospital bed, and they
47 were like, "Yeah, they took you, they brought you in or whatever and looked at you and took

1 you straight to surgery.” Uhm, cause it was so bad so they took out all of my tonsils, all three
2 sets of them...
3
4 AJ: Mhm.
5
6 AS: ... uhm, are gone because of whatever I caught and got so. It’s, technically, I almost died about
7 three times, uhm, in Iraq because of some stuff so, uhm, definitely not...
8
9 AJ: Yeah, that was a fun time.
10
11 AS: And I turned 21 in Iraq as well.
12
13 AJ: [Laughs].
14
15 AS: So, uhm, it definitely was, you know, a learning and left me with a lot of scares. And, you know,
16 uhm, things that make it hard to I guess be quote, unquote normal.
17
18 AJ: How do you deal with that now, Ash?
19
20 AS: Uhm, it’s difficult. It, it depends on what it is exactly. Uhm, I have a service animal...
21
22 AJ: Mhm.
23
24 AS: ... uhm, dog for PTSD.
25
26 AJ: Mhm.
27
28 AS: Uhm, and, uh...
29
30 AJ: Can we put him on camera?
31
32 AS: [Lifts dog up to camera]. Stick him up here, just like he’s laying at my feet right now.
33
34 AJ: Hey Socrates.
35
36 AS: This is Socrates, Socks for short.
37
38 AJ: [Laughs].
39
40 AS: Cause he’s got little socks on. Uhm, but, uhm, I’ve had him since he was a puppy. And, uhm, had
41 him for about, he’s seven now. He’s old, all this was black [indicating some fur that is now light
42 brown]. Uhm, but he helps me with my PTSD, uhm, and my anxiety. Uhm, so, you know, he’s
43 here as a friend, as a companion, you know, makes me do stuff. I have to get up on the days that
44 I’m super blue.
45
46 AJ: Mhm.
47

- 1 AS: Uhm, don't want to get up, don't want to do anything anymore. Uhm, and, uh, he makes me get
2 up. I have to feed him.
3
- 4 AJ: [Laughs].
5
- 6 AS: I have to, you know, take him out.
7
- 8 AJ: Take him for a walk.
9
- 10 AS: Yeah, I have to take him out and walk him. He's every playful. He may be old but he's very
11 playful, and he's very loving. You know, you see him, and he'll nudge me and stuff like that
12 cause he wants me to, you know, his little tail back here is shaking [laughs] and wagging. Uhm,
13 but, you know, he definitely keeps me, and, uhm, I've kind of become more introverted because
14 of PTSD and stuff like that. So he makes me have to get out there, you know. People see him,
15 and it's like oh, it's a dog and stuff and you have to talk and go to a dog park every now and then
16 and stuff like that. So, uhm, definitely helps. I go to groups.
17
- 18 AJ: So a service animal, so you consider him a service animal but some people don't let their service
19 animals interact with other...
20
- 21 AS: People.
22
- 23 AJ: Animals or people.
24
- 25 AS: Uhm, yeah, he, he is, he is a service animal. Uhm, there's a lot where, you know, they have to be
26 working and stuff like that. And, uhm, depending on where we're at and stuff like that...
27
- 28 AJ: Sure.
29
- 30 AS: ... uhm, you know, sometimes it's not, uhm, you know, good.
31
- 32 AJ: Mhm.
33
- 34 AS: Or I guess, you know, right. He needs to be on the job...
35
- 36 AJ: Yeah.
37
- 38 AS: ... more. Uhm, you know, but, you know, at home and stuff and that's, you know, mainly where
39 he does. Yeah, we do go to stores and stuff like that. I don't have to take him as much to those
40 places because I know my times and I know my triggers and stuff.
41
- 42 AJ: Sure. Yeah.
43
- 44 AS: Uhm, but, you know, like home and stuff like that, uhm, you know, I still have flashbacks. And I
45 still have night terrors.
46
- 47 AJ: Oh.

- 1
2 AS: And, you know, he'll jump up on the bed, you know, if he hears me moving or something like
3 that if he's not already up there, wake me up. Or lay next to me, which grounds me, to let me
4 know, "Hey, you know, you're..."
5
6 AJ: You're home.
7
8 AS: Exactly. You're in a place where you're not getting shot at and not doing any of this other stuff.
9 You know, you're here with me. You know, calm down.
10
11 AJ: Wow.
12
13 AS: Uhm, so, you know, without, truthfully, without him I probably would not be where I'm at right
14 now because it took a lot of time. And, uhm, not only do I have metal stuff. I have physical
15 things. You know, I have a really bad knee, uhm, shoulder stuff. I've had two knee surgeries
16 already. Like, this year, it's November. Uhm, before June I already had four surgeries, uhm, this
17 year alone.
18
19 AJ: In 2015?
20
21 AS: In 2015. Before June I had 4 surgeries. Uhm, and I've had two knee surgeries and stuff. I have
22 fibromyalgia. I have chronic pain. And to deal with that, and, you know, I was dealing with this,
23 you know, 22 plus and everything like that for so long.
24
25 AJ: Mhm.
26
27 AS: And things still aren't felt out. You know, we don't know exactly what they are so I'm still in pain
28 every day on top of, you know, the head stuff and you don't always have somebody to talk to
29 and everything like that. So it takes a lot out of you. This is a very difficult thing cause you have
30 to be your own advocate and sometimes you fight so much that you just have to give up
31 sometimes because you're fighting so much and it doesn't make sense why you're fighting so
32 much when this is something that, you know, I deserve or that I should have. You know,
33 healthcare and stuff like that and you shouldn't be fighting so hard for it.
34
35 AJ: So, how, how, how has the military been supportive since you've been discharged?
36
37 AS: Uhm, well, uhm, I get, I got disability through them. Uhm, I filed for disability, which, you know,
38 it took a little bit, but, you know, once you get the work done and stuff like that, it's worth it.
39 [Laughs].
40
41 AJ: What about all these surgeries?
42
43 AS: Uhm, the surgeries and medical issues, I am, uh, service connected disabled.
44
45 AJ: Mhm.
46
47 AS: So everything that I have is because of being in Iraq, military service for the most part.

1
2 AJ: Mhm.
3
4 AS: Uhm, so they pay for everything. Uhm, and everything like that. And also, you know, being
5 blessed because of the military and stuff like that, they've not accepted transgender serving in
6 the military but they do accept with helping us, so they help me with transgender therapy.
7
8 AJ: Oh wow.
9
10 AS: And they help with hormone therapy.
11
12 AJ: Really?
13
14 AS: So I actually get my, uhm, shots, my testosterone, all of my needles, uhm, and stuff like that
15 through the military.
16
17 AJ: Yeah, that was gonna be my next question. Sort of, uhm, what medical interventions you may
18 have had, to the extent that you're comfortable talking about?
19
20 AS: Uhm, I've, yup, I've had, uhm, I get that done. Uhm, the advocate. You have to constantly fight,
21 uhm, for it truthfully. Because they're still growing and they're still learning. Uhm, and there's
22 not a lot of, I guess, doctors in there that know a lot about it. So, you know, you have to get it...
23 There's a lot of, uhm, there's, there's misgendering here and there, but they're getting a lot
24 better.
25
26 AJ: So how long have you been on testosterone?
27
28 AS: I've been on testosterone for a little over 3 years. Yeah, I think it'll be 4 soon.
29
30 AJ: What is it like?
31
32 AS: Uhm, I enjoy it. I mean, uhm, I've always had problems, I guess, as a female and stuff like that
33 through my, uhm, female track.
34
35 AJ: Mhm.
36
37 AS: And so, like my reproductive system has been shut off. I've had endometriosis and everything
38 like that so painful, uh, periods and stuff like that. Uhm, so when I could, uhm, get on
39 testosterone, you know, it kind of alleviated a little bit more, uhm, with it and shut down my
40 system cause I hated periods with a passion. You know? [Laughs]. Because it was so painful.
41
42 AJ: [Laughs]. I wonder why.
43
44 AS: So, uhm, dealing with that plus, you know, it brought me a step closer to what I saw in the
45 mirror.
46
47 AJ: Mhm.

1
2 AS: You know, and how I felt about myself. You know, to get more, you know, I could get, I watched,
3 you know, I weigh myself every week. Every time I get a shot, I weigh myself and I put the
4 changes in a little notebook.
5
6 AJ: Oh really?
7
8 AS: Of my weight, my changes, the date, and stuff like that. I keep track of it. So all of my shots are
9 in there and, you know, things that I've had so surgeries and stuff like that. Even if it's like a
10 knee surgery or something like that.
11
12 AJ: Mhm. Yeah, no.
13
14 AS: Uhm, so...
15
16 AJ: It's important to document.
17
18 AS: Yeah, so seeing all those things. Like my first hair, like my facial hair is starting to fill out. You
19 know, my voice is dropping. I sound like Peter Brady, you know, with all the cracking and stuff
20 like that. Uhm, you know, I'm finding more hair on my body. I woke up this morning, and there
21 was this hair on my rear end or something.
22
23 AJ: Oh.
24
25 AS: It's like what are you doing? So, and...
26
27 AJ: So now you're becoming a hairy butt.
28
29 AS: Yeah, it is, it's like, it's definitely a big experience and stuff and, you know, emotionally and stuff
30 like that. So, you know, you kind of go through a little bit of, uhm, menopause, uhm, because
31 you're lowering your estrogen count and stuff like that so, you know, I went through the hot
32 flashes and all that stuff. It's kind of fun watching, you know, I'm gonna out my mom a little bit,
33 but, uhm, you know, see her go through some stuff and whatnot. I'm like, oh yeah, I already
34 know how that is. I get it about 4-6 times. [Laughs]. So yeah, uhm, it definitely was an
35 experience.
36
37 AJ: Did you have a hysterotomy.
38
39 AS: Uhm, I didn't have a hysterotomy. Paid through the military, I have a very high risk of breast
40 cancer through my family.
41
42 AJ: Mhm.
43
44 AS: My mom has, uhm, there are 9 kids on my mom's, so she's got 5 sisters.
45
46 AJ: Mhm.
47

1 AS: Uhm, her mother has had breast cancer. Her, uhm, youngest sister had had it about 4-5 times
2 and passed away because of it.
3
4 AJ: Oh.
5
6 AS: Her oldest sister, uhm, was diagnosed with it just a year and a half ago I believe. Uhm, my
7 uncle's had like, uhm, cancer sores. So it's very high risk on that side. So I went and had the test
8 done and everything like that. And because of that I was able to get the, uhm, military and the
9 VA...
10
11 AJ: Mhm.
12
13 AS: ... to do bilateral mastectomy...
14
15 AJ: Okay. Wow.
16
17 AS: ... uhm which they took both of my chests out. And the doctors were like well, we're not gonna
18 put breasts in because he knew, uhm, that I referred to as transgender male and stuff like that.
19 And he's like, well, you know, there's no need to put, you know, prosthetics because that would
20 be next, you know and everything like that. And he's like, "How about we fashion you a male
21 chest, but, you know, we will put it as a that you're getting this done specifically for the risk of
22 breast cancer?"
23
24 AJ: For the cancer.
25
26 AS: And, you know, I just kind of benefited off of it to an extent.
27
28 AJ: So kind of like an Angelina Jolie.
29
30 AS: And that's exactly what I tell people! And they're like, "What?" And I'm like, "Yeah, you didn't
31 know about that?" [Laughs]. But, yes, I got the Angelina Jolie done.
32
33 AJ: Okay.
34
35 AS: Uhm, so I got it done for free. Uhm, so, you know, it's kind of a curse and a blessing at the same
36 time. Uhm, because of that you're also at high risk of ovarian cancer if you're at a high risk of
37 breast cancer so I got what they call oophorectomy, uhm, which is a, uhm, they take out your
38 ovaries and your fallopian tubes. So I still have a uterus and a cervix, uhm, but I don't have the
39 things that create the estrogen or that I can, you know, my reproductive organs technically.
40
41 AJ: Hm.
42
43 AS: So, I've got some of it out, which didn't make sense to me. They could have taken it all out
44 cause...
45
46 AJ: So you have like a half reproductive system.
47

- 1 AS: Exactly, cause like research later on or whatever it's like it's gonna need to be done anyway. So,
2 but, you know, you get what you can get.
3
- 4 AJ: Yeah. Boy, I just don't like to think of you going through yet another surgery.
5
- 6 AS: Yeah, I guess, you know, kind of in my head I guess it's kind of just something that has to be
7 done. It's not that I like having surgeries or anything like that. I don't chase surgeries or anything
8 like that. You know, people are like just keep having them but, you know, it kind of happens. You
9 know, I've also had, uhm, I've got nerve damage after awhile being on crutches and canes and
10 stuff like that.
11
- 12 AJ: Oh wow. Yeah.
13
- 14 AS: And also the use of carrying guns and dropping down, you know, to your elbows and stuff like
15 that. I got, uhm, nerve damage so I don't have, uhm, hand movement here. Uhm, before both of
16 my fingers were gone. It's called ulnar nerve palsy. and both of them were gone so I had to have
17 surgery on it so I got half of my finger movement back but from half of my finger and over it's all
18 dead. I don't feel any of it, and I can't move it because of permanent nerve damage and
19 atrophied muscles.
20
- 21 AJ: Hm.
22
- 23 AS: And it's actually in both of my arms. So I'll have to, I already have to have another surgery that's
24 already on the books, you know, scheduled and stuff so, for the most part so.
25
- 26 AJ: Are you able to work out at all or?
27
- 28 AS: Yeah. I can workout. And, uhm, I had to do a lot of physical therapy and stuff like that, uhm, to
29 get back walking and everything with canes and crutches and, uhm, I actually have a personal
30 trainer, uhm, who works with people who, you know, do a lot of physical therapy and stuff like
31 that so we work on a lot of things that help condition my muscles, keep my muscles strong, and,
32 uhm, strengthen, you know, joints and stuff like that. So I do workout to be a better me too plus
33 I want more of a male figure since I'm adjusting, since all my stuff is adjusting more after
34 getting, uhm, my ovaries out and stuff like that, I don't make any, uhm, estrogen anymore. So
35 my, where I hold my fat and everything has readjusted and been put in different ways so I can
36 build more muscle and stuff like that. And I like to do that, especially like a lot more chest
37 muscles and stuff like that cause I kind of like having a buff chest. [Laughs]. And, you know, I
38 would like to have more definition and stuff like that. So, uhm, I've been working out at that
39 more. Uhm, plus before all of the issues I fought, uhm, I used to do boxing. I used to do muay
40 thai. Yeah, I did mixed marshal arts muay thai. I've, you know, sword fighter and stuff like that.
41 You know, I was raised fighting, you know, pretty much, you know, tag you're it, you know, with
42 a pop and then running through the house and stuff like that, you know, with my little sister and
43 my dad. So, you know, it's like...
44
- 45 AJ: So you've had this male energy all the time.
46
- 47 AS: Always.

1
2 AJ: Yeah.
3
4 AS: Yup. I was the one, you know, family member passed away or something like that my dad would
5 come to me and be like, "Okay, you have to be strong for your mom and your sister."
6
7 AJ: Hm.
8
9 AS: You know, and, and that's what I look at. That's what, you know, the oldest son, you know...
10
11 AJ: Yeah.
12
13 AS: ... does and stuff like that, the person to pass down. And so that's how I was always, you know,
14 treated.
15
16 AJ: Mhm.
17
18 AS: You know, in my heart sometimes I was crying and was like, "What about me?" You know? Who
19 hold me up, you know? Who do I go to? Who's strong for me because, you know, I'm missing
20 these people too.
21
22 AJ: Right.
23
24 AS: Uhm, so, you know, that kind of made me, I guess, even harder.
25
26 AJ: Mhm.
27
28 AS: And, you know, that really made me look at, you know, how I was raised and stuff, you know.
29 It's like you didn't know this but you know you already treated me this way. You know, so even
30 though you see me as, you know, you're "little girl" or, you know, what was. It's like, you know,
31 actually in your mind, I never was.
32
33 AJ: Right.
34
35 AS: So.
36
37 AJ: [Laughs]. How is your relationship with your dad now?
38
39 AS: So, we don't have a great relationship.
40
41 AJ: Mhm.
42
43 AS: Uhm, I'm not fond of him. I mean, I respect him as, you know, as a father and, you know, a
44 provider and stuff like that.
45
46 AJ: Mhm.
47

- 1 AS: Uhm, but other than that I don't. I don't, I had a really rough upbringing with him.
2
- 3 AJ: Mhm.
4
- 5 AS: Uhm, as far as the way we were raised and stuff like that. He had an anger issue. Uhm, and he
6 was this very hard guy. Uhm, don't know for what reason, whatever, but...
7
- 8 AJ: He's very...
9
- 10 AS: Yeah, he's a very hard guy and, uhm, you know, and I never quite understood and still don't.
11 And, uhm, you know, he's a lot for outwardly things and stuff like that. Everything has to look
12 good and stuff like that. And I don't know why because he wasn't raised in the best of, you
13 know, things and stuff like that, but, you know, he's really big on outlooks. How people see him
14 and this, that, and the other. And it's like, okay, but you need to be a person first. Uhm, so, you
15 know, we, we constantly butt heads. He's a Scorpio. Uhm, and we've always have. You know, we
16 never really melded as a different type of being. And he didn't quite understand it. Uhm, you
17 know, so I can be around.
18
- 19 AJ: You're a Capricorn?
20
- 21 AS: Yeah, I'm a Capricorn. So, you know, it takes a lot to get me upset and stuff like that. I, I see and
22 feel a lot. I understand a lot. I've done people watch and, you know, hear a lot. There's one thing
23 in high school, you know, we had this big to do, go out and fight and stuff like that. You know,
24 and something was amiss. You always had to be 100% plus, which you could never be.
25
- 26 AJ: Right.
27
- 28 AS: And, you know, fighting for that to get recognition to be, you know, for, to have them be, you
29 know, proud of you, you know. It's something that I always fought for. Cause I always felt that
30 they didn't. I still feel, you know, that my father's not proud of me as a person. Uhm, you know,
31 sometimes I feel like I just walk in a room and I upset him. Uhm, but, uhm, we had a big fight out
32 and, uhm, at one point in time he, you know, he said, "I know you." Cause like, "You don't know
33 me." And he said, "I know you." And I said, "Do you?" I said, "What's my favorite color?"
34
- 35 AJ: Mhm.
36
- 37 AS: And he looked at me and said, "Well, what's mine?" And I looked him dead in the eyes and said,
38 "Green."
39
- 40 AJ: Mhm.
41
- 42 AS: His face just dropped.
43
- 44 AJ: Hm.
45
- 46 AS: And I said, "Exactly." I wear my favorite color every day. It's blue. Blue jeans. Socks. Something. I
47 wear it every day. It's prominent. It's not like you can't see it but you're not looking.

1
2 AJ: Wow.
3
4 AS: So, you know, and I've always stayed to myself. Like I said, we didn't talk about feeling and stuff
5 like that so I stayed to myself in my own room and interacted with the family in that way and
6 stuff like that. But, you know, not only be, I was a different person then. It didn't feel right on
7 my own. I didn't feel, you know, like I belonged for the most part. You know, my little sister I
8 could talk to and everything like that, but, you know, as far as parents and stuff like that, you
9 know, he, he's got this different energy, and it really, you know, it keeps me on edge sometimes.
10 I don't like to interact with him some days.
11
12 AJ: Wow.
13
14 AS: Just because, you know, it's, sometimes I'm just so angry. You know, and sometimes I'm upset,
15 you know. I forgive him for the stuff that happened in the past and stuff like that but also it's
16 like, you know, what's your side? Tell me. You know, why do, why do I need to feel every time I
17 come in or something like that, that I'm a disappointment to you?
18
19 AJ: Hm.
20
21 AS: You know, and, you know, and then on the backside my mom is like, "Oh, well." You know, I just
22 moved into my apartment, and my mom is like, "Well, your dad will help you with this, that, and
23 the other." And it's like, I don't want anything to do with him. You know, I don't want to talk so
24 if he talks to her and stuff and has this different thing. And it's like completely different. It's, you
25 know, it's, it's a beast. I don't know.
26
27 AJ: Talk to me about relationships, love, like who do you date or you dating?
28
29 AS: Relationships.
30
31 AJ: Love.
32
33 AS: Uhm.
34
35 AJ: Do you like guys? Do you like girls?
36
37 AS: [Laughs].
38
39 AJ: I don't know.
40
41 AS: Uhm, I've been in love a lot. I mean, I'm a lover. I'm an old school lover.
42
43 AJ: Mhm.
44
45 AS: I'm a hopeless romantic, I guess. I'm an old school gentleman and stuff like that. I love to woo
46 and, you know, send you flowers and buying gifts and pamper you and stuff like that. Uhm, who
47 do I love? I love whoever my heart speaks to. You know, whoever is supposed to be in my life

1 and comes to me that I find attractive or, you know, in a way that's who I love as long as you
2 love me as a person.
3
4 AJ: Mhm.
5
6 AS: Uhm, you know, it's funny. I guess before testosterone I didn't, I guess, like men. Uhm, or deal
7 with them too much.
8
9 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
10
11 AS: Uhm, I guess to give them a chance for the most part. Now looking back at it, I was
12 uncomfortable with my body.
13
14 AJ: Hm.
15
16 AS: I didn't want to be looked at as, you know, like female and/or treated. So I was very
17 uncomfortable. Uhm, so I was always with females. Uhm, and then, you know, afterwards and
18 stuff, I was a little more okay. I'm open a little bit more to it. Uhm, and now it's just, you know,
19 kind of the way of the heart. You know, it's whoever I'm attracted to and attracted to back and
20 stuff like that. Uhm, what do I call myself. Am I bi? Am I gay? Am I straight? Lesbian? I had a
21 question from a person I was in a relationship with actually asked me this, and, you know, I'm
22 like I'm just me. I mean, why, why classify myself when it's like technically I'm not in a class
23 because of, you know, how I am, you know, gender wise, physically, and stuff like that. I have to
24 just love the person regardless of what they have.
25
26 AJ: Mhm.
27
28 AS: Uhm, you know, a straight person with me doesn't make me, you know, gay or lesbian or
29 anything like that because they're with me cause I have different, you know, stuff or equipment.
30 Uhm, so why do I need to be, you know, different. So, I'm just me. I love who I love. Uhm, a
31 mantra that actually, uh, I grew up by, uhm, is, my grandmother taught it to me actually. I was
32 raised very religiously. I went to Sunday school. I was Baptist. And I taught children's church and
33 everything like that. So I know the bible and everything like that.
34
35 AJ: Right.
36
37 AS: Uhm, I go to church every now and then, but, you know, church is difficult for me cause of my
38 PTSD and also just the way I grew up.
39
40 AJ: Mhm.
41
42 AS: Church is kind of, it's not great for, I guess, GLBT people sometimes...
43
44 AJ: It can be a little restraining.
45
46 AS: ... especially as an African American type community and stuff like that. So it can be difficult on
47 top of all my PTSD so.

1
2 AJ: So the PTSD you have, I know you relayed to me earlier that sometimes being in crowds...
3
4 AS: Yeah. Exactly. Minnesota State Fair or something, I'm hectic.
5
6 AJ: [Laughs].
7
8 AS: You know, I go there, uhm, with my marching band that I help out and stuff like that. And we
9 stay the whole day afterwards.
10
11 AJ: Okay.
12
13 AS: I proceed to go home and then I spend about an hour in the shower crying, uhm, because it
14 takes so much out of me trying to, uhm, hold that in and everything and be strong.
15
16 AJ: Uhuh.
17
18 AS: To be able to handle that one day. Uhm, to go with them.
19
20 AJ: You're in the marching band.
21
22 AS: I help, uhm, teach a marching band, uhm, in the summers, uh, with a high school that I actually
23 used to march with in high school. Uhm, and they've done it every summer since I've been back.
24
25 AJ: What high school?
26
27 AS: It's, uhm, Simley Senior High in Inver Grove Heights. And, uh, we do a lot of parades. We do
28 parade marching. We don't do field marching. Uhm, and we go out and have fun and I love
29 giving back to the kids and stuff and everything like that. Uhm.
30
31 AJ: So parade marching is just kind of a straight line whereas the field marching is where you make
32 your own...
33
34 AS: Yeah, you make all the designs and stuff on the field.
35
36 AJ: Yeah. Yeah, we just do straight lines, uhm. We do a lot of stopping, stop and go. We do dance so
37 you might catch us doing all sorts of stuff depending on the, you know, on the song.
38
39 AS: On the song, yeah.
40
41 AJ: Exactly.
42
43 AS: So we really have a lot of fun. We actually went to, uhm, St. Louis earlier this year, uhm, and
44 played at, uhm, the Six Flags and, uh, the World of Fun in St. Louis, uh, Kansas City.
45
46 AJ: Which is kind of like the state fair, I mean.
47

- 1 AS: Yeah.
2
- 3 AJ: I've been to a few Six Flags.
4
- 5 AS: Exactly, we've been to the, uhm, with days like that, uhm, people who know, like the director
6 knows about it. You know, his girlfriend knows about it. Uhm, a few of the parents do. Uhm,
7 and, uh, a person that I was with at that time, uhm, knew how I was. And, uhm, was there too.
8 So...
9
- 10 AJ: It helps.
11
- 12 AS: Yeah. So I had a lot of anchors and stuff like that that knew about me and a lot of, I've gone
13 through therapy at the VA and stuff and I'm on medications. So, uhm, all that, you know, help
14 for when days, there's days when like they're really, really hard.
15
- 16 AJ: What instrument do you play?
17
- 18 AS: I play the saxophone and the beri saxophone, uh, and also drums, like bass drums and
19 everything.
20
- 21 AJ: Oh wow.
22
- 23 AS: So yeah. Yeah, I used to march with the, uhm, the beri sax, like, I like the big toys.
24
- 25 AJ: Okay.
26
- 27 AS: [Laughs]. So that's why people look at me and like, "You're marching with that?" "Yes, I march
28 with a big thing, a harness and everything, and, you know, sit up there and work it."
29
- 30 AJ: [Laughs]. Wonderful. Uhm, and I understand you do drag. You talked about that a little bit
31 before.
32
- 33 AS: Yes. I am a drag king.
34
- 35 AJ: Uhuh.
36
- 37 AS: Not a queen. Nothing to say about queens, love to hang with them, but I am a drag king
38 performer.
39
- 40 AJ: I'm a drag queen too.
41
- 42 AS: Yeah. Tempe is what they call a male impersonator, which is a drag king, uh, which is a female
43 who is impersonating a man.
44
- 45 AJ: Mhm.
46
- 47 AS: Uhm, I've kind of grown up through that with being lesbian and to transgender now.

1
2 AJ: Mhm.
3
4 AS: Uhm, and still perform. I actually do, uhm, the national circuits and stuff. I perform under Gay
5 United States, uhm, most of the time. I started in 2009, and I've held a title every year since
6 then.
7
8 AJ: Is that right?
9
10 AS: Yep, most people don't know that. They just think, you know, I just kind of do drag and stuff. I'm
11 very, very humble about myself. But when, you know, they see me on a panel or something like
12 that or, you know, why I'm there, you know, helping, you know, do this, that, or the other. And
13 then they see me coming out to perform and they see me come in with all my credentials, you
14 know, my lace thing with, you know, my ribbon that's got the sash and it's got this and stuff like
15 that. Then you're really just like, yeah. You know, you have to do a little bit more, but I'd rather
16 give back not because of, you know, what I have or whatever. I want somebody to notice me
17 and recommend me because of how I am and what I do rather than, you know, all the golden
18 bling I show you. You know, respect me as a performer and who I am. And, uhm, a lot of, that's
19 how I met a lot of the queens and performers here because they see how I go about doing it and
20 everything. And they respect me for that.
21
22 AJ: Mhm.
23
24 AS: So when they want to work with me with that, you know, that's the best reward that I can think
25 of as a performer.
26
27 AJ: To get the respect.
28
29 AS: Yeah, exactly. It's like just because I have this title I don't think I should be treated, you know, a
30 certain way. Yeah, maybe I should, you know, get this amount of money for booking or
31 something like that but I'm just as apt to help out or donate for, you know, somebody trying to
32 get somewhere as long as they're, you know, fighting and they're showing me.
33
34 AJ: Wow. That's, that's awesome. Uhm, so you've, you've traveled all over the country?
35
36 AS: Yeah, I've, uhm.
37
38 AJ: Where are some places you've been?
39
40 AS: I started in Virginia. Uhm, in Roanoke, Virginia at the park. That's where I first started, uh, doing
41 drag and everything. Uhm, so I performed in Roanoke. I've performed in, uh, North Carolina. In
42 D.C. competitions. I've performed in, uhm, Maryland, Philadelphia, New Jersey, uhm, of course,
43 here.
44
45 AJ: [Laughs].
46

- 1 AS: You know I was actually at the beginning of one of the shows, uhm, the Divine Diva Show which
2 is on Thursdays at the Brass Rail. I'm actually the original devo.
3
- 4 AJ: Oh wow.
5
- 6 AS: Yeah. Uhm, and I do the talent search at the, uhm, the 90s. Uhm, it's been a while because of
7 surgeries and stuff but I've done those because we don't have a lot of king strength in
8 Minnesota so I wanted to bring it back to be like, "Hey, you know, come out. If you want to try
9 it, try it. Get on stage and everything like that." Try to build it back up. So as a performer who
10 has titles and sashes and stuff, we'd come down every Wednesday night and perform with,
11 uhm, all of the up and comings. Uhm, and stuff like that and just kind of tried to mentor them
12 and help them out and be like, you know, it's okay, come have fun. You know, regardless of your
13 orientation, how you are...
14
- 15 AJ: Do you see that as a path? I mean, I know the path for you, uhm, but being a drag male
16 impersonator as a path to coming out as trans? Have you noticed a lot of people?
17
- 18 AS: Uhm, not so much. Like, in my experience, not so much. I see it as more of a lesbian type, you
19 know, thing for the most part. Because once you get to the fact with transition, I've seen a lot of
20 them stop, uhm, because they don't want to be attributed so much as a drag king, uhm, because
21 it is, you know, male impersonation. They are now, you know, male where they want to be.
22 Uhm, so I see a lot stop. Uhm, drag is an outlet for me, uh, with my PTSD. You know, I like
23 making people laugh. I love, you know, interacting with them and giving them something
24 different. Uhm, you know, and I love, you know, being able to exert a different side of me. You
25 know, in my art. I do different types of arts and stuff like that. Uhm, and after going to Iraq, I lost
26 interest in a lot of stuff. And that's one thing that I could still do as far as acting and stuff like
27 that. So I embraced it.
28
- 29 AJ: And you mentioned you were in the marching band or in the band in the military too, right?
30
- 31 AS: Yep. Uhm, actually after coming home from Iraq, I joined the Virginia National Guard Marching
32 Band.
33
- 34 AJ: Uhuh.
35
- 36 AS: And did that where we did lots of parades, performances, anything statewide, stuff like that that
37 we did. Uhm, I also did the Honor Guard, uhm, which is the military guys that go up and fold the
38 flag. They play the trumpet. Uhm, they do the 21 guy salute for everybody who, uhm, passed
39 away, uhm, military wise. I did that for a few years honoring a lot of veterans and people. And
40 that, that was an honor for me to be able to do that, uhm, for, you know, brothers and sisters
41 that, that passed away.
42
- 43 AJ: Sure. So what are you up to now? Are you, do you, working anywhere? Or going to school?
44 What's going on?
45

- 1 AS: I don't work right now. Uhm, right now I guess after my, my stints of surgeries and stuff like that
2 I am, uhm, doing, back in school again. I've been to school, I guess, a couple of times. Through
3 the military I was actually a multimedia illustrator.
4
- 5 AJ: Oh wow.
6
- 7 AS: Uhm, so, you know, I did fun stuff on PowerPoint, Photoshop, and all that stuff.
8
- 9 AJ: Graphic design.
10
- 11 AS: Yeah, that's what I was trained in in the military. Uhm, and then, uhm, after that, uh, I did a lot
12 of diesel mechanic. I worked on Volvos, and then I went to school for culinary, uhm, that's
13 Virginia Western in Roanoke, Virginia. Uhm, so pretty much got a degree for culinary. Uhm, and
14 now.
15
- 16 AJ: You can cook, huh?
17
- 18 AS: Yeah, I can cook. [Laughs]. Now I am going back to school for my Associates in Fine Arts to kind
19 of, uhm, beef up the art background.
20
- 21 AJ: Sure.
22
- 23 AS: Uh, cause, you know, with culinary and graphic illustrating it's already an art background but it
24 just beefs it up a little bit more. Uhm, you know, there's never too, too much to learn new
25 things and new tricks so I'm doing a little bit of photography, you know, drawing, painting, uh,
26 ceramics. So it's a little bit of everything. It kind of keeps my mind going and stuff so.
27
- 28 AJ: Okay. You are just blowing me away here in this interview. Uhm, I think you talked about the
29 first time you met a trans person, right? Your friend in Virginia who?
30
- 31 AS: Yeah. He's actually, uhm, my trans brother.
32
- 33 AJ: Right.
34
- 35 AS: He's pretty much my brother. Uhm, his, his, uhm, his family, you know, kind of put me in the
36 family, and he's so close to me that he's not even, I don't call him my friend. You know, he's my
37 brother.
38
- 39 AJ: Wow.
40
- 41 AS: Uhm, for the most part.
42
- 43 AJ: You guys still communication and?
44
- 45 AS: We do, and he's actually, he's in, uhm, Kentucky, uhm, right now. And, uhm, you know, we talk,
46 uhm, at least weekly and stuff. We usually use Vox so we do the walkie talkie on, over the
47 phone.

1
2 AJ: Oh. Vox, yeah.
3
4 AS: Cause we both don't like the phone so we usually, you know, Vox-er it and stuff like that so
5 yeah. Uhm, yeah, I've been trying to get him up here for a while.
6
7 AJ: So what do you think about the relationship between the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and the
8 transgender community? Is it good? Is it strange? Is it awful? Like, what's your take on it?
9
10 AS: Uhm, as separate or just as a whole?
11
12 AJ: As a whole. I mean, it's, it's sort of classified as a whole community, right?
13
14 AS: Yeah.
15
16 AJ: The LGBT community. I mean people are very apt to say that. Uh, but, you know...
17
18 AS: But very remised to forget all the parts.
19
20 AJ: Right, exactly.
21
22 AS: Uhm, you know, we kind of have our own, I don't know, own nation within ourselves.
23
24 AJ: Mhm.
25
26 AS: Uhm, and, you know, we're a very diverse nation within ourselves. And, uhm, we tend to, you
27 know, like want to fight for rights and stuff like that but we forget underneath our things,
28 separately, you know, the lesbians, and, you know, the gays and the bisexuals and the
29 transgenders all together, they, you know, they want to put this big rainbow flag front but, you
30 know, technically, for the most part, we are all, you know, we're kind of separated, uhm, on a
31 lot of things.
32
33 AJ: Hm.
34
35 AS: Uhm, especially, uh, transgender. Kind of like the redheaded stepchild, no offense to redheaded
36 people...
37
38 AJ: [Laughs].
39
40 AS: ... uhm, but, uhm, you know, of the group because, you know, it's always, okay, let us get this
41 first and then we will bring you're stuff in later.
42
43 AJ: Mm.
44
45 AS: Uhm, it is, you know, kind of the way it reads. And it is remiss. And, you know, there's a lot of
46 fighting, and, you know, segregating on this and on that type and stuff like that within ourselves
47 underneath. So, you know, it's kind of hurtful, you know, it kind of hurts your heart to see that.

1 You know, people that are discriminated against and hated against all the time are so apart from
2 each other, uhm, instead of being, you know, brought together. Like there's so much out there
3 that is hateful in this world that, you know, want to hurt us and stuff like that. We don't need to
4 hurt each other. Uhm, you know, whether it be in, you know, like a drag community. And I do
5 this type of drag as opposed to you do this type of drag or, you know, lesbians, you know, don't
6 want to be classified as, I'm a butch lesbian, I'm this lesbian, or you know, don't be bi. You know,
7 everything like that, and it's like why do we do that? You know, it kind of brings me back to, you
8 know, you have the black and white. You know, I'm this black. I'm this white and stuff like that.
9 And even breaking it down even more, I'm this type of white or, you know, this is my
10 background or even blacks, you know, where we go through, you know, a real African or, you
11 know, you're yellow, you know stuff like that. It's always segregated. And it's like why do we
12 need to do that instead of just seeing a person?

13
14 AJ: Mhm. Yeah. Do you think there's a transgender agenda that's in place or do you think there
15 should be, and if so what should it be?

16
17 AS: Mm. That's hard. Uhm, it's really hard because one thing like with trans stuff like that there's a
18 lot of in the closet trans that are undercover and, and don't want to be put out there because
19 we just want to be who we are.

20
21 AJ: Mhm.

22
23 AS: And in order to, I guess, speak about it, we have to...

24
25 AJ: Undercover, you mean, don't come out or they do come out and then they go stealth.

26
27 AS: Uhm, kind of both.

28
29 AJ: Yeah.

30
31 AS: It's very much both.

32
33 AJ: Uhuh.

34
35 AS: Uhm, and in order to, I guess, vocalize and to stand up you have to constantly put yourself out.

36
37 AJ: Cause you could go stealth.

38
39 AS: [Laughs].

40
41 AJ: Iraq vet. Got the beard thing going on.

42
43 AS: Oh yeah. I have to truthfully convince people sometimes yes.

44
45 AJ: Really?

46

- 1 AS: This is me. You know, or something like that. I have to have a picture of me, no, no, this isn't my
2 twin sister. This is me.
3
- 4 AJ: [Laughs].
5
- 6 AS: Uhm, but yeah, there's a lot that do that. Uhm, so it kind of makes it hard, uhm, sometimes. I
7 think there needs to be more of a movement. I think we are slowly picking up movements. Uhm,
8 you know, things are turning over. Uhm, especially in the military, uhm, you know, trying to
9 accept talking about accepting transgenders. Uhm, you know, the different things and stuff like
10 that as far as, uhm, social security, being able to change your, uhm, identity, uhm, in different
11 states and places like that whether it be your birth certificate or driver's license and all that
12 stuff.
13
- 14 AJ: Passport is even...
15
- 16 AS: Yup. Things are becoming a lot easier and stuff like that. You know, uhm, and how to do it. Uhm,
17 because there is so much of it. You know, it's a little bit more. I mean even, you know, places,
18 work places, and insurance companies and stuff like that. I was just reading online, uhm, they
19 even have Medicare has opened it, uhm, for doing transgender surgery. Now do I know how to
20 do it? Not yet but you best believe I'm working on it. [Laughs].
21
- 22 AJ: Working on it.
23
- 24 AS: Working on that part but, uhm, you know, that, they've allowed it to be that it is a needed thing.
25 Uhm, it's not just some type of, you know, it's not like getting breast implants because...
26
- 27 AJ: It's not cosmetic.
28
- 29 AS: ... yeah, it's not cosmetic. It's a necessary thing, uhm, to have a healthy life. Some, not all
30 transgenders, need that.
31
- 32 AJ: Right.
33
- 34 AS: But, you know, for the most part, and the fact that they see that, just like calling it, uhm, you
35 know, it was, uh, gender identity, uh, syndrome. It's not a syndrome. It's dysphoria because it's
36 not, you know, just something that you have. Uhm, so the fact that they're moving to
37 understand it more. Uhm, and it's gonna take, it's gonna take a while because there are so many
38 shades of it. You know, if we, if any color we are, we are grey, uhm, in the many different shades
39 within because there are so many different but we still are transgender. You know, I could be
40 transgender and not have hormones. Or, you know, I could just be hormones and not have any
41 surgeries and be transgender. So they're, it's doesn't make me any less or any more. And it's, it's
42 one we stop thinking about, uhm, physical bodies. Uhm, and just see a person as a person. You
43 know, it shouldn't be because I wear a dress that's what makes me female or because I have,
44 you know, tits and you know a vagina, I am a female or, you know, the alternative for male.
45 Uhm, it doesn't matter. It matters, you know, my soul, my aura is, you know, the person that I
46 put out to you. And even on top of that, why, why does it matter whether I'm feminine or
47 masculine? Because, you know, a feminine person can do a masculine job and can be masculine

1 at a certain part, point or part of time just as much as a masculine person be effeminate. You
2 see that in, you know, single parents that are raising, whether it's a mom or dad that's being
3 both, uhm, for them. And that doesn't make them any less than the person that they are, you
4 know. In, in some eyes, it makes them a hero because they are all encompassing.

5
6 AJ: Sure. Wow. Uhm, some of the most visible trans people in our culture right now, like Chelsea
7 Manning, uhm, Caitlin Jenner, Laverne Cox, like, what do you think of this new level of visibility
8 that, uhm, trans people are experiencing?

9
10 AS: Uhm, I guess that's kind of split because some of them are great and some of them are aren't.

11
12 AJ: [Laughs].

13
14 AS: Uhm, and you know, I won't say too much about it but Caitlin Jenner she's going through her
15 own thing and everything like that. Maybe the way that she came out and started it and
16 whatnot and because there was such media on it, it kind of, you know, downplayed a lot of
17 other people who are in the struggle and who have been working towards it, such as, you know,
18 uhm, uh, just thought of her name, the one that does Orange is the New Black.

19
20 AJ: Laverne.

21
22 AS: Yeah, Laverne Cox. Uhm, and, you know, Chaz Bono whose constantly been doing this and stuff
23 like that but haven't gotten tons of overhead.

24
25 AJ: [Laughs].

26
27 AS: And, exactly, and it's like, it, it, you know, when Caitlin came out and everybody is like, "Oh my
28 god!" You know, it kind of downplayed everybody. And it's like, okay. Now we've got, you know,
29 we've got a little foothold but don't base it off of this.

30
31 AJ: Right.

32
33 AS: You know, keep going and working.

34
35 AJ: Mhm.

36
37 AS: Uhm, it's nice that there are, there are some shows about it. It's, it's nice and it's not nice
38 because there still are a lot of people who don't have open eyes. So take it and they twist it and
39 reconstitute it. You know, sometimes they use it for their own agenda. Uhm, the way that
40 people piece together things and put it up and are explaining. You know, they're going to use
41 this and they're gonna use that instead of, you know, like the whole story or, you know, this. So
42 they what to misuse it. You know, it's just like all the stuff with religion where they, you know,
43 want to hold up the signs and say, you know, this, Sodom and Gomorrah and whatnot but it's
44 like, well, okay, you don't want to read the whole story that actually says it.

45
46 AJ: [Laughs].

- 1 AS: You're just using it to, you know, place it into your own contextual things like...
- 2
- 3 AJ: Sure.
- 4
- 5 AS: ... like if you knew it, read the whole story, it's like you're stepping on your own toes. [Laughs].
- 6
- 7 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 8
- 9 AS: So, you know, it, it's just, you know, gonna take a lot of movement and motion and, uhm, the
- 10 people that are in the lime light and stuff, you know, they have to hold fast and make sure
- 11 they're, you know, yes, they're on their own journey, but they are also representing.
- 12
- 13 AJ: Mhm.
- 14
- 15 AS: And I think first and foremost as long as they represent themselves the way that they want to
- 16 see themselves and everything, then they will represent the community, you know wonderfully.
- 17
- 18 AJ: Cool. Uhm, have you ever been engaged or involved in any LGBT or transgender specific
- 19 organizations?
- 20
- 21 AS: Uhm, not so, not so much. Uhm, I've got little ones, I guess, uhm, as far as ones in colleges that
- 22 I, that I help out. I just took a, uhm, kind of a group, that, that was in, uhm, the community
- 23 college that I'm in now. We made it a official group.
- 24
- 25 AJ: Okay.
- 26
- 27 AS: So we officially have a trans, you know, a, uhm, LGBT plus group and stuff like that.
- 28
- 29 AJ: Oh wow.
- 30
- 31 AS: You know, I'm trying to get out there and be known and stuff like that.
- 32
- 33 AJ: And you go to?
- 34
- 35 AS: I go to Inver Hills Community College in Inver Grove Heights.
- 36
- 37 AJ: Uhuh.
- 38
- 39 AS: Uhm, so, you know, we're trying to do that. Uhm, I also help, I help with a, uhm, I guess trans
- 40 groups throughout the, uh, through the VA.
- 41
- 42 AJ: Okay.
- 43
- 44 AS: And, uhm, I help out where ever I can to do, uhm, discussion. You know, discussion boards. I'll
- 45 be on those and everything...
- 46
- 47 AJ: So there's trans specific military group?

1
2 AS: There is. There are actually two of them. There, there are trans vets where we got the older
3 ones who are, you know...
4
5 AJ: Uhuh.
6
7 AS: ... uhm, and then we have one once a month for the younger...
8
9 AJ: Oh wow.
10
11 AS: ... uhm, and that involves both trans females and trans males.
12
13 AJ: Okay.
14
15 AS: Uhm, a lot. So they, we actually do have, you know, group and everything like that where it's all
16 veterans where we can, you know, help each other with the PTSD and stuff.
17
18 AJ: How are people are in these groups?
19
20 AS: Uhm, wow, there are over 10. Definitely over 10. Not like, you know, we're breaking 20s and
21 stuff like that but we do have, we do have a lot. There are a lot of transgender people who are
22 veterans, period.
23
24 AJ: That's right.
25
26 AS: Uhm, that go through and stuff like that, which was, you know, an awe inspiring thing to me,
27 uhm, with that. I knew there were a lot of, you know, like lesbians and gays out there. You
28 know, cause they are undercover and, you know, they do all that stuff before.
29
30 AJ: Sure.
31
32 AS: Uh, when I went to Iraq, you know, you kind of have the world in one little place, you know.
33
34 AJ: Mhm.
35
36 AS: I've met people from Hawaii and, you know, people from, you know, the east coast, the west
37 coast, all over the place.
38
39 AJ: Puerto Rico.
40
41 AS: Exactly. And, uhm, all come into one so, you know, you kind of see all of it, and the extremes...
42
43 AJ: Uhuh.
44
45 AS: ... in one little group. Uhm, but, uh, yeah, we have a lot. It's a great thing to see because we can
46 help each other as far as navigating, uhm, transgender world and stuff like that. Okay, this is
47 what you need, you know, to get your birth certificate or hey I'll help you do all this paperwork

1 and, you know, I'm having trouble with, uhm, relationships. I'm having trouble with, you know,
2 uhm, this community or something like PTSD or something. I hear people that have, that are
3 fighting the same struggle as you...
4
5 AJ: Right.
6
7 AS: ... uhm, at the same time.
8
9 AJ: I mean, they're dealing with the gender issue but they're also veteran.
10
11 AS: They're also veterans dealing with it. And that's a wonderful asset to have.
12
13 AJ: Wow. 50 years. Where do you see transgender community?
14
15 AS: 50 years. Uhm, in 50 years I hope I don't see a quote, unquote "transgender community."
16
17 AJ: Bing.
18
19 AS: It's like, you know, I just, I just hope to see, you know, people just in community, you know. No,
20 no labels of straight, gay, whatever. You're just you and, you know, you're how you are and
21 that's accepted, period.
22
23 AJ: Mhm. And you think we're gonna get there?
24
25 AS: I hope we get there. I don't know, maybe. I don't know if in 50 years we'll get there but we're
26 definitely moving. Uhm, you know, a lot of the youth and a lot of stuff like that they have open
27 eyes. And they don't care.
28
29 AJ: Mhm.
30
31 AS: You know, a lot of stuff is just old, but, you know, we still have to remember that, you know, old
32 stuff does carry weight, uhm, and what not. I mean, we still see stuff with, you know, through
33 racism and everything like that. And that's old, that's old. [Laughs].
34
35 AJ: It's old.
36
37 AS: So, you know, it's, it's always gonna come up, you know, as much as, you know, history.
38
39 AJ: It's changed, but it's still there.
40
41 AS: Yeah, exactly. And as much as history is important, you know, the more and more we dig it up
42 and we keep recurring history and this happened and this happened and this happened. You
43 know, it's always gonna be ingrained in it. So, you know, it's kinda always gonna be there but
44 hopefully we get to a point where it doesn't matter, you know. As long as you're doing what you
45 need to do, you're happy and you're continuing, you know, a well worth life.
46
47 AJ: Hm. Thank you Ash for this fascinating conversation.

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AS: Thank you. I'm more than honored.

AJ: I'm deeply honored to get to know you.

AS: [Laughs].

AJ: Thank you for your service to, to this country and to the ideals of, uhm, freedom and democracy. And thank you for being an outspoken person in, in our community.

AS: [Laughs]. You can't learn anything if nobody tells you.

AJ: Alrighty. Thank you.