

CJ Vondal
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

October 15, 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

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1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 CJ Vondal -CJV
3
4 AJ: And hello. My name is Andrea Jenkins. I am the oral historian for The Transgender Oral History
5 Project at the University of Minnesota. Today is October 15th, 2016. I am in Fargo, North Dakota
6 at North Dakota State University, NDSU. Uhm, go bisons! Uhm, and I'm here with CJ. How you
7 doing CJ?
8
9 CJV: I'm doing fine.
10
11 AJ: Hey CJ, tell me your name, spell your name, I know the CJ part is pretty easy but your last name,
12 uh, and then your gender identity as it is today, your gender assigned at birth, and the pronouns
13 that you use.
14
15 CJV: Alright, my name is CJ Vondal. So it's V.O.N.D.A.L. A lot of people put and E instead of an A.
16
17 AJ: Wow, okay.
18
19 CJV: And my sis always got mad, and I'm like I don't care.
20
21 AJ: [Laughs]. Right.
22
23 CJV: I identify as uh, a trans man that has not transitioned yet...
24
25 AJ: Okay.
26
27 CJV: ... but I was born a female.
28
29 AJ: Mhm.
30
31 CJV: And I use they, them, and their pronouns.
32
33 AJ: Okay.
34
35 CJV: I'm pretty much gender neutral pronouns.
36
37 AJ: Gender neutral pronouns. Thank you so much. Uhm, where are you from?
38
39 CJV: I'm from Grand Forks, North Dakota.
40
41 AJ: Is that right?
42
43 CJV: Yup. Born and raised.
44
45 AJ: Born and raised, alright. Do you still live in Grand Forks now?
46
47 CJV: Yep.

1
2 AJ: Are you a student?
3
4 CJV: I am a student at the University of North Dakota. UND.
5
6 AJ: UND. Okay, in Grand Forks.
7
8 CJV: Yep.
9
10 AJ: What's, what's it like growing up in Grand Forks, North Dakota?
11
12 CJV: Uhm, I don't want to really say much cause I was raised kind of closed minded like I didn't really
13 get out. I didn't actually know that, that the LGBT community actually existed until I was actually
14 a Sophomore in high school.
15
16 AJ: Oh wow. They have a GSA at your high school?
17
18 CJV: uhm, they, they do.
19
20 AJ: They do now?
21
22 CJV: They, they started, I think, a couple of years ago and—
23
24 AJ: Were you, were you still a high school student?
25
26 CJV: I was still a high school student. I'm a Freshmen now at UND.
27
28 AJ: Oh, wow. Okay. So you just started college? Wow, this is like your first semester.
29
30 CJV: Yep.
31
32 AJ: How's it going?
33
34 CJV: It's going pretty well.
35
36 AJ: Yeah?
37
38 CJV: I would say.
39
40 AJ: You're making the adjustment?
41
42 CJV: It's kind of getting used to not being, living with my parents. I'm by myself in the dorms. I don't
43 have a suitemate so...
44
45 AJ: You don't have a roommate?
46
47 CJV: Nope.

1
2 AJ: Did you come out to your school? Is your school...
3
4 CJV: Uhm, I actually only came out to my school, like my high school, as a lesbian. I actually came out
5 in a newspaper article. It was during the—
6 AJ: As a lesbian?
7
8 CJV: As a lesbian during my junior year of high school.
9
10 AJ: Mhm.
11
12 CJV: It was the, it was for the, it was called the Same Sex Couple Marches Down for like our Prom.
13
14 AJ: Uhuh.
15
16 CJV: And during that time my partner was actually gender fluid.
17
18 AJ: Okay.
19
20 CJV: And, and it was then that I kind of started to notice that I didn't really fit like feel like a woman.
21 Like a started like looking up things...
22
23 AJ: Mhm.
24
25 CJV: ... for like trying to figure out what my identity was...
26
27 AJ: Sure.
28
29 CJV: ... but I just kept as a female but I wasn't really comfortable.
30
31 AJ: Mhm.
32
33 CJV: So...
34
35 AJ: Wow. Uhm, do you have any plans for medical interventions as a part of your transition?
36
37 CJV: I hopefully, I want to but the only problem is I have to deal with, uhm, polycystic ovary
38 syndrome, PCOS, which leads sometimes if it's not treated can lead to ovary cancer and, uhm, I
39 think it's pelvic cancer too.
40
41 AJ: Mhm.
42
43 CJV: And I was actually diagnosed on my eighteenth birthday, which was one day after I actually told
44 my mom I wanted to transition.
45
46 AJ: Okay.
47

- 1 CJV: So the day I was told I had PCOS they— my mom was like, “Well you have to wait and see if you
2 can at least try to balance your hormones.”
3
- 4 AJ: Right.
5
- 6 CJV: Cause PCOS is pretty much a, uh, hormone disbalance.
7
- 8 AJ: Okay. Alright, uhm, so thinking about medically transitioning but really want to make sure that—
9
- 10 CJV: ... that my—
11
- 12 AJ: ... your body can handle...
13
- 14 CJV: ... handle it.
15
- 16 AJ: ... yeah, that’s smart. That’s very smart. Uhm, what do you think of the Dismantling Walls
17 conference this weekend?
18
- 19 CJV: It’s actually— I’m, at first I wasn’t coming...
20
- 21 AJ: Uhuh.
22
- 23 CJV: ... but then I’m like, “Well, I have no other plans...”
24
- 25 AJ: [Laughs].
26
- 27 CJV: So I’m like, “Well, I might as well register.” And I’m actually enjoying it. I’m actually talking to a
28 lot of people and actually opening up to them.
29
- 30 AJ: Uhuh.
31
- 32 CJV: I’m usually actually really shy, closed kind of guy so...
33
- 34 AJ: Oh, I can’t tell. You’re, uh, pretty, uh, active and engaged since I’ve met you. Uhm, do you come
35 to Fargo very often?
36
- 37 CJV: I do not. It’s actually been almost a year since I’ve been to Fargo.
38
- 39 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
40
- 41 CJV: Last time I was here was for like, uhm, I think it may be a year, maybe two. I can’t really
42 remember but it was when, uhm, this trans activist came and it was during that time that I
43 started to notice like I actually like understood what he went through.
44
- 45 AJ: Mhm.
46
- 47 CJV: And I started to realize that, that’s what I kind of wanted to do too.

1
2 AJ: So I'm getting a theme that when people show up in, in these communities and they're living
3 their lives authentically like that can have an impact on people.
4
5 CJV: Yes, it does.
6
7 AJ: Yeah, I mean, how did that impact you.
8
9 CJV: It kind of gave me the strength to be the person that I want to be.
10
11 AJ: Uhuh.
12
13 CJV: Like I was always like shy, and I didn't want to come out to my parents.
14
15 AJ: Right.
16
17 CJV: Like the first time I came out as lesbian I actually had an argument with my mom...
18
19 AJ: Mhm.
20
21 CJV: ... cause she was actually afraid for me.
22
23 AJ: Sure. Yeah. I mean, understandable. You know there's a lot of bigotry and hatred out there and
24 so parents worry. Yeah. But you're being brave.
25
26 CJV: Yup.
27
28 AJ: Uhm, CJ is there anything that you want to say that I didn't ask you?
29
30 CJV: Mm, not that I know of.
31
32 AJ: Okay, what— last question— what do you think is the number one issue facing the transgender
33 community?
34
35 CJV: I, uh, I think it's just how people treat the trans community.
36
37 AJ: Mhm.
38
39 CJV: Like with the H2BE [correction: HB2] law in North Carolina.
40
41 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
42
43 CJV: It's kind of harmful to everyone cause if you read it they actually mess up what, what sex means.
44
45 AJ: Right.
46
47 CJV: And so it's kind of harmful.

1
2 AJ: Well, it also, uhm, limits people's ability to sue the government for discrimination. Uhm, all
3 people, uh, immigrants, people of color, uh, I don't think people realize that when they voted to
4 pass this thing, uhm, so, yeah, you're absolutely right. It, it has an impact on all our lives.
5
6 CJV: Yeah.
7
8 AJ: So I want to thank you so much for being a part of this conversation and this project and wish
9 you good luck in your college career and your journey towards becoming more and more
10 yourself, CJ.
11
12 CJV: Thank you.
13
14 AJ: Thank you so much. Bye bye.
15
16 CJV: Bye.