

Alyssandra Taylor  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

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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 Alyssandra Taylor -AT

3

4 AJ: So, hello.

5 AT: Hi.

6 AJ: Today is May 5, 2016. I am Andrea Jenkins, the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History  
7 Project, and I am here today with Alyssandra Taylor, who is performing in the show *Charm* at  
8 the Mixed Blood Theatre. And I just want to correct – today is actually May 4<sup>th</sup> . . .

9 AT: May the 4<sup>th</sup> be with you.

10 AJ: May the 4<sup>th</sup> be with you – and the 5<sup>th</sup>, so I wanted to make that correction. So, hi, Alyssandra,  
11 how are you?

12 AT: I'm doing well, how are you?

13 AJ: Oh, man. I'm amazing, it's such a beautiful day.

14 AT: It is.

15 AJ: I'm just so thrilled that you are willing to sit down and talk with us today a little bit about your  
16 life and the transgender movement and how you see yourself in it and where do you see it going  
17 and all of those kinds of good things.

18 AT: All right.

19 AJ: So, listen, I just want you to introduce yourself. Can you please spell your name and tell me  
20 what is your gender identity today, what was your gender identity assigned at birth, and what  
21 are your pronouns that you use?

22 AT: OK. My name is Alyssandra Taylor, A-l-y-s-s-a-n-d-r-a. Taylor, T-a-y-l-o-r. I identify as a trans  
23 woman, or trans feminine non-binary person sometimes, I guess, depending on how I feel that  
24 day.

25 AJ: I love that, that's awesome.

26 AT: Yeah. My pronouns are she/her/hers and they/them/theirs.

27 AJ: OK.

28 AT: I was assigned male at birth.

29 AJ: Got it – got it. Thank you, Alyssandra. Do you use a nickname ever?

30 AT: You can either call me Aly or Sandy, those are my two nicknames. Or, Alyssa or Lys. There's  
31 actually a lot, but I pretty much say Aly or Sandy because . . .

32 AJ: Cool. I like Aly.

33 AT: Yeah, everybody . . . that's what most people call me.

- 1 AJ: Is that right?
- 2 AT: Yes.
- 3 AJ: Wonderful. Aly, tell me a little bit about your earliest memory in life. It doesn't have to have  
4 anything to do with your gender identity, but if it does, that's cool. Just, what's the first thing  
5 you remember?
- 6 AT: My third birthday party.
- 7 AJ: Yeah.
- 8 AT: I got these Disney plates and Disney cups and I was really excited about them. I think one was  
9 Pooh Bear and one was Mickey Mouse. I don't really remember much else about that, I just  
10 kind of remember the feeling and I remember the plates. I remember sitting in my high chair  
11 with them and looking around like, "What else? What else?"
- 12 AJ: Did you have lots of siblings growing up or any siblings at all?
- 13 AT: I have two siblings, two blood siblings, on my mom's side and then I have three on my dad's, but  
14 my older cousin is more like my older sister so I say I have three siblings on my mom's side.
- 15 AJ: OK. How was it growing up with your siblings?
- 16 AT: I didn't really grow up with them. I'm 12 years younger than my brother on my mom's side and  
17 my cousin, and I'm 18 years younger than my older sister. And then, on my dad's side, there's a  
18 7-year age gap between me and my sister and then an 11-year and then a 12-year age gap  
19 between my brothers and me.
- 20 AJ: So, you kind of grew up as an only child then?
- 21 AT: Kind of, yeah. For a while it was me and my mom and my sister and my brother and then my  
22 sister moved out and then my brother went to go live with his dad, and then . . . yeah, it was me  
23 and my mom. So, pretty much. I saw them and hung out with them, but I wasn't . . . yeah.
- 24 AJ: Yeah, but the household . . . the day-to-day . . .
- 25 AT: Was mostly me and my mom after I was four.
- 26 AJ: Getting up and eating cereal and watching cartoons and all of that stuff.
- 27 AT: Right, I was all by myself.
- 28 AJ: Where did you grow up?
- 29 AT: Boston, Massachusetts.
- 30 AJ: All right, Beantown.
- 31 AT: The Beantown, the dot – yeah.
- 32 AJ: What was that like? That's a big city.

- 1 AT: It was like Boston . . . It was Boston. That's weird . . . growing up . . . growing up was a lot like . .  
2 . I played with the boys and the girls, up until somewhere around first grade and then I mostly  
3 played with the girls – not saying I didn't have boy friends, because I did, but I was just more  
4 interested in hanging out with the other girls. I was a smart, sheltered, and, yet, rapidly growing  
5 up kid. I came out when I was 10 and that didn't really go so well, but . . . I came out as gay  
6 when I was 10 . . . 10, 11, 12, somewhere around there. Eleven or 12 for most people, but the  
7 first time I said anything, I was 10.
- 8 AJ: Wow. Who did you say it to?
- 9 AT: This boy, Kiran . . . well, no, there was Cody, who was my boyfriend.
- 10 AJ: You had a boyfriend at 10? All right.
- 11 AT: Yeah, we had a little thing. He was a friend of mine and our uncles and aunts were best friends.  
12 So, yeah, it was like a little thing. It lasted like two weeks, but we didn't live in the same state –  
13 so, duh! He was cute, but the first person who I really remember saying it to was this boy, Kiran,  
14 who just kept asking me and I was like, "Yes, god damn – why?" And he was like, "I just wanted  
15 to know." And, that was it – he didn't care, and we were cool. Yeah, I don't know. My  
16 childhood, I don't know. It wasn't horrible but it wasn't the greatest at times – not because of  
17 my mom or anything. You know how you look back on stuff and I think I was exposed to things a  
18 little bit too early. Looking back at it, that's not OK, but it wasn't horrible up until the gay  
19 gender identity stuff, and then shit got kind of rocky, but that's life.
- 20 AJ: Yeah. Rocky, how so?
- 21 AT: I got into fights a lot when I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade after I came out – well, in middle school, period.  
22 My brother and mom were not OK with me being gay; my oldest sister is a lesbian and that was  
23 a whole big thing. And then, when I came out as trans, shit just really went downhill. My mom  
24 and I didn't see eye-to-eye, I wasn't allowed to transition, when I did transition I got kicked out.  
25 But, yeah, there were a lot of arguments between me and my mom and me and my brother.  
26 Me and my brother on my mom's side don't talk at all. I haven't . . . I texted him last year, but I  
27 haven't . . . I don't even know the last time we've actually talked, but it's been a good three  
28 years – at least, going on three years.
- 29 AJ: Oh, Aly, I'm sorry to hear about that. Do you think he'll come around, come to light ever?
- 30 AT: I don't know, I'm not really worried about it. I can't be. I spent too much time worrying about  
31 what he thought when I was younger, so I don't give a flying fuck whether he comes around or  
32 not.
- 33 AJ: Got it.
- 34 AT: I would like him to, but if he doesn't there's nothing I can do about it.
- 35 AJ: You do, you've got to keep moving on, right?
- 36 AT: Right.
- 37 AJ: How do you and your mother get along now? You said you guys didn't see eye-to-eye.

- 1 AT: It's rocky. She really is having struggles accepting me as her daughter and I don't have time for  
2 you to call me he anymore. She . . . I don't know, is moving at a slower pace or whatever and . . .  
3 I don't know. I love her, her initials are tattooed on my wrist.
- 4 AJ: Sure.
- 5 AT: But, our last conversation I just told her how she and my family hurt me and then that didn't go  
6 so well and I just don't have time, but I'll see her next week because it's her birthday so I should  
7 go say happy birthday at least. So, I'll see her – so, we'll see. It's rough.
- 8 AJ: So, home life has been a little bit rocky; school was, you said, once you came out there were  
9 some challenges there.
- 10 AT: Yeah, high school was fine though – high school and college were fine, for the most part. There  
11 was one person in my high school who I just had a beef with for the entire four years that I was  
12 there and whatever - screw him because he's still a transphobic dumb ass.
- 13 AJ: So, it was all around your gender identity stuff?
- 14 AT: Yeah, a lot of . . . yeah, what else? Nobody could be mad at me for anything else. I was smart, I  
15 got good grades, I was artistic, I had a job. Yeah, most of my problems have all been around  
16 that. I was also really pre-occupied with that when I couldn't transition, so that was all I thought  
17 about.
- 18 AJ: Heavily on your mind, yeah.
- 19 AT: Right. Yeah, but I don't know . . . college and high school, for the most part, were fine though.
- 20 AJ: Did you go to a public high school?
- 21 AT: I went to a private high school.
- 22 AJ: Really? OK – like a religious-based . . .?
- 23 AT: No, I went to a Waldorf School.
- 24 AJ: Oh, wow – nice.
- 25 AT: Yeah, that was complete culture shock but I made some of the best friends that I've made my  
26 entire life.
- 27 AJ: Where did you go to college?
- 28 AT: I went to Emerson for two years and . . . you know, wait. College was fine besides the race stuff.
- 29 AJ: OK, let's talk about that.
- 30 AT: I don't know, there were just so many ignorant people. And then 2015 and 2016, that was . . .  
31 well, really 2015 and 2014 actually, that was the year that racism really started, I think, to  
32 become way too apparent to me with people and how people were talking and getting into  
33 arguments with people over race. At a certain point, I just got tired of educating . . . and then I  
34 just got tired. I was just constantly dealing with everything that was going on in the world and

- 1           seeing how people respond to it and . . . first racism and white privilege and all this . . . I don't  
2           know. I got woke – really, I got real woke my first year of college and it was a lot.
- 3    AJ:     W-o-k-e, woke.
- 4    AT:     Yeah.
- 5    AJ:     Got it.
- 6    AT:     And, yeah . . . I don't know. I guess I'm in this space where I don't want to be too negative, so  
7           Emerson was good for a lot of things but they had a lot of stuff to work on, that they're still  
8           working on, and yeah . . . some of those privileged kids were real racist, and I don't have time  
9           for it.
- 10   AJ:     Where is Emerson?
- 11   AT:     Boston, Massachusetts.
- 12   AJ:     Oh, it's in Boston, OK.
- 13   AT:     Yeah, it's right in the heart of the city, in downtown. We didn't have a typical college campus,  
14           like the city was the campus.
- 15   AJ:     The city was the campus.
- 16   AT:     Right.
- 17   AJ:     So, you said when you transitioned, began to transition, you got kicked out of your house.
- 18   AT:     Yeah.
- 19   AJ:     Where did you stay?
- 20   AT:     It was my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday and I stayed with my aunt for a month and then I moved in with my  
21           sister and then I moved into my college dorm. I would stay with either one of my sisters or my  
22           aunt until I moved into where I'm living now – which is the first apartment that is my apartment.  
23           Even though I share with people, it's the first place that's actually been my home in a while and  
24           not that my sister's and aunt's houses aren't home, but it's nice to not have to sleep on a couch.
- 25   AJ:     Yeah. And to be able to do the dishes whenever you get ready to.
- 26   AT:     Right, and just to . . . yeah, just kind of live and breathe and exist in my own space. But, yeah.
- 27   AJ:     What did you study at Emerson?
- 28   AT:     I was an acting major and then directing and playwriting.
- 29   AJ:     How did you come into acting?
- 30   AT:     Well, I did *Black Nativity*, which is this gospel production . . .
- 31   AJ:     Written by Langston Hughes.

- 1 AT: Yeah. But, in 8<sup>th</sup> grade I would get called on all the time in English class to read because I was  
2 the . . . no one else wanted to, but I liked to read, and was the only person to read and give  
3 every character their own voice. And, I knew I liked to write, but I also liked to tell stories and  
4 when I was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I was in Drama Club and then when I was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I was in  
5 *Hourtown* and I was George – so, I was the lead male role and around that time was when I  
6 really knew that I wanted to act. And then, the next year I joined this theatre troupe called True  
7 Colors, which is for LGBTQ youth and their straight allies, ages 14-22, with The Theater  
8 Offensive.
- 9 AJ: The Theater Offensive, I know that group.
- 10 AT: Yeah, so I worked with them up until last spring. I was a part of True Colors almost every troupe  
11 – I did six.
- 12 AJ: Abe – do you know Abe?
- 13 AT: Yeah, he's coming up here . . . Friday.
- 14 AJ: This coming Friday?
- 15 AT: Yeah.
- 16 AJ: To see the show?
- 17 AT: Yeah.
- 18 AJ: Oh, I need to . . . tell Abe to call me because we need to really talk. We will talk about this after  
19 the video is over.
- 20 AT: Yes. But yeah, The Theater Offensive actually really helped me grow, grow as a person, and kept  
21 me solid and made sure that I was good. So, semi-professional, I was acting with them and then  
22 I was acting at Emerson and now I'm here and I'm going back home to do another show.
- 23 AJ: Oh, my goodness. That's incredible. What's your experience been like with *Charm*?
- 24 AT: I love *Charm*. This play is going to have a special place in my heart for the rest of my life.
- 25 AJ: Really? What's the plot line?
- 26 AT: So, it's about this older trans woman named Mama Darleena Andrews, who gives charm school  
27 to these inner city LGBTQ youth and their straight ally . . . I feel like we should give Victoria some  
28 credit, she's the only straight one in that room. And, yeah, so it's about these kids and this  
29 older woman – all these people who are finding themselves and trying to find a community and  
30 home and family. Yeah, it's been really great. I really love the cast – I love each and every  
31 member of the cast. I think working with Addie, our director, was amazing.
- 32 AJ: What's her name? Addie . . . ?
- 33 AT: Addie Gorlin.
- 34 AJ: Gorlin. Do you know how to spell her last name?



- 1 AT: G-o-r-l-i-n.
- 2 AJ: OK, cool, thank you.
- 3 AT: Yeah, she was great on ensemble building and really getting . . . her and Harry were great at  
4 character work.
- 5 AJ: Harry Waters, Jr.
- 6 AT: Harry Waters, Jr. Yeah, I don't know. This has been one of the most affirming experiences I've  
7 had – both as a woman and as an actress. It's been really good to know that I can really hold my  
8 own on a stage full of people who I know are talented. I don't think that that's something I  
9 knew before I came out here. They've helped affirm that and that's good and that's . . . I don't  
10 know, it's just been a really great experience. There's a lot of love, openness, I feel like, and  
11 trust in that group.
- 12 AJ: Yeah, it's a relatively . . . it's a very young cast and one of the interesting sort of storylines for me  
13 is that the show is based on a real-life experience, right?
- 14 AT: Right.
- 15 AJ: And so, the character Mama Darleena is based on a living, breathing woman, Mama Gloria Allen,  
16 who lives in Chicago and actually started this charm school at the Center on Halsted. Mama  
17 Gloria came to see the show.
- 18 AT: Yeah.
- 19 AJ: What was that experience like for you to have . . . to sort of lived her story on stage and then get  
20 to meet her?
- 21 AT: That was crazy. I felt really blessed . . . it's not like we didn't know she was coming because we  
22 talked to her the first day of rehearsal and she told us she was coming. But, to actually see her  
23 in person – she's so sweet and so beautiful. Yeah, I gagged . . . I don't get star-struck easily at  
24 all, but with trans role models I tend to. That was great, it was great. When she told me I was  
25 beautiful, I was like gagged, "Oh, thank you, I appreciate it." But, yeah, that was so cool – that  
26 was really cool. I really appreciated having her there.
- 27 AJ: I loved your character which seemed to be . . . you didn't play Beta; your character's name was .  
28 . .
- 29 AT: Jonelle.
- 30 AJ: Jonelle. But the character was sort of gender queer, gender non-conforming, gender fluid, I  
31 would say. So, there were times when your character would . . . there was a couple of times  
32 where your character would appear sort of androgynous or maybe sort of masculine of center, I  
33 would say – not fully masculine.
- 34 AT: Masculine-ish, because I don't give off masculine vibes ever.
- 35 AJ: But then, there are other times when your character presented as sort of this quirky, feminine  
36 identity. Is there any of you in that character, or was that merely a role that you were playing?

- 1 AT: Of course . . . I mean, you can't just play a role. If you don't give a little bit of yourself, you can't  
2 connect to audiences. But, there's a lot of me in Jonelle. Both got kicked out . . . like I said,  
3 most of the time trans woman, but both of us are gender queer at times. There are times where  
4 I go out, like she says, "I'm not feeling it today," and just like I don't give a fuck. But yeah, the  
5 whole college story line where you're working towards college and just being who you are and  
6 not caring about what anyone has to say about you and just living trying to live as authentically  
7 as possible, I feel like yeah there is a lot of me in her. I'm low key, I'm real sassy like she is too –  
8 actually, that's not the right word, I'm real bitchy like she can be too.
- 9 AJ: Yeah, she is a little bitchy.
- 10 AT: No, she's the biggest bitch in the show. They're all bitches, but she was definitely written to be  
11 a bitch. I knew that as soon as I read it and that's part of the reason I wanted her.
- 12 AJ: Ariela, Areala . .
- 13 AT: She's one too.
- 14 AJ: Is it Ariela?
- 15 AT: Ariela.
- 16 AJ: Ariela was quite bitchy.
- 17 AT: Of course, we were the bitchiest, really, with each other – until she . . . until Ariela's character  
18 pulled that whole shit, but . . . whatever. But, yeah, they were definitely . . . they were written  
19 to be like that, and I like that a little bit. I like her unapologeticness. I like the fact that she's  
20 unapologetic about everything she is.
- 21 AJ: I loved your character. I really connected with the character because . . . and not that everyone  
22 didn't seem real, but Jonelle seemed to really just not be holding back anything, didn't have an  
23 agenda, didn't really have any hidden motives. Your attractions were, or Jonelle's attractions,  
24 were made very clear. Jonelle spoke their mind and lived their truth.
- 25 AT: Yeah. She's the only character, actually . . . she's the most open of all the characters from start  
26 to finish.
- 27 AJ: Right. Because we learned more things about other characters as the show went on.
- 28 AT: But I just started spilling my tea, just in general.
- 29 AJ: Yes, spilling sweat tea. Speaking of which, Aly, can you tell me the first time you realized that  
30 you were not the gender assigned at birth.
- 31 AT: I think I had an inkling for a long time but I don't think I ever really knew I could transition or  
32 what I was feeling . . . or, I guess the first time it was confirmed for me was when I was 12.
- 33 AJ: OK.
- 34 AT: I watched a documentary and I was like, "Oh, shit, this is it – this is everything I can't figure out  
35 up here." Like, "Oh . . . oh!" But, I feel like I always knew . . . I feel like I knew that I was a girl

- 1 but I don't think I ever expressed that openly because I knew not to, but I know that I felt it.  
2 Actually, let me . . . I used to pray that I could wake up and be a girl, now that I'm thinking about  
3 this – like all throughout 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 4 AJ: Wow.
- 5 AT: Yeah, so I guess 10 or 11 was when I first started to figure it out. I don't know, I've always been  
6 feminine, I've always . . . I'm like a nerd, so I liked to play with action figures but I definitely  
7 loved playing with feminine action figures and dolls more and stuff. But, yeah, I guess that was  
8 when I figured it out.
- 9 AJ: OK.
- 10 AT: And, I've known ever since.
- 11 AJ: What terms do you use to describe yourself today? We kind of talked about this a little bit, but  
12 just kind of want to revisit it a little bit. What terms do you use to describe yourself – right now  
13 today, and then how has that changed over time?
- 14 AT: So, I guess today – yeah, like I said, trans woman or trans feminine non-binary person if I'm not  
15 having a day where I'm really feeling like I'm all woman but I'm never actually a man so there's  
16 that. And, that's relatively new and I think that that's because I'm comfortable in myself and  
17 now I can go out and maybe not be all put together as a girl.
- 18 AJ: Made up . . .
- 19 AT: Made up and stuff and I don't care. I think that's because I'm comfortable in myself and I don't  
20 know how long this will last, it could be . . . it's a fairly recent development, it could change . . . I  
21 don't know. But, yeah, and for a while . . . I also identify as pansexual, but for a while I identified  
22 as a straight woman and then I realized . . . well, straight, but I knew I was attracted to  
23 masculinity and I could date a trans guy, but then I was like, "Well, I could probably date . . .  
24 probably a masculine woman or I could also date a feminine guy or a feminine girl, and then I  
25 was like . . . it was just this process of oh, it doesn't really matter what gender somebody is or  
26 what genitals they have, it's more about your personality and stuff. I think that came with time  
27 and growth as well, but I also probably have always been this way and I think I just blocked it off.  
28 As a kid, I was only really attracted to boys and I'm not saying I didn't have crushes on girls, but I  
29 definitely (audio file stops).
- 30 AJ: And, we are back. All right. Well, Aly, we got a little interrupted with the battery switch, but you  
31 were kind of talking about how language that you used to describe yourself has changed over  
32 time and pansexuality was sort of this newer identity that you have recently come to  
33 understand about yourself. Was there anything more you wanted to say about that?
- 34 AT: No, not really, just that . . . you know, I feel like as I grow I tend to figure out more about myself  
35 and that's just what this . . . I feel like that's where me being pansexual came from, just from me  
36 growing up and looking at the world through a different lens and me being more comfortable  
37 with me and same thing – the more comfortable I get with myself, the more I feel open I am, in  
38 general.

- 1 AJ: Oh, cool. Wow, that's a beautiful place to be.
- 2 AT: Yeah.
- 3 AJ: What have been some of the challenges that you have faced since you have begun to express  
4 your true identity?
- 5 AT: Well, I already talked about . . .
- 6 AJ: You talked about a lot of the family stuff.
- 7 AT: The family stuff and, you know, I've lost friends but I honestly feel like I've had it . . . I've had it  
8 relatively easy. Yeah, I've gone through some of the same stuff as everybody else in terms of  
9 being harassed on the street or people looking at me or maybe almost getting into fights and  
10 stuff because I'm trans. But, it hasn't actually been that bad and I guess I'm lucky in that. I'm  
11 from a very . . . if not super . . . I come from a place where even if it's not accepted, people just  
12 generally tend to respect you. So, for the most part, I haven't been fired from any jobs or  
13 anything for being trans.
- 14 AJ: That's good. And, you've been able to get jobs.
- 15 AT: Right, yeah. I got my name changed legally and my gender marker changed on my ID. But,  
16 yeah, I'm also very much aware . . . I hate the term passing because I don't think of trying to  
17 pass as anything, or fool anybody, I'm just living. But, I know that hormones hit me and hit me  
18 hard and really feminized me and so I know that's part of the reason why . . . I know people can  
19 tell, but I also know that I'm pretty . . . I know there are some people who can tell, I know that  
20 there are a lot of people who just don't know. I'm pretty, in addition to passing, so I know I've  
21 had it easier in that way. But then, at the same token, I guess not because telling people that  
22 you're trans is always . . . it can go 50/50, especially with boys. They're like . . . not sometimes . .  
23 . messy stuff, but I know that generally I've had it pretty lucky.
- 24 AJ: OK. So, no physical violence or anything.
- 25 AT: I've got into fights before but not anytime recently. That was . . . that happened once when I  
26 was like 19, back when I was a baby.
- 27 AJ: Yeah, a baby trans.
- 28 AT: Right.
- 29 AJ: What's it like when you meet a guy, or meet a person even . . . you like them, you feel like hey,  
30 this may turn into something physical, and you . . . do you come out as trans? At what point do  
31 you tell them about your transgender history?
- 32 AT: If I'm definitely trying to have sex with you that night, then you're going to know within, like, the  
33 first 20 minutes. But, I am . . . I don't know, I feel like I generally just come out now just with . . .  
34 or, like I won't, and then I'll just assume people know and then I'll mention it at some point and  
35 they're like, "Oh." I don't know, if I'm feeling somebody, then you're going to know. I'm not  
36 trying to put myself in any unnecessary violence or danger. I'll just tell you . . . because it's all

- 1 over everywhere anyway. It's on all my social media profiles, there's something that says I'm  
2 trans. I find that honesty is the best policy. I just tell them.
- 3 AJ: If they Google you, they will figure out what's going on.
- 4 AT: Right. Yeah, they'll figure it out real quick.
- 5 AJ: So, you might as well be upfront about it.
- 6 AT: Right, I have nothing to hide or be ashamed of.
- 7 AJ: Absolutely not. What have been some of the positive aspects that you have experienced since  
8 expressing your true gender identity?
- 9 AT: I feel like I got closer with a lot of people because I was being more open and I've been more  
10 comfortable in myself. I feel like I've helped people in terms of being a mentor almost, or just  
11 showing people like, "Oh, you can do it." Like, "You can (a) transition; and, (b) do what you  
12 want to do."
- 13 AJ: That's a beautiful message, man.
- 14 AT: That's really cool. It's really cool that I'm helping people in the same way that I was helped. I'm  
15 just . . . yeah, I just feel like I'm generally a lot happier and I feel better. I guess, that's been the  
16 biggest positive effect. So, I'm . . . not like I'm completely out of the woods with depression and  
17 anxiety and stuff, but I feel a hell of a lot better than when I was an adolescent and trying to  
18 figure all this shit out. So, I wasn't happy. I was really not happy. OK, so, I guess going back to  
19 this whole challenges thing, I wanted to die. I guess that's something . . . I was real depressed  
20 and stuff – challenges around being trans and right before I transitioned, and even at first when  
21 I started . . . because I lost a lot of people.
- 22 AJ: Sure.
- 23 AT: And I was like, "Ugh," but, generally – overall, I'm happier and so I don't feel like that anymore  
24 and that's good.
- 25 AJ: That's amazing – that's awesome. Aly, to the extent that you feel comfortable, can you talk  
26 about any medical interventions that you have undergone since you've began to transition?
- 27 AT: Hormones – that's it.
- 28 AJ: Yeah.
- 29 AT: Yeah – you mean, like what have I done as far as in terms of my transition?
- 30 AJ: Sure, yeah, medical . . . I don't know, electrolysis or bottom surgery, top surgery.
- 31 AT: Yeah, I've been on hormones for three years and that's it.
- 32 AJ: Yeah. That's been able to give you the comfort level that you feel good with?
- 33 AT: Yeah.
- 34 AJ: Any thoughts about any additional medical interventions in the future?

- 1 AT: I don't know.
- 2 AJ: Yeah.
- 3 AT: That's actually where I'm at. I don't know, I have not completely decided yet on if I want any  
4 surgeries and . . . yeah. I just don't know.
- 5 AJ: That's fair, that's awesome.
- 6 AT: I'm not completely uncomfortable with . . . well, no, I'm pretty comfortable, actually, with my  
7 body, to be honest. Actually, I'm real comfortable with it now. So, yeah, I guess at this point it's  
8 like I don't have any plans for surgery, but I also don't know . . . sometimes I'm wishy-washy,  
9 sometimes I think I want it and then sometimes I don't. I don't know . . . I'm still all wishy-washy  
10 and I haven't decided one way or the other, I'm just not going to do anything.
- 11 AJ: Right, that's very fair. Has there been any specific moments or individuals or organizations that  
12 have had a significant impact on you related to your gender identity? And I know you talked a  
13 little about The Theater Offensive in terms of helping you sort of identify this acting sort of bug,  
14 if you will, even though you were doing acting prior to that. But, I also know that The Theater  
15 Offensive is sort of a place for gender queer and gender non-conforming and trans and LGBT  
16 youth too.
- 17 AT: Yeah. The Theater Offensive helped me a lot. It helped me get on hormones actually . . .
- 18 AJ: Oh, wow – OK.
- 19 AT: Somebody there put me in contact with somebody who works at the clinic that I go to and that's  
20 how that happened. They were always making sure that I was OK and checking up on me  
21 throughout everything. So, yeah, The Theater Offensive definitely has been a big help. So has  
22 BAGLY, which is Boston Alliance of Gay Lesbian, Transgender . . . wait, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,  
23 Transgender, Queer, Questioning Youth ages 14-22. Hispanic, Black Gay Coalition of Boston
- 24 AJ: Hispanic, Black . . . ?
- 25 AT: Gay Coalition of Boston.
- 26 AJ: So, the first organization is BAGLY.
- 27 AT: BAGLY.
- 28 AJ: So, B-A-G-L-E-Y?
- 29 AT: L-Y. Because it was originally Boston Alliance for Gay, Lesbian Youth and now we've . . .
- 30 AJ: Expanded that but you kept the name.
- 31 AT: Yeah, so when we say it . . . yeah. But, yeah, they were a big help. I feel like meeting Janet  
32 Mock, that really helped me. I was real suicidal the day I met her and that helped me a lot.
- 33 AJ: Really? So, Janet kind of helped save your life – I mean, if you're saying you were feeling like  
34 you were suicidal.

- 1 AT: She knows, I've told her since then.
- 2 AJ: Yay, Janet. That's my boo, I love her.
- 3 AT: She's so sweet, so nice.
- 4 AJ: She's amazing. How did you meet Janet? What was going on?
- 5 AT: So, HBGC had their second annual youth empowerment conference and she was the keynote  
6 speaker and I made sure my ass was up there in the front row. I was crying and I was really  
7 emotional and I was the last person . . . I specifically waited to be the last person and I just told  
8 her my story and I thanked her. She told me I was beautiful and that I was going to make it –  
9 and here I am. So, there's that. I feel like . . .
- 10 AJ: If she told you you're going to make it, I'm telling you – you're going to be a star.
- 11 AT: Thank you. I don't know. I feel like a lot of people have said that to me recently. I also . . . I  
12 didn't realize this before I came out here, but I've been grinding for a while. There was a whole  
13 period where . . . last January, last winter, I was hella depressed and the only thing I did was act.  
14 That's crazy. I couldn't do anything else and I didn't think I was motivated, but I acted. I made  
15 sure my ass was in rehearsals, that was the only thing I went to. I don't know. Somewhere  
16 around making it out here showed me that I was determined enough that I kept going. I didn't  
17 even realize I was working still, but I was. I don't know, it's really weird. Somebody was like,  
18 "Yo, the way you're driven." I don't know, I'm not really trying to be a star, I just want to be able  
19 to act.
- 20 AJ: How did you find out about this show?
- 21 AT: They reached out to me. Jack asked me to audition. Company One Theater, which is in Boston, I  
22 guess, reached out to Mixed Blood and told them about me and then Mixed Blood reached out  
23 to me and I auditioned and then I had a Skype call back with Addie and Jack and now I'm here.  
24 In fact, Company One, I'm working with them on their next show. I'm in their next show, so  
25 that's cool.
- 26 AJ: That's sweet. Have there been people who have been really insensitive or mean and nasty to  
27 you within, sort of, institutions? So, like the medical institution or the police department or  
28 schools where you went to college and high school, related to your gender? Since you've been  
29 out?
- 30 AT: I mean, yeah. Not in the medical . . . definitely not in the medical sense, not up in Boston.
- 31 AJ: So, your medical experiences have been pretty positive?
- 32 AT: Yeah.
- 33 AJ: Good.
- 34 AT: My doctor, when I was like 15, told my mom I was trans and was like, "You might want to help  
35 your daughter." My mom didn't listen, but I don't know – they were real good about that,  
36 always.

- 1 AJ: That's awesome, that's amazing.
- 2 AT: Yeah, people were rude to me sometimes. Not really at Emerson, yeah – in high school,  
3 sometimes at my job, but people have been talking shit about me my entire life and they're  
4 going to keep talking shit about me until the day I die, and probably after then. So, I can't really  
5 do anything about that and so just keep on talking trash, I guess. I don't know. I'm at the point  
6 where it doesn't really bother me. It has to be something from somebody who I wasn't  
7 expecting it from for it to really fuck with me. But, people just talking trash, I mean, if you're  
8 going to talk trash – OK. I'm going to stoke you and I'm still here, so bye.
- 9 AJ: I always think about it like this – like, hey, I talk shit about people too, so why wouldn't they talk  
10 shit about me. But, police department . . . you haven't been really harassed by police or . . .  
11 what do they call it? Profiled, walking while trans, or any of that kind of stuff?
- 12 AT: No.
- 13 AJ: Good, that's beautiful. Who was the first trans person you ever met? Or seen? Or heard  
14 about?
- 15 AT: I don't know. The first trans person I ever saw, I saw on TV. The first trans person I ever met, I  
16 guess my sister, Ashlie. I mean, before we transitioned, but we both knew by the time we were  
17 in 9<sup>th</sup> grade – like that's what the goal was.
- 18 AJ: So, she was your homey, your friend?
- 19 AT: Yeah. But, I mean . . . I don't know. Like, I don't know. I'd probably seen trans people before  
20 and . . . I don't know, nothing really phases me so I don't know that I would have known. I know  
21 a lot of people, but I've known them for so long that I don't really remember when I met them.
- 22 AJ: Sure.
- 23 AT: But, yeah. I guess we'll go with Ashlie for the first trans person I met.
- 24 AJ: OK. That's perfect. And she was really a good friend. You know, I want to shift a little bit and  
25 just . . . well, first of all, let me ask you this. Have you ever been involved in ball culture?
- 26 AT: Sort of. I'm always around balls and I have a lot of friends who are really in the scene. But, I'm  
27 not . . . I'm in a kiki house.
- 28 AJ: What's a kiki house? K-i-k-i house?
- 29 AT: Yes. Like, a smaller house for fun – not a main house.
- 30 AJ: You guys don't necessarily compete and . . .
- 31 AT: Yeah, so kiki house . . . well, we do compete, we have kiki balls. It's competing but it's not really  
32 competing. It's more for the fun of it – you know, doing your thing and practicing, almost. Like  
33 yeah, I've been around it. I'll be stepping out this year though.
- 34 AJ: Oh, really.
- 35 AT: I think I just want to walk a couple of times.



- 1 AJ: Nice. One of the things that I've been sort of curious about is this idea of people involved in  
2 house culture who express sort of non-gender conformity, right? Or gender non-conformity is a  
3 better way of saying that, but don't necessarily identify as transgender. Do you recognize that  
4 or is that a phenomenon that you see? I know it's not you personally, but can you speak on that  
5 a little bit?
- 6 AT: I mean, I know people who are like – yeah, they're not trans, like they're not trans identified but  
7 they definitely play with their gender expression. Some days they'll be like super masculine and  
8 other days they'll have beat faces and long hair. I live for it. I think that it's important . . . I think  
9 it's actually really weird that we go from one gender to the other a lot of times. I love the  
10 people who live in-between – like Jonelle, like my character, that is the perfect example of what  
11 we're talking about.
- 12 AJ: Yeah.
- 13 AT: And, you know, me a little bit, but I also identify as trans and I've been on hormones. But, yeah,  
14 I think that's cool. I think that it's beautiful, actually, to see people who can pull that off and  
15 who do it and live freely. More power to them.
- 16 AJ: Yes. Well, thanks for speaking on that. What do you think the relationship is between the G,  
17 the L, the B, and the T? Should they be together?
- 18 AT: I don't know. I understand why people think the T and gender stuff should be separate from  
19 sexuality, because it is a different topic. But often, we co-mingle and co-exist. I don't know, I  
20 guess maybe it should be separate because you can be trans and be gay – they're not mutually  
21 exclusive. I think the trans community gets shit on a lot, but there's a lot of in-fighting, I just feel  
22 like, a lot of times. I see stuff and I just don't get it. I know that that's going to be within every  
23 community, but . . . I don't know. It sometimes feels like the T has been tossed to the side when  
24 we've done so much for the L, G side. And bisexual people, they have the shitty end of the stick  
25 too because they just get shit from straight people and gay people all the time, from what I've  
26 seen.
- 27 AJ: Yeah.
- 28 AT: And that sucks. It's so weird that even within an oppressed community there is so much back  
29 and forth and . . . oppression, I guess. But, I think when we all come together for something it's  
30 beautiful. I just wish we could be on the same page about everything. But, that's life – and I  
31 know that was a real big . . .
- 32 AJ: No, that's a great answer. And there are no right answers, there are no wrong answers – they're  
33 just your answers. So, don't judge it – because I'm not.
- 34 AT: OK.
- 35 AJ: Do you think there is an agenda for the transgender community?
- 36 AT: To live and have the same rights as everybody else.
- 37 AJ: Yeah.

- 1 AT: And that's it.
- 2 AJ: Pretty plain and simple, huh?
- 3 AT: Pretty plain and simple. If there is an agenda, that is the agenda.
- 4 AJ: Yeah, that works for me. I would fight for that.
- 5 AT: Right.
- 6 AJ: I would step up to the plate for that to happen.
- 7 AT: Right. And when I say live, I mean actually live – not survive, but live. Like be able to be  
8 accepted and just walk around and nobody gives a fuck.
- 9 AJ: Right. And have employment opportunities and have housing opportunities and . . .
- 10 AT: Housing and healthcare and be able to get what they need.
- 11 AJ: Yeah. Awesome. Have you ever worked or volunteered for any LGBT or transgender-specific  
12 organizations?
- 13 AT: I mean, I worked for The Theater Offensive and I do a lot of talks for BAGLY or for GLSEN, which  
14 is the Gay, Lesbian . . . GLSEN . . . what does it stand for? Gay, Lesbian . . .
- 15 AJ: Student . . .
- 16 AT: Student Education Network.
- 17 AJ: Yeah.
- 18 AT: Gay, Lesbian Student Education Network, something like that. But, I will go around and do  
19 trainings for them – like just doing Trans 101 and talking to schools and teachers about how you  
20 can open . . .
- 21 AJ: Do you get paid for that work?
- 22 AT: Yes. About how you can open up dialogues and discussions about how you can be more  
23 supportive of your students. Yeah, I get paid for it – that's pretty nice. But, yeah.
- 24 AJ: Cool. OK.
- 25 AT: Also, people just know me so if I go to any of these organizations, I feel like people know that  
26 they can talk to me and be like, "I have four gay daughters." Yeah. I don't know. My goal is to  
27 help the trans community. I want to be rich, but I don't want to be rich for me. I just want to be  
28 rich so I don't have to see people struggle anymore. I want to be rich to give a lot of it away. I  
29 don't know, if I have something and somebody needs something, I will help you. I feel like a lot  
30 of . . . I come now from a place of love, which is really . . . I used to be a really angry, sad, violent  
31 person. And so . . . my violence may not have been expressed outwardly a lot, but the thoughts  
32 and the shit that I've broken and countless amounts of paper that have been shredded or things  
33 that have been broken because I've been angry, is scary. When I transitioned, something that I

- 1           did was I tried to come from a place of love and . . . I don't know, it's been really good. I just  
2           want to keep that going and help people. It's part of the reason why I did *Charm*.
- 3   AJ:     So, do you consider yourself a transgender activist?
- 4   AT:     Yeah, I've done a lot. I've got an award for it so I would say so.
- 5   AJ:     Really? What's the award?
- 6   AT:     I got the Livingston Pangburn Award for Youth Activism.
- 7   AJ:     Livingston?
- 8   AT:     Livingston Pangburn, yeah. He was this trans man who went to BAGLY and he was always  
9           helping people and, you know, trying to serve the community. He got into a car accident and  
10          died and so now we have this award named after him. Yeah, I got it last year and I don't know . .  
11          .
- 12   AJ:     Congratulations.
- 13   AT:     Thank you. I was on the committee – I'm not going to lie, I voted for myself, but I didn't think  
14          that I was going to get it.
- 15   AJ:     OK, that's fine – that's OK.
- 16   AT:     But, yeah, I've participated in a protest at Emerson, there was a protest for Black Lives Matter.
- 17   AJ:     All right.
- 18   AT:     I feel like when I go out and I give speeches or I go to conferences and do Trans 101 workshops,  
19          that is my way of being an activist. I think actually doing like my art on stage, I also write and do  
20          plays and I really want to do stuff. I want to do the type of art that I want to see, but I want to  
21          do art that's going to affect people. That's why I give it my all every night when I'm on stage, no  
22          matter how tired I am or messed up – or whatever. It's not about me. Part of me is doing this  
23          for me, but part of me is doing it for everybody who is like me when I was 19 and transitioning  
24          and struggling and getting kicked out and not being accepted. That's who this is for.
- 25   AJ:     Yeah, that's beautiful. Anything else that I may not have asked that you want to talk about, Aly?
- 26   AT:     I don't know, I don't think so.
- 27   AJ:     Are you in a relationship right now?
- 28   AT:     No, I'm not. I broke up with my boyfriend after being here for a week.
- 29   AJ:     Really? Do you think that was . . . I mean, why? Were you guys having problems before you  
30          came out here?
- 31   AT:     We were and I think that all stemmed from the fact that I wasn't in love with him anymore and I  
32          didn't know until I came out here. And that sucks. I think that was the hardest decision I've  
33          ever had to make in my life. But, I did it for the right reasons and I did the right thing. And so,  
34          I'm OK with it.

- 1 AJ: Have you guys been talking or no contact?
- 2 AT: No, we've been talking. I have to go back home and we live in the same apartment.
- 3 AJ: So, you lived together – wow.
- 4 AT: Yeah, we have separate rooms but they're right next door to each other. And he's not going to .  
5 . . I'm 22 and he's almost 31. We're grown and it's going to be awkward as fuck, but we'll figure  
6 it out. We're committed to being friends at least and so as long as no shit goes down, we'll be  
7 good. But, don't try me though, I'm a little bit crazy – he knows that, we're both a little bit  
8 crazy. But, I don't know . . . yeah, I was too anxious. I was so anxious out here for the first week  
9 really and one Saturday I got drunk and was like, "Oh, shit, I know exactly what's going on." And  
10 that sucks – and it sucks because I was afraid it was going to be the opposite thing. I was afraid  
11 he was going to fall out of love with me and then it ended up being me. That's . . . yeah, I don't  
12 really know how I've processed . . . I don't know if I've dealt with that, but that's life.
- 13 AJ: Yeah. Well, Aly – Alyssandra, Sandy, I have just had the most amazing time chatting with you  
14 this afternoon.
- 15 AT: Same.
- 16 AJ: I really appreciate your openness and honesty and willingness to share your story in hopes that  
17 it might help somebody who has been kicked out and is struggling and thinking about not being  
18 a part of this thing anymore and they see your story and they get inspired.
- 19 AT: I hope so too. I guess, yeah, that's my life. Life is hard sometimes and it's not fair, but when it  
20 gets beautiful, it's worth being here to see it.
- 21 AJ: Absolutely.
- 22 AT: And if you can get through your struggle and through your survival mode, then once you start to  
23 live it's the greatest feeling in the world. And so, you shouldn't give up. I'm glad I didn't. And,  
24 thank you for having me and letting me tell my story. It's so weird. I feel like I tell my life story a  
25 lot, but the more I tell it the more open I become, the more I realize . . . like, I was real messed  
26 up this morning and I realize just how far I came. Just talking about that stuff, just how far I  
27 came, I feel a lot better right now than I did freaking out about last night and having to go back  
28 to Boston . . . I don't want to go back. But, yeah.
- 29 AJ: All right, darling. Thank you so much.
- 30 AT: Thank you.
- 31 AJ: All right. Until we meet again, my friend.