

June Taylor and  
Isabelle Wedin  
Narrators

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

October 31, 2016



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

The Transgender Oral History Project will collect up to 400 hours of oral histories involving 200 to 300 individuals over the next three years. Major efforts will be the recruitment of individuals of all ages and experiences, and documenting the work of The Program in Human Sexuality. This project will be led by Andrea Jenkins, poet, writer, and trans-activist. Andrea brings years of experience working in government, non-profits and LGBT organizations. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting project, please contact Andrea.

Andrea Jenkins  
[jenki120@umn.edu](mailto:jenki120@umn.edu)  
(612) 625-4379

1     Andrea Jenkins             -AJ  
2     June Taylor               -JT  
3     Isabelle Wedin           -IW  
4

5     AJ:     So, good morning. My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender  
6             Oral History Project at the University of Minnesota. Today is October 31<sup>st</sup>, it's Halloween.

7     JT:     Yeah.

8     IW:     So it is.

9     AJ:     And I am here today on the campus of the University of Minnesota with June Taylor, wave June.

10    JT:     Hello.

11    AJ:     And, Isabella . . .

12    IW:     Isabelle.

13    AJ:     Isabelle Wedin.

14    IW:     That's correct, Isabelle Wedin. Hi.

15    AJ:     Yeah, so how are you ladies this morning?

16    JT:     We're doing great. We had a wonderful weekend.

17    IW:     Yeah, it's been really great. I'm really happy to be here.

18    JT:     Yes.

19    AJ:     Cool. So, before we dive deep into the interview, I'm going to ask you, June, if you would  
20             introduce yourself, state your name and spell your name just so we make sure we get it all  
21             correct, your gender identity today, your gender identity assigned at birth, and the pronouns  
22             that you use. And then, Isabelle, I'm going to ask you to do the same thing afterwards.

23    IW:     Sounds good.

24    JT:     My name is June Taylor, spelled J-u-n-e T-a-y-l-o-r. My gender identity is female or trans  
25             woman, depending on context. I was assigned male at birth and I use she and her pronouns  
26             today.

27    AJ:     Perfect, thank you. Isabelle.

28    IW:     I've been misspelling your name, I've been doing it e-r.

29    JT:     I don't know that you've ever spelled my last name for any reason. Anyway, it's o-r.

30    IW:     Anyway, I am Isabelle Wedin, that is I-s-a-b-e-l-l-e W-e-d-i-n, as in Nancy. I was assigned male at  
31             birth but I am a woman and my pronouns are she and her and etc . . . you know, I'm kind of  
32             nervous.

33    JT:     She and hers.

- 1 IW: Yes.
- 2 AJ: Wow, well thank you both. So, one of the things that I like to do just to kind of get us in sort of  
3 recollection mode is to start with a question about your earliest memory. So, June, why don't I  
4 start with you. What is your earliest memory in life? It doesn't have to be related to your  
5 transgender identity, although if it is, that's perfectly fine. I just want to know what's the  
6 earliest thing you remember in your life.
- 7 JT: I was actually telling Ibby this story because I was . . . my earliest memory is of my dad throwing  
8 me up in the air and catching me.
- 9 AJ: Wow, you remember that.
- 10 JT: I do. I was like two, I guess. It's weird. It's not that I remember everything from then forward,  
11 it's just that that's my earliest impression.
- 12 AJ: Right, but you remember that – yeah.
- 13 JT: Yeah. It came up this weekend because I was playing with our kids and similar age right now for  
14 my youngest.
- 15 AJ: So, you guys have children?
- 16 JT: I have three kids and they're 1, 3, and 5 years old, so it's a good spread.
- 17 IW: I don't have any kids, but after hanging out with your kids for a weekend . . . yeah, I have to have  
18 a conversation with my wife when I get home.
- 19 AJ: No, you said you were hanging out with our kids, you made it seem . . . so I just want to clarify  
20 that for the camera.
- 21 IW: I wish they were my kids.
- 22 JT: You're like an aunt.
- 23 IW: Sure.
- 24 AJ: Isabelle, what's your earliest memory?
- 25 IW: Gosh, I don't know. I remember . . . I think I was sitting on my mother's lap in the kitchen, at our  
26 dining table. She was wearing her robe, which she always wore in the morning . . . I must have  
27 been like two, maybe a little bit older. I'm trying to remember . . . I was very, very jealous of my  
28 younger brother at that age, he's almost two years younger. I don't remember if he was around  
29 yet, but I would have been very young . . . something like that. That's the rough outline – sitting  
30 on my mom's lap.
- 31 AJ: Sitting on your mom's lap.
- 32 IW: Yes.
- 33 AJ: Where did you grow up, Isabelle? And, I should say . . . because you are referring to Isabelle as  
34 Ibby . . .

- 1 JT: Oh, sorry.
- 2 AJ: That's fine, I just want to clarify for our transcriptionist, Ibby is I-b-b-y.
- 3 IW: That's correct.
- 4 AJ: So, you told me about your earliest memory, sitting on your mom's lap. Where are you from?
- 5 IW: New York, Long Island . . . Brentwood, specifically, which is like a really un-important town in the  
6 middle of the island. Yeah, I was there, we lived in the same house and I stayed there until I was  
7 18 and then I moved away to college and right after college, got out of that house and moved  
8 into an apartment with my wife in Queens. She wasn't quite my wife yet.
- 9 AJ: But, you guys have been together . . .
- 10 IW: We've been together . . . 13 years. Something like that? And married for a little over eight.
- 11 AJ: Wow.
- 12 JT: My wife and I had our ninth wedding anniversary just earlier this month.
- 13 AJ: And, that's June and her wife.
- 14 JT: June and my wife, Mary.
- 15 AJ: All right, wow. Long-term relationships. I want to get into all those a little bit.
- 16 JT: It's kind of awesome.
- 17 IW: It really is.
- 18 JT: But, just back to you, Isabelle, were you out before you . . . out as a trans person before you met  
19 your current wife?
- 20 IW: Yeah. That's actually a bit of a complicated story. So, I went away to college, that's where I met  
21 my wife – freshman year. I'd been crossdressing since I was like 12 or 13, and maybe a little  
22 younger, but it was always a really private thing. I didn't feel comfortable sharing it with  
23 anybody. And then I got to college and I was out of the house and I was fairly open with all of  
24 my friends there, so she knew and that was a thing we did together once in a while, not often. I  
25 would get all dressed up and she liked that, she's always been really accepting.
- 26 AJ: So, yes, and she knew.
- 27 IW: Yeah, I guess I didn't know . . . I thought that this wasn't possible. I thought I was just a  
28 crossdresser and I would grow up to be a miserable old man.
- 29 AJ: Wow.
- 30 IW: And then just . . . this happened. I guess we'll talk about that later.
- 31 AJ: OK. Where did you grow up, June?
- 32 JT: I grew up in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Do you need me to spell that or is that OK?

- 1 AJ: I think we can probably figure out Winston-Salem, North Carolina.
- 2 JT: I don't know, yeah – just a fairly normal childhood. I don't know.
- 3 AJ: Yeah, what kind of town is Winston-Salem?
- 4 JT: It's kind of small.
- 5 AJ: Tobacco . . . is that Tobacco Road?
- 6 JT: RJ Reynolds Tobacco is the main thing there, or it was at some point. That kind of is a dying  
7 industry, it's a lot of biotech now. It's very southern, very conservative. There's pockets of  
8 liberal things, but mostly conservative.
- 9 AJ: So, what was school like for you there? You grew up there your entire childhood?
- 10 JT: Yeah, I went to high school there and I did go away for college, but school was . . . I had nothing  
11 as far as . . . like Ibbey was saying about crossdressing, it was just kind of . . . just getting through  
12 things.
- 13 AJ: Just normal – yeah, that's cool.
- 14 JT: In retrospect, it seems like there was a lot of depressive stuff, but at the time it didn't seem that  
15 way. Now, I can look back on it and kind of reflect on it as not so great.
- 16 AJ: OK. You've got to say more now, you kind of opened up a can here.
- 17 JT: Sure.
- 18 AJ: What made it not so great?
- 19 JT: Well, the experience of learning about trans people and gender as a thing later in life was  
20 something that was useful for looking back on how was gender described and imposed in family  
21 and school and all those things where it was really discouraged to not be cis and heterosexual in  
22 a lot of little ways and big ways, I guess. But, those were so not apparent, it was just the way it  
23 was. So, weirdly, nobody in my family was gay and nobody in my family was . . . that's just  
24 improbable to just think that through all of the social interaction that you never have experience  
25 with queer people is not normal. So, looking back on it, that seems really weird, but it didn't  
26 seem weird at the time.
- 27 AJ: I would say the majority of people in this country identify as heteronormative, cis gender . . .  
28 you kind of have to be lucky to run into a queer person . . . not necessarily but . . .
- 29 IW: I would say lucky.
- 30 JT: Yeah, definitely – let's go with lucky.
- 31 AJ: It's not the norm.
- 32 JT: No, it's not, but it was so far out of acceptance.
- 33 AJ: So, you weren't out, June, as a young person?

- 1 JT: No.
- 2 AJ: When did you first realize that you may not be the gender you were assigned at birth?
- 3 JT: That's such of a kind of . . . it's such a long span, because there are moments of recognition of  
4 different experiences, but they don't all fit from a single point in time. I can point to as early as  
5 maybe 13 or something, where it's like something is weird, something is different and what is it  
6 and trying to find anything that's like that in the world is really difficult in the 1990s. So, I guess I  
7 come to coming out around two years ago from now, but it was a long process of internal  
8 exploration and thinking and reading and learning and trying to figure it out.
- 9 AJ: So, yeah, I understand that it's a process and a journey, but was there . . . there was never a day  
10 where, even prior to coming out, said, "Wow, I think I may be different from other little boys."
- 11 JT: Yeah, I guess . . . I mean, it goes way back to 13 or 14, but I didn't have words for  
12 it. Like Ibby was saying, if you don't even know that trans people exist, as a concept, then what  
13 are you going to . . . you have nothing to attach to.
- 14 AJ: Absolutely, yeah.
- 15 JT: It's just this weird feeling of not fitting in.
- 16 IW: Yeah, we've talked a lot about this. My experience was actually really similar where I can  
17 remember from a very young age wanting to be a girl but I never . . . it seemed absurd to say,  
18 "Well, if I want to, then I am."
- 19 JT: Yeah, that was just so not acceptable.
- 20 IW: People told me I was a boy and I believed what adults said, so I believed them. And so, I just  
21 thought every boy, every young man, hated it. I was just like this whole masculinity thing is God  
22 awful and it's transparently obvious to me, so everybody else must be feeling the same thing  
23 and we just must all be scared to even bring that up to say, "Yeah, actually, being a dude is  
24 horrible, it feels bad." Now, I realize that actually for some people they really like it and it feels  
25 really good. I didn't like it because it wasn't, at all, the right thing for me.
- 26 AJ: So, Ibby, were you ever ostracized or bullied in school? What was school like for you on Long  
27 Island?
- 28 IW: Yeah, that's what they said – it's on, it is an island. Yeah, no, it's so weird because I didn't really  
29 understand that I was different. I kept all this secret, I didn't tell anybody how I really felt about  
30 my gender, but all the other boys could tell and I was a target. It's so weird – even into  
31 adulthood when I tried to assert myself in masculine ways, I would just get slapped down. They  
32 could tell, "No, you're faking this, that's not going to work."
- 33 AJ: Wow.
- 34 IW: Yeah, but trying to not be masculine also gets you punished. Yeah, it was a bind, there's no  
35 winning, you can't be masculine because you don't do it right and you can't be feminine  
36 because that's not allowed. So, yeah, I got picked on a lot as a kid. It didn't really change until  
37 about high school when I got into the drama club and that was full of queer people and it was

- 1           really great. I was starting to figure things out about myself and I could tell something about  
2           this feels really good and I don't know what. I thought for a while maybe . . . I knew I liked  
3           women, but I also couldn't really identify with this queer thing in this really deep way that I  
4           didn't understand. I thought maybe I'm bisexual, turns out I'm not. And so, yeah. I didn't really  
5           figure it out then – it took me a long time after high school to figure it out but that's when I  
6           really started to come into my own a little bit and started to feel comfortable with myself.
- 7   AJ:     So, you said you don't identify as bisexual. What is your sexual orientation?
- 8   IW:     Women only, please. I'm just not . . .
- 9   AJ:     OK. So, do you identify as lesbian?
- 10   IW:    Yes – yeah, definitely. I guess in abstract, men are . . . I find some men attractive, I guess, and  
11           then they go and talk and then it's like . . . yeah, not for me.
- 12   AJ:     OK. Well, you've been married, you said, for . . .
- 13   IW:     Eight years – just over eight years.
- 14   AJ:     Eight years . . . but you guys have been together longer than that, right?
- 15   IW:     Yeah, we were engaged for a year and a half and together for two and a half years before that,  
16           so that comes up to . . . I thought it was 13 but . . . anyway, I could do the math, since 2004.
- 17   AJ:     It's 2016, so you're going on 13 years.
- 18   IW:     12. It was September 2004 – the start of sophomore year, so about 12 years.
- 19   AJ:     Wow. That's awesome. It is a challenge for a lot of transgender-identified people to find love in  
20           their lives and I'm happy to hear that you've been able to find that. And you, as well, June.
- 21   JT:     Yeah, we've both been very lucky.
- 22   AJ:     You've been married for nine years?
- 23   JT:     Nine years, yes. And, I mean that was definitely one of the most stressful parts, for me, of  
24           coming out – was just knowing that that experience existed as far as trans people coming out to  
25           their family and friends and spouses and just being completely rejected. That was my prime  
26           fear and it took me a long time to come out to my spouse. And, it's awesome. She's been  
27           amazing and it's been great.
- 28   AJ:     There was no indication prior to . . . you hadn't had any kind of conversation with her before  
29           marriage or . . .?
- 30   JT:     No.
- 31   AJ:     It was kind of a big surprise . . . because you guys were clearly in the middle of your marriage.
- 32   JT:     Yeah.
- 33   IW:     Well, you're forgetting some stuff though.



- 1 JT: I am forgetting some stuff.
- 2 AJ: You're leaving out a lot of stuff here.
- 3 JT: I am.
- 4 IW: You told me you used to wear nail polish.
- 5 JT: I did. I did a lot of feminine-coated things, in retrospect. I don't know, it just . . . it wasn't  
6 something that we really talked about that much. It was just, "Yeah, some guys do that, and  
7 whatever." Which is not totally true.
- 8 IW: It's a little true.
- 9 JT: A little true, obviously. But, we did not have a big conversation about it until it was imminent as  
10 far as, "I'm going to come out and do this thing and I don't even know how to do that, but that's  
11 what we're doing, I guess."
- 12 AJ: How did you come out?
- 13 JT: I wrote my wife a note because I had tried for about a week to tell her in person and it was just  
14 so anxiety ridden that it was easier to hand her a letter that told her that I felt like I was trans  
15 and I wanted to go to a therapist and work on this with her and I don't know what it means, but  
16 I want to figure it out with her.
- 17 AJ: So, you weren't in therapy at that point in time.
- 18 JT: No.
- 19 AJ: But, you knew you were trans. Did you do research on the internet? How did you come to that .  
20 . . ? Because first you told me that there's no way, you never saw anybody that was trans and  
21 then you came to this conclusion that you're trans . . . like you left out a lot in-between.
- 22 JT: I did, I'm sorry . . . sorry. So, for years . . . from years prior, reading books by trans people, a lot  
23 of stuff on the internet as far as YouTube and discussion boards and groups, to see is this . . .  
24 does this fit? Is this what I'm feeling? And it ends up to be a pretty good match, but it took a  
25 long time to really believe that of myself because everything you deal with tells you that it's not  
26 OK but that that's really hard to get over.
- 27 AJ: Yeah, society is pretty oppressive around gender identity and gender policing.
- 28 JT: Yeah.
- 29 AJ: How did your wife take it when you handed her the note?
- 30 JT: She hugged me and said it was OK and the next day gave me an orchid and a beautiful note and  
31 then we set up appointments to do therapy together. I mean, it was a lot of . . .
- 32 AJ: And then you guys started making babies.
- 33 JT: We had already had our oldest . . . I guess we had two.
- 34 IW: You already had Jade.
- The Transgender Oral History Project

- 1 JT: Yeah, Jade . . . I think so. Yeah, we must have. Yeah, our oldest two. So, I mean, yeah, we had a  
2 lot of hard conversations and a lot of late nights and just going over things and figuring stuff out  
3 and going to therapy together. But, we worked it out and it's just amazing and I'm really  
4 impressed by her.
- 5 AJ: That's incredible, that sounds really sweet and lovely.
- 6 JT: Yeah. I mean, I kind of feel guilty about it in some respects because we know so many people  
7 who don't have that experience and it's really sad.
- 8 AJ: Sort of like survivor's guilt, is it?
- 9 JT: Yes.
- 10 IW: Yes. Definitely, I would say for me – yes, absolutely.
- 11 AJ: Isabelle. Wow. Say more about that, Isabelle. What does that feel like?
- 12 IW: Sure. It's actually . . . maybe I'll work this in reverse. I'll jump around . . . so, my wife, Maria, she  
13 is bisexual although definitely leans towards women. So, that's obviously working in my favor –  
14 that was hugely advantageous to me in the end. To the extent that . . . so, there's this format of  
15 essay which is the cis wife of a trans woman basically complaining about how horrible it is to be  
16 married to a trans woman and, "This happens and it destroyed our marriage and I had to do all  
17 this work to be a decent person to my wife." And, Maria and I both find that particular attitude  
18 very . . . let's say, grating – it's very grating. So, she wrote one basically from the other  
19 perspective which is actually . . . her perspective was, "My wife came out to me and it wasn't a  
20 big deal – yeah, there was stuff to do and certain things were a little bit hard, but actually I'm  
21 still the same person and we're still the same couple and it's still really good. In fact, my  
22 marriage is better than it's ever been."
- 23 JT: I would say the same thing – absolutely. This is June. Because we had to have so many really  
24 deep conversations, we've been able to work on communicating way better. It makes it much  
25 easier to get through other things in our life. I absolutely think it has improved our marriage a  
26 lot since I came out.
- 27 AJ: Yeah – I mean, I can only speculate but from my own experience, coming out you become a  
28 happier person.
- 29 JT: For sure.
- 30 IW: Yes – yes.
- 31 AJ: Which, potentially, can make a relationship a little happier.
- 32 JT: It was so much more work to make a good relationship good while also carrying all this weight  
33 and depression about gender. So, that being gone, and better, is much easier to focus on other  
34 stuff.
- 35 IW: Yeah, Maria said the same exact thing. She said, "Well, yeah, our relationship is better – you're  
36 happier now and that makes the relationship better." So, yeah, I do feel really lucky to be

- 1 married to someone who is so open and so kind. Maria is one of the kindest people you could  
2 ever meet, she's so emotionally brilliant.
- 3 JT: She's awesome.
- 4 IW: She really is. She's a psychologist. So, yeah, I do feel like I lucked out – I picked a good one.  
5 Actually, my wife picked me but we also have all these friends whose marriages are getting torn  
6 apart and they're going through expensive divorces and their parents are . . . yeah, basically  
7 they're losing their whole family. Keeping the kids . . . you know, 50/50.
- 8 AJ: When you say, "We have friends," are you referring to other transgender people?
- 9 IW: Yes, exactly – other trans women coming out right now or some who have been out for a while.
- 10 AJ: I couldn't tell you whether you were talking about you and Maria's friends who have . . .
- 11 IW: Yeah, Maria is friends with most of my trans friends. She gets along . . .
- 12 JT: She's like an ambassador.
- 13 IW: A little bit, yeah. She's like the good cis person.
- 14 AJ: But, specifically, though we're talking about transgender people who come out and then their  
15 families get torn apart.
- 16 IW: Exactly, yeah – so many people.
- 17 JT: It's upsettingly common.
- 18 IW: Yeah.
- 19 AJ: Yes.
- 20 JT: That was a really hard thing for Mary when I did come out to her and she was looking for  
21 support in the role of a spouse who is working on this topic. A lot of what's available is either  
22 you find somebody who is a spouse of a trans person and went through something like this, and  
23 then suddenly their blog stops because they got divorced and things did not work out and it's  
24 really depressing. Or, you find support groups that are kind of hyper focused on this terrible  
25 thing that's happening to you and let's help you get through this terrible thing, but also is  
26 terrible. Rather than . . . there aren't a lot of . . .
- 27 AJ: Let's help you figure out a way to be in this relationship.
- 28 JT: Yes, exactly.
- 29 AJ: And, to focus on the positives.
- 30 JT: The relationship takes a back seat to the support and that seems backwards.
- 31 IW: Yeah.
- 32 AJ: Yeah. It is sort of a trauma for people to work through in many, many cases. In your case,  
33 Isabelle, your partner, your wife already had some inklings so it wasn't like a big huge surprise;

- 1           whereas, you, June, said your wife had no idea and then was able to hear and see you for the  
2           person that you really are. That's wonderful.
- 3    JT:     Yes, it is.
- 4    AJ:     Do you still have the note that you . . . ?
- 5    JT:     Somewhere. It's actually . . . I gave it to her, so it's her note.
- 6    AJ:     It's her note.
- 7    JT:     I'm sure it is in some box at home.
- 8    AJ:     Wow. So, what terms, and this is for you, June, and ultimately for both of you guys, but what  
9           terms have you used to describe yourself over time and how has that changed?
- 10   JT:     Do you mean gender terms?
- 11   AJ:     Gender, sexuality. I mean, when I ask this question, some people say, "I came out as gay and  
12           then I realized that that wasn't really who I was."
- 13   JT:     Yeah, OK. So, being assigned male at birth and having people tell me that this is what guys do  
14           and this is what being a man is, I identified that way in however that works in a non-committal  
15           kind of, "OK, this is the default, I guess, that's great." So, that was the first part of my life. I  
16           identified as straight and attracted to women, and I'm still attracted to women. I identify as a  
17           woman now and as a trans person, as a queer person, as a lesbian, and that's kind of really  
18           comfortable for me.
- 19   AJ:     Yeah, there are no right or wrong answers here, so please don't . . .
- 20   JT:     I mean to say that in the sense that the primary identifications were not correct, they didn't  
21           totally feel like my own and now it does and that's great.
- 22   AJ:     No – yeah, that's the whole point of the question is to try to get at that. You said you kind of  
23           thought about, "Maybe I'm bi, but not really." What terms have you used to describe yourself  
24           over time, Isabelle?
- 25   IW:     Sure. Yeah, so going back to middle school or so when I first started having sexual feelings and  
26           also crossdressing. I was 12 or whatever, everything I did was sexual, so, of course,  
27           crossdressing was sexual. So, just inside a cultural fog – my word for myself was . . . I didn't dare  
28           use a word for myself. It would have been pervert or something; I really internalized that.
- 29   AJ:     Wow.
- 30   IW:     Then high school came around and I came out to some people as bi before realizing that didn't  
31           really fit. Sometime in college, when I was a little more free to express my gender and go out on  
32           campus in weird halfway . . . slacks and heels or a skirt over my jeans, I was . . . I dressed pretty  
33           openly queer in high school too, but always in terms of details – like hair accessories and things,  
34           but boy clothes. So, in college I started playing around with describing an experience of gender  
35           fluidity even though I didn't have the word for that all the time. And then I got out of college  
36           and I got a job and I got busy, and then I guess my word for myself, at that point, was just

- 1 crossdresser. And then we moved to Miami for a year for my wife's post-doctoral fellowship at  
2 the Miami VA.
- 3 AJ: Ooh-la-la.
- 4 IW: Yeah, it was part of the whole Ph.D. process.
- 5 AJ: So, does that mean no laying on the beach, no fun on the beach.
- 6 IW: No, actually Miami was pretty crazy – that was a really crazy year in my life where I was . . . I  
7 kept the same job so I was working from home a lot, working remotely from Miami for a  
8 company mostly in New York. So, I would just dress however I wanted, all day.
- 9 JT: That's really cool.
- 10 IW: And then it came to a point where I said to Maria, it was like three in the morning, and I'm trying  
11 to work the courage to tell her this. I'm holding her in bed and my heart is pounding – it was  
12 pounding so hard it wakes her up and she turns around and she looks at me and she says, "What  
13 is it?" I'm like . . . what I said was, "Sometimes isn't enough," meaning I can't just . . . I can't only  
14 express my true gender, my true self at home, this needs to be me forever. I'm a woman, I need  
15 to do this. And what she said to me, "I know, can I go back to bed." She just . . . she figured it  
16 out before I did, basically. So, yeah, that was sort of the last shift. That was a couple years ago  
17 where it was like, "Yeah, I'm trans, I'm a chick, I'm a lady, this is cool." And then, I bought a  
18 bathing suit and we went down to the pool. Finding a bathing suit that takes breast forms is  
19 actually really hard when that will take the forms and the cover up down to here. So, yeah, it  
20 was a really crazy experience. Everything was just so sudden – just one day she was like, "OK,  
21 put on this dress, we're going to go shopping." And I'm like, "Holy shit." And I got three hours  
22 getting myself together and then we went shopping and nothing bad happened. And then a  
23 couple weeks later, it was Thanksgiving, we had some of Maria's work friends over who I wasn't  
24 out to and I was dressed as a guy and trying to enjoy my turkey and I was so miserable. So then  
25 that night I told my wife, "Yeah, tomorrow I'm going full-time." And I just did it. It took me a  
26 while to come out at work, but socially I spent that entire year in Miami very nearly . . . just,  
27 yeah – it was really wild. I was not on HRT yet and I was getting done up and going out – not  
28 even done up, jeans and a t-shirt and going to board game socials.
- 29 JT: You kind of dove right in.
- 30 IW: I kind of dove right in, I can't believe I did that.
- 31 JT: It's really intensive.
- 32 IW: So, that's . . . yeah, that's the entire arc of my identity, I guess.
- 33 AJ: Wow. What has been some of the more positive aspects of expressing your true gender  
34 identity, Isabelle?
- 35 IW: Wow, OK. I mean, just in general trying to operate within the bounds of masculinity, I felt  
36 diminished. One of the biggest freedoms that I found is the freedom to be expressive, to  
37 express myself, to have facial expressions, to not have to tuck my hands under my legs, to really

- 1 engage with people. It's really hard to keep this huge secret and actively misrepresent yourself  
2 and still be close to people. It was really fraught.
- 3 JT: Yeah.
- 4 IW: I would say that's it – the social comfort of just being able to relax in front of the people that I  
5 love and just be myself. It's just so emotionally freeing.
- 6 JT: Yeah.
- 7 AJ: June, what would you say have been some of the biggest challenges since you've decided to  
8 express your true gender identity?
- 9 JT: I guess . . . I mean, there's a large amount of time spent on bureaucratic and red-tape things  
10 right now for me. I've been out for two years now, but I'm still working on legal stuff like name  
11 changes on different records and systems and interacting with medical systems is kind of  
12 annoying sometimes – even in the best cases, it's just kind of weird. I guess the biggest thing  
13 that's been a challenge for me has been my family where I grew up has been just awkward and  
14 strange and strained since coming out. And there have been points when it seemed like it was  
15 getting better and then it kind of rolls back. So, that's been really emotionally hard to come to  
16 terms with. Otherwise, before, having this really close relationship with family and feeling like  
17 that's solid, and then that's just not there anymore. Even though I've got great people here in  
18 Minnesota and have built a network of friends and chosen family that are awesome, it's still  
19 really hard to kind of reflect on that birth family kind of thing that's just not the same as it was.
- 20 AJ: Yeah. So, are your parents still alive, both your parents?
- 21 JT: Yeah, they are.
- 22 AJ: Do they want to have a relationship with the children?
- 23 JT: They do, on their terms, which often doesn't include recognizing me as me. So, that makes it  
24 kind of difficult for us to do normal stuff – like have regular visits or consider holiday things since  
25 it's been so weird and so not normal and not loving for a long time.
- 26 AJ: Oh, wow – I'm really sorry.
- 27 JT: It's OK, thank you.
- 28 AJ: But, it sounds like you have found support in chosen family.
- 29 JT: Oh, my gosh – yes.
- 30 IW: I can vouch for her chosen family. I've been meeting all of them this weekend and they're  
31 amazing people. They're the best – some of the best people I've ever met. They're so warm  
32 and just really brilliant and . . . yeah, they're great.
- 33 AJ: So, tell me about you guy's friendship. How did you meet? How long have you been friends?
- 34 IW: Do you want to do it?
- 35 JT: You should probably do it.

- 1 IW: OK.
- 2 AJ: OK, so you've got to say a name.
- 3 IW: OK, this is Isabelle, and I'm going to at least start off this story. So, there's a website called  
4 MetaFilter, it's basically a discussion . . .
- 5 AJ: MetaFilter?
- 6 IW: MetaFilter, yes. It's basically a discussion board, but it's one of the better places on the internet  
7 because it's moderated so you're able to . . . at least I felt . . . I discovered it a couple years ago  
8 while I was starting to figure out my gender, before we moved to Miami.
- 9 JT: That was one of the first places, this is June speaking, that was one of the first places I came out  
10 online.
- 11 IW: Yeah, me too.
- 12 JT: And was interacting as me.
- 13 AJ: OK.
- 14 IW: So, one time there was this discussion about men wearing make-up. It was a video or  
15 something of men getting make-up put on them. And, I chimed in to be like, "Yeah, I've been  
16 doing that at work sometimes." At the time, I'd been going to work in make-up and it's really  
17 weird, because people don't notice, they just compliment you – they're not like, "Hey, are you  
18 wearing make-up?" They're like, "Hey, did you get some sun?" It was a wild experience and so I  
19 posted about it there on the discussion . . . this big three paragraph ramble and June sends me a  
20 message to be like, "Oh, my God, can you tell me more about this? I want to do this." We  
21 exchanged a few messages a couple times a month maybe and it was always me going, "Hey, did  
22 you go buy make-up yet?" And she was always like, "No, I'm too scared."
- 23 JT: I wasn't out and it was just this thing that I kind of maybe wanted to do, but I couldn't figure out  
24 a way to do it and be safe or possible. It just felt like this huge thing that was impossible and  
25 you had done it and it was just so impressive and I was really interested in how you  
26 accomplished that, fit it into your life and were OK with it. So, not just the practice of wearing  
27 make-up, that's kind of trivial in itself, but this sense of ownership that you had over who you  
28 were and asserting that publicly was really inspiring to me.
- 29 IW: So, Isabelle again in finishing the next part of the story, I contacted you around Thanksgiving of  
30 last year because your mom was visiting and I wanted to make sure you were OK. We weren't  
31 really friends yet, we were acquaintances, so you thanked me and said that you would tell me  
32 how things went after Thanksgiving – and then you didn't.
- 33 JT: I'm so sorry.
- 34 IW: You didn't follow-up, that's OK.
- 35 JT: That's because it was a terrible week.
- 36 IW: Yeah, I know, but you should have told me about it.

- 1 JT: I should have.
- 2 IW: Yeah, well – you didn’t know. So, then in February, just this past February . . . what, eight  
3 months ago? Yeah, I sent you another message and then we started talking and chatting online  
4 in Google Hangouts.
- 5 JT: Instead of doing the message board thing where you kind of have an inbox, I was like, “We  
6 should just chat on our phones, that would be cooler.” And we did, and it was just amazing  
7 because we had so much in common to share and talk about and explore. It was my first  
8 experience talking with another trans woman in a really deep sense and kind of bouncing ideas  
9 off each other and talking about stuff that I didn’t know – whether it was just me in my history  
10 that I was experiencing and was totally foreign, or was it something that was more normal. And,  
11 at the time that I had messaged you, I had come out and I had sent letters to my family and all  
12 that stuff; I had checked off all the coming out stuff, but I still felt really not great. I felt like I  
13 didn’t really know what to do and how to do this and Ibby was just really inspiring to help that  
14 feel OK.
- 15 AJ: Oh, wow. So, you’ve been sort of like a big sister . . . ?
- 16 JT: A huge mentor. Yes, absolutely a mentor.
- 17 IW: You’ve helped me too, you really have. That first week, when we first started chatting, and we  
18 couldn’t stop.
- 19 JT: I know it was all day.
- 20 IW: All day, every day, to where it got to be sort of a problem with our wives.
- 21 AJ: Yeah.
- 22 JT: Yeah, “Come to bed, it’s 2am.”
- 23 IW: Yes. We just burned so bright and it’s never really stopped. I just really feel like I’ve really come  
24 up with you. Those first conversations on MetaFilter where I was like just starting to dip my toe  
25 in and you were there, I thought you were too cool for me.
- 26 JT: I don’t know why.
- 27 IW: Because you’re so cool.
- 28 JT: Whatever.
- 29 IW: Oh, my God, you’re so brilliant, you amaze me – you really do. I felt like, “Oh, I’m not cool  
30 enough to talk to this person.” And now that’s all we do. You’ve been like an inspiration to me,  
31 you’ve helped me so much. Yeah.
- 32 AJ: Wow, OK. Lovefest 2016 going on here. All right, to the extent that you’re comfortable and this  
33 question is for both of you but maybe we’ll start with you, June, and then Isabelle you can chime  
34 in. What medical interventions have you undergone on your journey towards expressing your  
35 full female identity?



- 1 JT: HRT, so testosterone suppressant and estra.
- 2 AJ: OK.
- 3 IW: Yeah, same for me.
- 4 JT: Oh, and laser hair removal.
- 5 AJ: OK. Oh, and . . . just kidding.
- 6 JT: Yeah, I don't know why I forget that sometimes.
- 7 AJ: It's certainly is a medical treatment.
- 8 JT: Yeah.
- 9 AJ: So, what's that experience been like for you? How has hormones been for you?
- 10 JT: Really interesting. It's been a fascinating experience. There's not enough that's written about it  
11 from the perspective of emotions and outlook on life . . . it's just . . . it's very medicalized right  
12 now. There's the sense of here's the physical changes that happen and all that stuff is kind of  
13 what you have from a doctor's office, but there's so much more to it in terms of feeling better  
14 and feeling normal, for me at least. So, that's been a big part of it for me. And until meeting  
15 you, there was no one to talk about that with or explore that with.
- 16 AJ: What about you, Isabelle? What medical interventions have you undergone?
- 17 IW: Similar. I didn't do laser hair removal, I did IPL at home.
- 18 AJ: IPL?
- 19 IW: Intense pulsed light. It's the same basic principle – use light to get the hair follicle really hot and  
20 hope it dies. So, yeah, I got a home machine because I needed to do it on the cheap and it turns  
21 out that's a much cheaper way to do it. It's been pretty effective for me. I actually started with  
22 IPL well before I started on HRT . . . like seven months or so before. I was just like, "Get this shit  
23 off me." I had always been really . . . my body hair has bothered me since it started growing in  
24 and my facial hair was constant discomfort and there was no way that I ever got it to work until I  
25 just zapped it off. So, yeah, after about seven months of that, I started on spiro and estrogen.
- 26 AJ: Spiro . . . like spironolactone.
- 27 IW: Sorry, yes – should I be more explicit?
- 28 AJ: You know, I'm just helping out . . . just keep talking.
- 29 IW: Spironolactone, sublingual 17 beta estradiol, finasteride, progesterone. I'm a very . . .  
30 everything and the kitchen sink, just try it all. It's been really good.
- 31 AJ: Injections? Pills?
- 32 IW: Oh, yeah, pills – sublingual.
- 33 AJ: Pills, OK.

- 1 IW: You tried patches for a while.
- 2 JT: I did try patches, they were OK. It was hard to get stable blood levels so I did switch to  
3 sublingual, oral, estradiol and that seems to be better. But, maybe I'll try injections if somebody  
4 figures out how to make enough so that people can have a supply of it.
- 5 AJ: Ahh, yes. Speak about that – what's going on?
- 6 JT: So, there is . . . right now there is an issue with . . . a supply issue with the people who  
7 manufacture the ingredients that go into the injectables. I'm not really sure where it stands  
8 right now, last I checked there was an FDA approval awaiting a second supplier so that there  
9 could be more in the U.S. I don't think it's like a global thing, it's just a U.S. thing. So, injectables  
10 are not really available widely right now.
- 11 IW: Although, this is Isabelle, the shortage has been specific to estradiol valerate, right?
- 12 JT: Yes.
- 13 IW: I know some people . . .
- 14 AJ: Estradiol . . . ?
- 15 IW: Valerate.
- 16 AJ: Valerate.
- 17 IW: Is that right? Yeah. But, there is another form that's actually available and Georgia just started  
18 on it, she was telling me about it . . . I forget what it's called, but it's better in some ways – and  
19 you can actually get it, which is really important.
- 20 AJ: I know there's a lot of concern because of . . . a lot of people feel like the injectable hormones  
21 are more effective in terms of . . .
- 22 JT: Yeah, I mean, there's not a lot of . . . this is June speaking. There's not a lot of data about the  
23 different forms that is like well-respected in medical communities, but anecdotally, certainly,  
24 there's a lot of experience that the injectables are better. Maybe not even with effectiveness  
25 but, for instance, if you're in a situation where you're on a dose that's going to require you to  
26 take a lot of pills per day, that can feel kind of weird as well as potentially out you, so people  
27 who are on injectables can take them less frequently and it's just less of a burden in their life  
28 than other forms. So, it does kind of . . . it is feeling for a lot of different reasons than just that  
29 it's more effective.
- 30 AJ: Any plans for any additional medical interventions.
- 31 IW: This is Isabelle – and yes.
- 32 AJ: And yes, she says.
- 33 IW: We've talked a lot about this. I went back and forth for a long time about genital surgery,  
34 vaginoplasty, and for a while I'm like, "Well that just seems like a huge pain in the ass."
- 35 AJ: No pun intended.

- 1 IW: Oh, yeah.
- 2 AJ: A pain just below the ass, I would say.
- 3 IW: This is true. Bowel prep also doesn't seem super fun. So, yeah, but I've just kind of . . . I don't  
4 know, I've just sort of had this shift with that where I'm like, "OK." But tucking also really sucks  
5 and spiro also really sucks and so worst case, I have to dilate 15 minutes every day. I spend at  
6 least 15 minutes waiting to finish peeing because I need 300 milligrams of spiro every day and . .  
7 . yeah.
- 8 AJ: So, it makes you urinate a lot?
- 9 IW: A lot, and it takes a long time. Yeah, it's a real pain. And honestly, for a while, I'm like . . . I've  
10 been on HRT for shit . . . for a while, like over a year. And honestly, it's cute . . . my junk is cute,  
11 but objectively I think OK, something that cute should exist in the world but it doesn't really  
12 need to be attached to me, I don't have . . . no, no. I remember, as a child, just wondering like,  
13 "Hey, what is this and where is the real thing? Where's my fucking vagina? When is that going  
14 to grow in?" So, why fuck around with what I have when I can have something better. So, yeah,  
15 I've come around and I've discovered that there is a capable surgeon not far away from my  
16 home in New York City and I've been meaning to give the office a call, I just haven't yet but I will.
- 17 AJ: Yeah. Will your insurance at your job cover that?
- 18 IW: Yes. I mean that's basically required now – even if policies say they don't cover it, they all pretty  
19 much do.
- 20 AJ: Well, you have to go through some legal haggling to make it happen.
- 21 JT: Yes, a lot.
- 22 AJ: But, for the most part, many will cover it.
- 23 JT: It's getting better, for sure.
- 24 AJ: How about you, June? What's your plans for the future if you don't mind discussing?
- 25 JT: I'm not as sure, but we'll see. I don't know – I'm not sure yet.
- 26 AJ: OK. Have either of you experienced any challenges with institutions, the criminal justice system,  
27 schools . . . I don't know, at the restaurant? Have you experienced street harassment or  
28 violence or anything like that?
- 29 IW: Do you want to go first?
- 30 JT: This is June speaking. I wasn't out publicly until I moved here to Minneapolis and . . .
- 31 AJ: When did you move to Minneapolis?
- 32 JT: I moved here in July of 2015.
- 33 AJ: Where did you move from?
- 34 JT: I moved from North Carolina.
- The Transgender Oral History Project

- 1 AJ: OK, so you're a very new Twin Citian?
- 2 JT: Yeah, a fairly new resident. I don't have that much experience with street harassment, in  
3 general, but certainly it seems like Minneapolis has been a pretty good spot for queer people, so  
4 far. Or, I've just found pockets that are good. I work with amazing people and it was my first  
5 job interview out and it was really hard to get through, but it was amazing. They're awesome,  
6 and the university has been awesome.
- 7 AJ: So, where do you work?
- 8 JT: I work at the Minnesota Population Center with the University of Minnesota.
- 9 AJ: OK. What's your job?
- 10 JT: I work as a systems administrator in the IT, Information Technology, group. Keep the servers  
11 running.
- 12 IW: You do more than that.
- 13 JT: I do.
- 14 AJ: For the University or just for MPC?
- 15 JT: Just for MPC.
- 16 AJ: That's awesome.
- 17 JT: And your help with policies and what not has been hugely and personally helpful with the  
18 University system.
- 19 AJ: Well, I'm glad that I could help, that's what we're here for. Any challenges at all in your life,  
20 Isabelle, around institutions?
- 21 IW: Sure. I mean, I'm pretty lucky in that most people mistake me for a cis woman.
- 22 AJ: You have very much what we call passing privilege.
- 23 IW: It's true. It's true. That's definitely a thing. I don't know, it's weird because it is a very  
24 conditional privilege and I do feel kind of uncomfortable about keeping that a secret, but in sort  
25 of casual situations, obviously I'm not going to out myself to every stranger. But, yeah, so most  
26 of the shock, most of the problems that I've encountered have been as a woman rather than as  
27 a trans woman, including street harassment and . . . you know, many different forms of street  
28 harassment – cat calling and men leering and leaning and getting very close and not knowing  
29 when to leave me alone. I've had drunk men walk up to my wife and I having brunch and try to  
30 hit on us and we're like, "Well, actually we're married." And he was like, "Oh, so both of you  
31 then." And I'm like, "Dude, go away." And, of course, that doesn't work. Institutionally, I've  
32 had some borderline shitty experiences with the Post Office trying to get my passport changed.  
33 Nothing that put me at risk, but just ridiculous. I walked up to hand the guy my application and  
34 he's like, "Oh, so you're transgender." And I'm like, "Yes," and he says, "Good job." And I'm  
35 like, "Good job at what? Not being too tall?"

- 1 AJ: Right, yeah.
- 2 IW: But, for the most part I've been really, really lucky with that.
- 3 JT: Yeah, I would say the same.
- 4 AJ: No negative police interactions, no negative medical doctor interactions?
- 5 IW: I've had doctors say dumb things, but I always get the care that I need. And we're white, so  
6 being white kind of makes it a lot easier with the police, in particular.
- 7 AJ: Ahh, yeah. Speaking as a Black trans woman, I think I can say that it's a different challenge for  
8 women of color . . . trans women of color.
- 9 IW: Definitely.
- 10 AJ: Wow. Speaking of that, what do you think some of the challenges for the broader transgender  
11 community are? And maybe we'll start with June.
- 12 JT: I have been really impressed with younger trans people, like now teens and early 20s age kids  
13 now have so much more as far as information and access to other queer people. So, trans  
14 people today have just been so impressive to me and the stuff that they are able to talk about  
15 openly with each other. That makes me feel really hopeful for the future of transness, at least in  
16 America. I'm cautiously optimistic about policy and legal improvements, but it seems like it's  
17 always on a knife's edge and there's always this constant throwback to public referendums on,  
18 "Should trans people even be trans? What do we think about that?" That's just really  
19 exhausting. But, I'm really, really hopeful that that's getting better and there's just so much  
20 more as far as groups working on stuff and political action committees and advocacy groups  
21 working for trans people and working with trans people that were just not even remotely  
22 possible when I was looking for this stuff early on. I feel really hopeful about it, yeah.
- 23 AJ: Cool. How about you, Isabelle?
- 24 IW: Sure – all of that basically, but also, I do think . . . we've talked about this a lot, we've been really  
25 frustrated by the medical situation where there's no real data, it's all anecdotes, there's more  
26 information in the community than there is in the medical literature. And, nobody is bothering  
27 to really study it and, when they do, it's tiny sample sizes.
- 28 AJ: Study what exactly?
- 29 IW: Particularly drug effects. Like progesterone is a great example of where every doctor will tell  
30 you, "Oh, it doesn't help with your breasts, it doesn't help breast development." But the study  
31 that they're referring to had a sample size of what? Seventeen across both the positive and the  
32 control group – like really, really tiny studies and they're extrapolating that into care for millions  
33 of people. It's just really weird how nobody seems to care or like with the injectable estrogen  
34 shortage where it's like actually . . . that shouldn't have gone on for as long as it did, we're  
35 insignificant to the broader medical community and that carries over into research.
- 36 AJ: Do you think that has anything to do with sexism?

- 1 IW: Possibly. That's really complicated, right? Because to analyze whether or not there is an  
2 element of sexism in there, or at least certain forms of sexism, you'd have to look at the  
3 corresponding situation for trans men. But, actually, injectable testosterone hasn't had a  
4 shortage, its effects are pretty clear, its not like . . . it's sort of a medically simpler situation and  
5 there are other issues there, obviously, like surgical coverage for mastectomies and that's  
6 complete bullshit that that's not . . . that they're still fighting against that, that they're still trying  
7 to police our bodies.
- 8 JT: This is June. At a previous job, I worked with groups doing clinical research and I would  
9 absolutely say that sexism plays a huge role – sexism and heteronormativity, in the way that  
10 research is designed and funded and supported and published is huge in terms of  
11 disadvantaging research towards minority populations, but specifically women as a group, as a  
12 whole, aren't studied. Research is done on men and backfilled with assumptions about how it  
13 would affect women. The idea that there are participants who are not cis and heteronormative  
14 is still very often edge, in the special projects kind of area, instead of as a core part of any kind of  
15 normal research at all. And, the groups that do this work, there's a lot of implicit bias stuff that  
16 happens with groups of cis het people, because that's the norm doing this research and not  
17 really even thinking about it, not as an intentional thing necessarily, but it's just the matter of  
18 the fact that they don't believe that that's a thing that they have to study.
- 19 AJ: Wow. Have there been times when someone has been really super helpful in terms of helping  
20 you to become more sure-footed on this journey, this transgender journey?
- 21 JT: Oh, my gosh – so many people. I have so many great people in my life that have helped me,  
22 given me space and helped me figure this out. I couldn't even name them all, but it's been huge  
23 to have that sense of friendship that I can rely on for that. Absolutely.
- 24 AJ: June, who was the first trans person you ever met?
- 25 JT: Met in person? Was it you?
- 26 IW: That can't be.
- 27 JT: That I was aware of . . . it can't be. That's an excellent question that I haven't really thought  
28 about. I'm not sure. I'm not sure . . . it seems weird that that would be Isabelle, but it might be.
- 29 IW: You're definitely the person that I spent the most time with. We live what . . . 1500 miles apart,  
30 and yet . . . yeah.
- 31 AJ: Isabelle, you don't have very many transgender friends?
- 32 IW: Actually, I do. The trans community in New York City is not bad.
- 33 AJ: It's pretty big. I've been in New York quite a bit and there's a lot of trans activism going on and  
34 trans community.
- 35 IW: It's a little geographically defused because New York City pulls people from long distances in  
36 every direction. But, yeah, no – I have some really great friends. Emma, who you met when you  
37 visited New York.

- 1 JT: She's awesome.
- 2 IW: Yeah, that's been a really great experience. My wife and I got to take her out on her first day  
3 out as herself shopping.
- 4 AJ: Wow.
- 5 IW: Yeah, it was really fun. There are a bunch of local people.
- 6 JT: You know a ton on Twitter.
- 7 IW: That's true.
- 8 JT: You're like an ambassador for trans people – a huge mentor.
- 9 IW: I guess, maybe. I don't know. I do try to help as many people as I can. I've been offering voice  
10 training to people over Skype and that's been really rewarding. It's something that when I was  
11 teaching myself, I was really invested in it and it's something I really, really enjoyed. I put so  
12 much time and so much effort into it, and I loved the work and the process of learning. I'm  
13 discovering things and figuring out . . . I had no idea. It seemed impossible, it feels like magic  
14 that you can practice and change the way you speak and I've just been trying to share that with  
15 people.
- 16 AJ: Give us some tips.
- 17 IW: Oh, sure. Wow, OK – there's a lot. First things first, most people don't really breathe as  
18 efficiently as they could when they speak and if you're going to be pushing the limits of your  
19 voice, you have to breathe like a singer. So, you have to take your breath from your diaphragm,  
20 not your chest. When most people breathe they puff all this up and it makes everything really  
21 tight and it's exhausting and it's not that efficient. So, proper breath . . . like, if I just kind of . . .  
22 this isn't even right . . . somewhere down, so you can get this resonance . . . that's not even low  
23 enough. I have a hard time doing my own voice. So, you have to pull . . . literally put your hands  
24 on your body and make weird sounds until you figure out what it feels like to have your  
25 vibration come from here and not from here. And also, just listening and trying weird . . . you  
26 have to sound bad. This is the thing that one of my singing teachers told me – practice is about  
27 sounding bad so that you can sound good. So, you just have to be willing to make bad weird  
28 noises that you don't like and just get used to that.
- 29 AJ: Bad . . . which kind of noises?
- 30 IW: Weird noises.
- 31 AJ: Oh, weird.
- 32 IW: So, just recording yourself and getting used to the way you sound and being able to map a  
33 sound to what other people hear to what you hear in your own skull, and what it feels like  
34 experientially, physically, muscular stuff and being able to understand if it feels like this so it will  
35 sound like that. That takes a lot of practice. Most people, when they hear a recording of  
36 themselves, they are like, "Oh, that's not my voice." I don't have that because I've listened to  
37 recordings of myself so much.

- 1 JT: You spent a lot of time on it, though.
- 2 IW: I did. I loved it, I love doing it, I love doing it for other people.
- 3 AJ: So, do you charge a fee for your services?
- 4 IW: No. I thought briefly about . . . I love it so much and was like, "This would be great if this could  
5 be my job," but I don't know . . . so many trans women, the community in general, there's a  
6 poverty problem and I'm like why would I be taking money out of the community when I am  
7 personally fully capable of getting steady work and putting money into the community instead.  
8 I would be very hesitant to take money for helping another trans woman, that just doesn't feel  
9 right to me.
- 10 AJ: OK, very good. What do you guys think the relationship is between the G, the L, and the B to the  
11 T?
- 12 IW: Oh, God. You should go first.
- 13 JT: It's been very . . .
- 14 AJ: This is June.
- 15 JT: Yes, this is June speaking. It's been very difficult for me to feel a part of the GLB part of the  
16 community, even though I identify as lesbian, because there is just this huge historical animosity  
17 or . . . I don't even know what the right word is. It's just like this constant sense of being thrown  
18 under the bus all the time. Often you'll see GLBT or LGBT on some marketing or some group's  
19 identity, and the T is just . . . they don't have any idea why it's there, it's just they heard the  
20 letters and they just added it. It's very infrequent that I've come across groups that are GLBT or  
21 LGBT and they actually mean T. And it seems like it might be getting better, I don't know . . . I'm  
22 kind of really worried about legislation right now as far as bills prohibiting trans people from  
23 using public accommodations or clarifying a lack of regulations as excluding trans people from  
24 public accommodations.
- 25 AJ: Yeah, that's a big deal in the state you just moved from – what the hell is going on in North  
26 Carolina?
- 27 JT: It's a huge deal. North Carolina's HB2 is awful, of course, but it's concerted and it's part of this  
28 very planned effort by conservative groups . . .
- 29 IW: ADF.
- 30 JT: ADF, specifically – Alliance Defense Fund.
- 31 IW: Americans Defending Freedom – some bullshit.
- 32 JT: Some eagle and American flag logo. Anyway, it's a group that basically plans the eradication of  
33 trans people and gay people and pushes legislation into favorable legislatures and gets it passed  
34 and gets ordinances in place and astroturfs local people, like up here in Minnesota, that farmer  
35 dude who went to a bunch of house committee meetings and freaked out about trans people  
36 and made it this big issue. So, they're pushing all this stuff and trans people, being a small



1 percentage of the population are relying on allies in the truest sense of the word to help them  
2 with this stuff. So, political action and lobby groups and people who are oriented towards  
3 justice, we're relying on them to stand up for us because there aren't enough of us to do it  
4 ourselves. Right now, it's really touch and go with LGBT groups, considering whether it's  
5 politically advantageous to push for public accommodation laws as a line in the sand, or is it  
6 going to be something they want to kick further down the road.

7 AJ: Where do you stand on that in terms of . . .? Because the argument is we can get some  
8 protections now and then we'll come back and fight for transgender people later.

9 JT: Yeah, I do understand the political calculus that's going on and why people would want to do  
10 that from a tactical perspective. Me personally, I am way on the side of no, that's not  
11 acceptable, because, to me, public accommodation is everything – that's more important than  
12 protecting me on the job. If I can't get to my job, if I can't be in public, then it's . . .

13 AJ: Yeah, right – it's useless for me to have a job.

14 JT: I have a lot of appreciation for people who do feel like that's the right tactical move – like maybe  
15 they've really done the test and they've decided that this is the best move to make. I don't  
16 think it is. I think it gives the conservative groups too much ammunition to circle back and take  
17 things away. A lot of the stuff that we enjoy as trans rights right now are executive actions as a  
18 result of the Obama Administration and that could be easily wiped out if there's not actual  
19 federal legislation that protects trans people. So, I'm really not interested in teaming up with  
20 groups that are going to play that game rather than wholeheartedly support us right now. I  
21 don't feel like that is safe right now.

22 IW: Yeah, this is Isabelle. Yeah, I do find . . . like the politics have been, honestly, really baffling.  
23 Human Rights Campaign on our side on this.

24 AJ: I know, this is weird.

25 JT: So weird.

26 IW: Trans Equality being an incrementalist organization when the last time we passed any legislation  
27 like this was what - 2004? So, they're saying we can wait a decade on public accommodations  
28 and for 10 years you can have a job, but if you're a trans woman at your job, you have to use the  
29 men's room. It's like, "What? Who is that actually serving?"

30 AJ: And I just want to clarify, NCTE is the National Center for Transgender Equality.

31 JT: Correct, yes.

32 IW: It's just so bizarre how the politics are playing out and they're basically retreating and protecting  
33 housing and jobs which are, of course, profoundly important, but notably cover . . . if you look at  
34 who is affected by public accommodations, it's dominantly trans people. If you look at who is  
35 affected by employment and housing, well that's any queer person. They're currently not  
36 protected in most states. It's kind of suspicious that they're doing the thing that helps gay and  
37 lesbian and bisexual people and skipping the thing that's specific to transgender people.

- 1 JT: This is June speaking again. It reminds me of when I was watching a documentary about trans  
2 women, mostly trans women, doing on-the-ground work in Washington to go to legislator's  
3 offices and push for the passage of . . . was it called the Equality Act at the time or was it  
4 something else?
- 5 AJ: ENDA.
- 6 JT: Yeah, ENDA.
- 7 AJ: Employment Non-Discrimination Act.
- 8 JT: Yes, thank you. Do you remember the name of the movie, lbby?
- 9 IW: I don't – no, I don't.
- 10 JT: Citizen Lobbyist or something like that.
- 11 IW: Something like that; it was something very generic.
- 12 JT: Yeah, I apologize.
- 13 AJ: That's fine.
- 14 JT: It was like 2002 . . . 2004.
- 15 IW: Something like that.
- 16 JT: Yeah. I remember watching this group of women do this work and go to the HRC offices and  
17 protest outside of them and make them talk to them and just how familiar it seems to now was  
18 kind of terrifying. If I could have shouted backwards in time, it would be like, "Be more angry."  
19 Oh, my gosh – thank you for doing the work but oh, my gosh, I am so, so sorry that it's not  
20 better than it is now. It just feels like this huge boulder.
- 21 AJ: Wow, yeah. Well, that is going to be a big issue in the coming weeks and months and years,  
22 unfortunately.
- 23 JT: Yes, it will.
- 24 IW: Can I take a sec to take that original question from a different angle?
- 25 AJ: Yeah, Isabelle – go ahead.
- 26 IW: So, politically the community is kind of shitty, obviously. It's a very mixed bag but I found  
27 interpersonally, locally actual relationships with . . . I mean, a good chunk of my friends are cis  
28 gender queer women and they are so good to me and I can talk to them. There is a great queer  
29 tango scene in New York City that my wife and I were involved in for a long time . . . a while ago.
- 30 AJ: Tango, like with the rose and the . . .
- 31 IW: Well, no – nobody does the rose.
- 32 AJ: OK.

- 1 IW: That's very showey – we did Argentine tango, it's decidedly very simple and small and perfect –  
2 and I loved it. The community there was great and it was . . . I might have been the only trans  
3 person in our group, but they were all very accepting and I could be open with them. There's  
4 this really weird contrast for me where every single person that I meet is great and then,  
5 somehow, collectively, the community is not as good. Even within the trans community, things  
6 get ugly.
- 7 JT: Really ugly.
- 8 IW: Really ugly.
- 9 AJ: Like what, for example?
- 10 IW: I think our favorite pastime is tearing each other down, basically, on the internet. Go ahead,  
11 June.
- 12 JT: Speaking about the legislation thing, the tactics like I remember getting into several really  
13 heated discussions with other trans women about whether that's a good idea or a bad idea. It  
14 just feels really gross and not fruitful. So, yeah, the dreaded discourse, whenever that comes  
15 up, as far as what does trans mean in terms of what words we use to describe it and who we  
16 involve in our advocacy seems to quickly get heated.
- 17 IW: Yeah.
- 18 AJ: Who do you think belongs under the transgender umbrella? That seems to be changing a lot  
19 lately so I'm interested in both of your guy's opinion.
- 20 IW: Do you want to go first?
- 21 JT: I don't feel like there's a limit. I'm excited to . . . like I was saying earlier about the younger  
22 people now and what gender means to them and gender fluidity and how they embrace that. I  
23 mean, it's really inspiring so I'm hopeful that it's a broad umbrella and is less like gatekeeper-y,  
24 personally.
- 25 IW: This is Isabelle. I think I broadly agree and there are some weird corner cases of people who  
26 frankly do fall under the umbrella of people who are served by transgender activism, but  
27 personally don't want to be under that umbrella. I mean, Julia Serano talked a lot about the  
28 division between an identity label and an umbrella term and I do feel like people often . . .
- 29 AJ: What is the difference?
- 30 IW: Sure. I mean, OK. Sure . . . so, somebody who falls under an umbrella is essentially served by  
31 that community so if you . . .
- 32 JT: And works to improve that community.
- 33 IW: Exactly, but you don't necessarily have to take that label for yourself.
- 34 JT: Sure.
- 35 IW: So, unlike Julia Serano who also has opinions about this . . .

- 1 AJ: Who would that apply to?
- 2 IW: There are lots of bisexual people who don't feel comfortable using that word for themselves –  
3 lots of bisexual and pansexual women calling themselves queer women because there's  
4 sometimes a stigma attached to that within the community. So, sometimes, even though  
5 somebody falls under an umbrella, they don't want to use the word for themselves. So, within  
6 the trans community, there is . . . I don't know, the intersex community seems, in my  
7 experience, split about 50/50 on whether they want to be under the umbrella. And maybe that  
8 50% split is the intersex people who are also trans, whose birth assignment or whatever . . .
- 9 AJ: Because that's a possibility, right?
- 10 JT: Absolutely.
- 11 IW: Plenty of people, sure. Avery Edison, Cat Graffam, the painter.
- 12 AJ: I'm sorry . . . because my transcriptionist is going to be like, "What did she say?" I'll be like, "I  
13 don't know." So, somebody . . . Addison, you said.
- 14 IW: Oh, gosh. Avery Edison and
- 15 AJ: Avery Edison.
- 16 IW: Yeah, she's a comedian. Intersex, androgen insensitivity, but assigned male and she is a  
17 transgender woman. I personally think she's hilarious. Her humor isn't for everybody but I think  
18 she's really smart and . . . her humor is pretty dark but she's very brilliant. She was sort of one  
19 of my early inspirations, one of my role models and one of the people that I looked up to when I  
20 was trying to figure myself out at first.
- 21 AJ: Cool.
- 22 JT: And the second name you mentioned was Catherine Graffam G-r-a-f-f-a-m. She's a trans  
23 woman artist but also intersex and really inspiring.
- 24 IW: Yeah.
- 25 AJ: So, what about drag queens. That is being slowly being pushed out of the umbrella.
- 26 IW: Yeah. This is Isabelle . . . I'm just going to say it's complicated. Plenty of drag queens are also  
27 trans, but plenty aren't. I feel like maybe in this case, to the extent that somebody performs  
28 drag, there are not really affected by the same issues that affect the transgender community at  
29 large, like when you have the option of switching back – of saying, "Well, I'm not a woman so  
30 public accommodations don't really affect me." Like, you can take the costume off, right,  
31 because that really changes things. I can't ever go back to the safety of being a man, I just  
32 couldn't – it would destroy me. So, I do think that that is a substantially different situation; the  
33 fact that it is explicitly . . . the people for whom it is explicitly just performative, I do think they  
34 do fall in sort of a separate category, but I understand that can be a controversial opinion.
- 35 JT: My experience with drag only is fairly small in terms of direct experience, but I remember pretty  
36 starkly one of the first times that I went out as me with my wife. We went to a club and there

- 1           was a drag performer there, a drag queen, and it was very notable because this is like this thing  
2           that was very show-y for people who were participating as audience and there was absolute,  
3           complete agreement from the audience and the place that was putting on the show that she's  
4           doing a show and pronouns are she and everything is great – no problems . . . except that I was  
5           harassed in the bathroom downstairs – because, "There's some guy in the bathroom." That  
6           makes no . . . it's right there, it's right in the same space as this thing going on and people were  
7           like, "Yeah, great." I don't know – it felt like a microcosm of how drag kind of can be damaging  
8           for trans women who are just trying to live their lives and not perform this show for everybody.  
9           But, of course, everything Isabelle said as well, I would say.
- 10   AJ:     Have either of you either worked for or volunteered for a trans or LGBT organization?
- 11   JT:     I'm on the Trans Commission here at the U.
- 12   AJ:     This is . . . June.
- 13   JT:     June speaking, yes.
- 14   AJ:     You're on the Trans Commission?
- 15   JT:     I am.
- 16   AJ:     What is that like?
- 17   JT:     It's pretty cool. It's like coming back from apparently some rough times so we're trying . . .
- 18   AJ:     A bit of a hiatus or . . .
- 19   JT:     Get more organized. We have a lot of new members that are excited, so we're hoping to  
20           capitalize on that and use it for some good stuff.
- 21   AJ:     Is it mostly U of M staff or students? What's the make-up nowadays?
- 22   JT:     I think most of it is staff right now, though there was one student at the last meeting that I went  
23           to and there was a specific agenda item about trying to increase student involvement. I'm not  
24           sure how that's going to go, that's like right now – so, we'll see. I'm totally new to it, so I'm just  
25           excited to be a part of it. And, I've had some initial talks with different groups here – like  
26           OutFront Minnesota. Having just moved here, I don't really know much about the queer groups,  
27           but I'm trying to learn. I've done some work with a local clinic to kind of help their doctors learn  
28           more about trans people and help with some policy decisions with Allina Health Systems to  
29           improve guidelines for care.
- 30   AJ:     That's pretty awesome – sort of as a solo artist.
- 31   JT:     Yeah, me and a friend who works with the clinic have been working on policies and procedures  
32           and updating them to modern terms and being more sensitive and aware of being respectful.
- 33   AJ:     That's incredible. What about you, Isabelle?
- 34   IW:     Yeah, I'm not as awesome as June – she's incredible. I'm just . . . I mostly just work directly,  
35           interpersonally. I'm very into trans mom-ing for people. That's something that I get a lot of joy

- 1 out of, so mostly that's what I do. I don't think I've . . . have I ever gotten at all politically  
2 involved? I've been meaning to, but it's also a really big imposing subject with all this  
3 bureaucracy and all these structures that I don't understand or really know anything about.
- 4 AJ: Yeah, it's work.
- 5 IW: You've done a great job of navigating that, June.
- 6 JT: I read a lot of angry letters.
- 7 IW: I've been too scared to even try, really. It's just so intimidating. But also, I'm just already very  
8 busy just doing all the one-on-one stuff – it's hard to make time after work and four hours of  
9 voice lessons a week and seeing if I can squeeze in more. And, just supporting people when  
10 they're feeling really shitty about things.
- 11 JT: That's hugely important.
- 12 AJ: Yeah, that's huge – it absolutely is. What do you guys think the agenda should be for the  
13 transgender community moving forward? You kind of talked about this a little bit, but I just  
14 want to get a little more specific.
- 15 IW: Yeah, this is Isabelle. I do think . . . yeah, so there's the immediate stuff where people are  
16 actively suffering and it's the stuff that's politically hot right now . . . bathrooms and housing and  
17 employment. Those need to be fixed, all of them, as soon as possible.
- 18 AJ: I'm just going to throw in transgender women of color getting murdered, which is kind of a big  
19 deal.
- 20 IW: Yeah, I was going to touch on that. I do think . . . that's a really hard issue to solve because it  
21 intersects with race and that's a massive problem in this country in a lot of ways. There are so  
22 many things that dominantly affect women of color – like imprisonment and trans women being  
23 thrown in men's prisons, sometimes for just defending themselves. It's atrocious.
- 24 AJ: Yeah, I just saw *Free CeCe*, the movie, this past weekend – one of those women who was  
25 defending herself and subsequently incarcerated.
- 26 IW: Yeah, it's heartbreaking, but what . . .
- 27 JT: And even beyond just defending, but surviving – like so much about surviving is criminalized for  
28 trans people, trans women of color specifically.
- 29 IW: Sure. I mean, are you talking . . . this is Isabelle, specifically about sex work?
- 30 JT: Yeah, specifically.
- 31 IW: Yeah. It's just . . . I don't know, these are huge problems that have been part of this country's  
32 history from the very beginning and dismantling them . . . it doesn't feel impossible, but it feels  
33 like the work of a generation. It's work of now so many generations . . . it feels almost arrogant  
34 to think that this generation, however great we are, however aware we think we are, I think  
35 we're up against this massive engrained hatred and I don't know. People have theories about  
36 how you undo that and there's the whole Harvey Milk narrative where you just come out and

- 1           now your friends and family know a gay person so maybe they'll be less shitty. But that only  
2           takes you so far, especially with race where . . . OK, there are parts of the country where  
3           nobody, where everybody only ever sees white people. But, I don't think merely introducing  
4           yourself to those people as a person of color, I don't know how far that would get you honestly.
- 5   AJ:       Changes their hearts and minds – yeah, it really doesn't.
- 6   IW:       No. there's a part of me that just feels like America is broken and we just need to . . . to solve it  
7           and start over, there's no way to pay back the legacy, the damage that we've done, and  
8           relatedly, indigenous communities and the destruction of two-spirit identities is another  
9           important intersection where, yeah . . .
- 10   JT:       Well, gender as a whole thing is like this colonial legacy of oppression that's just . . . I mean, the  
11           gender binary. It's just awful.
- 12   IW:       Yeah, like white supremacists and so-called white nationalists and whatever bullshit they call  
13           themselves to make themselves feel good about it – or even white genocide. I'm like, "Sure,  
14           let's do that, let them fix things." Yeah, just like, "Let's breed ourselves out of existence, that  
15           would be OK, everybody would be better off."
- 16   JT:       I mean, yeah, we've pretty much fucked everything up.
- 17   IW:       OK, so that's the white guilt portion.
- 18   AJ:       I'm not saying that.
- 19   JT:       I said it.
- 20   AJ:       I just want to be clear here.
- 21   IW:       Yeah . . . no, whatever.
- 22   AJ:       Even though it's hard to disagree, but I don't think white genocide is the answer, personally.
- 23   IW:       Well, white genocide and the way that white supremacists mean it which is like calling diversity  
24           white genocide and worrying about miscegenation and I'm like, "No, that's kind of OK – diversity  
25           is really great."
- 26   JT:       Yeah, this whole sense that equality is somehow oppressive to white people is insane.
- 27   AJ:       Sure.
- 28   JT:       That's ridiculous.
- 29   AJ:       Well, where do you see the trans community in 50 years from now?
- 30   JT:       I have . . .
- 31   IW:       June, that's June.
- 32   JT:       Yes, sorry, that's June speaking. I've mentioned to Isabelle that I see larger and larger  
33           percentages of trans people being self-identified and recognized in a census sense as where  
34           we're going 50 years from now. I think there's way more trans people than even trans people

- 1           now would say there are because of that legacy of oppression from a whole society suppressing  
2           this idea that you can be trans. So, I am very hopeful that there will be a lot of trans people in  
3           50 years and that will be an OK thing to be and that it will be weird in the same way that it's  
4           weird for kids now to learn about slavery as a real thing – that their not very distant  
5           relationships experienced. I'm hoping that people 50 years from now will be similarly  
6           embarrassed about and feel disgraced by the idea that that was OK to oppress trans people in  
7           the way that they have been.
- 8   AJ:     OK. What about you, Isabelle?
- 9   IW:     Sure. Wow, I don't know. I do think you're right in terms of the percentage of the population.  
10           The best study we had was about one-third of a percent, and now it's about two-thirds of a  
11           percent, and I'm like my guess would probably be closer to 2% altogether, if people would just  
12           feel comfortable coming out of the shadows.
- 13   AJ:     Minimally, right?
- 14   JT:     Yeah. I'm very optimistic.
- 15   IW:     You said 5%, I think that's probably shooting a little higher but somewhere in the low single  
16           digits. I'm like that's a real political force . . . that extra, there's a threshold politically where I  
17           think if we can get across the threshold where people say a third of a percent, or they did, and  
18           now that gets translated into point-zero three of a percent, because people don't understand  
19           percentages. If we can just cross that threshold into a whole number, it worked for gay men.  
20           Maybe that's overly optimistic, maybe we . . . I don't know. Fifty years is a really long time.
- 21   JT:     That's a really long time.
- 22   IW:     But I do think so many trans people are around now and they're transitioning pretty young  
23           some of them, and that's really going to change people's perceptions – I hope.
- 24   AJ:     Yes, very young.
- 25   IW:     We made a promise to each other, we're going to grow old.
- 26   JT:     Seriously, that's huge.
- 27   IW:     Yeah, the trans elders that are so hard to find . . . yeah. So, I think starting to amplify those  
28           generational affects . . . there being enough of us to start passing things down, I think can really  
29           make the difference.
- 30   JT:     Yeah, stop being the pioneers.
- 31   IW:     Yeah, right. If people don't have to feel like pioneers.
- 32   JT:     We're still in that stage of everybody figuring it out for the first time themselves only – in  
33           isolation.
- 34   AJ:     Yeah.
- 35   JT:     I hope that's better.



- 1 AJ: Well, I want to thank you both for being willing to be a part of this project. My sincere
- 2 appreciation to June Taylor and Isabelle Wedin.
- 3 IW: Correct.
- 4 AJ: Thank you so much for coming in. Until we meet again.
- 5 JT: Thank you.
- 6 AJ: Bye-bye.
- 7 IW: Thank you. Bye.