

Hannah Stein
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

October 27, 2017



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 Hannah Stein -HS
3
- 4 AJ: So, hello.
5 HS: Hello.
6 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project
7 at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries. Today is October 27, 2017,
8 and it snowed today.
9 HS: It snowed – ahhh.
10 AJ: Oh, my goodness – the first snow of the season.
11 HS: Fall is starting and ending. Oh, gosh.
12 AJ: But, as we Minnesotans do, we are here and my honored guest showed up on time, and so I’m
13 here today with Hannah Stein.
14 HS: That’s me.
15 AJ: How you doing today, Hannah?
16 HS: I’m doing great.
17 AJ: Yeah. Before we get going, I just want you to answer a few questions.
18 HS: Of course.
19 AJ: State your name, spell your name, what is your gender assigned at birth, and your gender as you
20 define it today, and your pronouns.
21 HS: Great. I’m Hannah Stein, Hannah Jo Stein. H-a-n-n-a-h J-o S-t-e-i-n and I’m a trans woman,
22 assigned male at birth but of the female persuasion. She/her and . . . yeah. I got my name by
23 sending a list of names I’d been thinking of to my parents and they narrowed it down to three
24 and I picked from the three.
25 AJ: Is that right?
26 HS: Yeah.
27 AJ: So, your parents had a role in selecting your new name.
28 HS: Yeah, they did.
29 AJ: That’s pretty awesome.
30 HS: Yeah, I picked the first name but they picked my middle name.
31 AJ: Wow. But, your first name was part of the three that they selected.
32 HS: It was, yeah.

- 1 AJ: That's pretty incredible. So, I take it your parents are really supportive. Were they involved in
2 your transition at all? Well – yes, they were, they helped pick your name, so that's a big part of
3 it.
- 4 HS: Yeah, they were very good to me honestly. I was worried about telling my father mostly, but I
5 had to come out three times to my mother, I guess, before she was like, "All right, well tell your
6 father." I told him once and he was like, "Oh, well cool," and took it completely well and nice.
7 They were totally supportive and have learned a lot themselves too.
- 8 AJ: Wow.
- 9 HS: I learned a lot too – you know, trust more folks. You never know who will be on your side and
10 it's nice when people you don't expect . . .
- 11 AJ: Step up and show up.
- 12 HS: Yeah.
- 13 AJ: Or, show up and step up.
- 14 HS: Exactly, yeah.
- 15 AJ: So, Hannah, just to kind of get your memory bank flowing, what's the first thing you remember
16 in life?
- 17 HS: Oh, wow. I remember seeing my baby sister and realizing my life was going to change, I guess.
18 Like, "Oh, wow, there's a little kid in there." I remember that distinctly. I think I remember
19 running around or something vague.
- 20 AJ: How old were you when your sister was born?
- 21 HS: I was three. She's three years younger than me, that's my only sibling. But, we've always
22 gotten along really well and . . . yeah, never really . . .
- 23 AJ: Even though you had that early moment of . . . I don't guess it was jealousy but you just
24 recognized that your life was going to change.
- 25 HS: Right. I was like, "Oh, there's a kid there." Yeah, gosh, I remember that first and foremost but I
26 remember kindergarten, stuff in pre-school because I couldn't really see. It was actually a little
27 blurry because I'm really near-sighted so I didn't have glasses until 1st grade, which meant I saw
28 a lot of movies and things that were really blurred because I have -10 and . . . really bad
29 nearsightedness. So, I heard a lot of things, or read really close up. I liked to read a lot as a kid.
- 30 AJ: You're a reader.
- 31 HS: Yeah.
- 32 AJ: What was home like?
- 33 HS: Good.
- 34 AJ: Where did you grow up?

- 1 HS: I grew up in Athens, Georgia. My mom worked for the hospital as a cancer nurse and my dad
2 worked for medical gas . . . the pumps that make oxygen go to the patients require a lot of
3 mechanization and he made sure that was up to code and stuff. Yeah, so he would go to a
4 bunch of different hospitals but my mom stayed at one hospital. It was nice.
- 5 AJ: So, you guys had a pretty middle income . . . middle to upper income family lifestyle.
- 6 HS: Right. I went to a public elementary school, but I went to a private high school or whatever
7 because that was . . . yeah, Georgia doesn't support the public schools as well, I guess. They had
8 enough to sort of send me and my sister to a private school then. But, yeah, it was really small
9 and a lot of those folks had been there since . . .
- 10 AJ: Elementary school.
- 11 HS: Yeah, exactly. It was like a whole private sector. So, I don't know – middle school kind of
12 sucked. I didn't know anyone or have any friends really until . . . yeah, freshman, sophomore
13 year of high school, I guess. And then it was all right, I guess.
- 14 AJ: You didn't know anybody in middle school. What was your experience like in school? Were kids
15 . . .?
- 16 HS: Jerks.
- 17 AJ: Bullying you or teasing you?
- 18 HS: Yeah, I couldn't see, I had thick glasses – or, I had these contact lenses that would just fall out of
19 my eyes all the time. I remember . . . I don't know, pretty early on, I knew I was trans because I
20 guess with the internet . . . I had a little mini – like learn to type mini-computer, or whatever, in
21 6th grade, so by 7th grade I had done a Google search and been like, "Wow, I guess I feel that
22 way, but I don't really feel enough that way to do anything in my life." I pretty early made a
23 decision to not . . . to actively, I guess, repress that part of myself because I remembered
24 relatives laughing at news specials when it was like, "Don't laugh, it's not a joke, finger nail
25 polish for boys."
- 26 AJ: Oh, wow. OK.
- 27 HS: My dad, in particular, was like, "If you ever feel that way, let me know so I can move out." And I
28 was like, "Oh, fuck."
- 29 AJ: So he could move out?
- 30 HS: Yeah, I guess. He didn't – or whatever, but I guess he was . . .
- 31 AJ: Do you think he was joking or he was serious?
- 32 HS: Well, I guess, he was joking but I took it as serious.
- 33 AJ: Yeah.
- 34 HS: You never know what will really make someone believe that what they feel is wrong and bad
35 somehow. Right? I pretty much just decided actively I'm going to be a closeted person and

- 1 eventually those feelings will go away, right? Yeah, totally. I guess I had a really tough time in
2 middle school and remember thinking once, “I’m going to act this role of a funny dude so I can
3 have friends,” because I hate not having friends first and foremost.
- 4 AJ: Right.
- 5 HS: So, that worked all right.
- 6 AJ: So, you were like the class clown?
- 7 HS: Yeah, exactly. I hosted a talent show or whatever once in high school. I don’t know . . . I was in
8 orchestra.
- 9 AJ: What instrument did you play?
- 10 HS: Cello.
- 11 AJ: Really? Do you still play?
- 12 HS: I still have it. I’ve played the past year but I took six off. When I went to college I sort of slacked
13 off, but I like it a lot. I haven’t really recorded anything but I play with my friend who plays a
14 ukulele and that’s fine. It sounds nice to us, but . . . yeah.
- 15 AJ: When did you go to college? Or, where did you go to college?
- 16 HS: I decided to go to Appleton, Wisconsin – to Lawrence University.
- 17 AJ: In the Midwest . . . so, from a southern upbringing to the Midwest.
- 18 HS: The exotic Midwest, exactly.
- 19 AJ: What was that like?
- 20 HS: I liked it tremendously. I had aunts and uncles up here, so that’s why we were visiting and I
21 thought, “Wow, this is great. I want to go here, darn it.” And, got enough college loans and my
22 folks helped me out also – because it was near family. They agreed to help me if it was
23 somewhere in the southeast, but I was like, “No way, I want to go to Lawrence.” It’s a small
24 liberal arts school, learned a lot about different things. I especially liked some classes that had
25 nothing to do with my major – Native American empires. I got a Spanish minor too, which is
26 cool. Theatre Arts and Government is what they call Political Science there. So, I did a bunch of
27 different things and didn’t know what I was going to do when I graduated, so I worked at an
28 Indian restaurant there in Appleton, Wisconsin for a summer, and tried to figure out what I was
29 going to do. I took a job at Environment Minnesota to move here because I carpooled with my
30 friends from Minneapolis to Appleton, thought it was very pretty – it was also the summer,
31 right? “Wow, this liberal nice summer place.” And, so I moved there, I liked it a lot.
32 Minneapolis seemed where I needed to be with a theatre degree and . . . I don’t know. I felt like
33 I already knew what was happening in New York or LA from movies or shows and if I was
34 somewhere where I could make the most of life in an up and coming spot, I thought that would
35 be good.
- 36 AJ: So, you were telling me a little bit earlier that when you moved here there was a polar vortex.

- 1 HS: Yes, that was the first winter.
- 2 AJ: And you stayed?
- 3 HS: I did, even though at Environment Minnesota my job was to door-to-door canvas.
- 4 AJ: Oh, my goodness.
- 5 HS: Yeah. The fall was great, but then they made me a manager just as it was the coldest winter
6 since the 1970s. And so, my job was to hire people, send them out into the cold to knock on
7 doors, and collect their money to stop taconite mining in the Boundary Waters. It was dismal. It
8 was the coldest winter ever, all these staff quit. Oh, man, I didn't blame them. I quit too. But,
9 that was in January. I made it all the way through November and December managing that and
10 when I got another job at a Lebanese restaurant, I just was thrilled that it was inside. It was
11 indoors, all you could eat meal once a day, and that was what I needed at that time. It was at
12 that job, really, that I came out – at the Lebanese restaurant. It was walking distance and I felt .
13 . . I had come out to some workers at Environment Minnesota, but I didn't take it seriously
14 enough to apply it to my lived experience at work, which I have since . . . I present full-time, all
15 the time as myself, which is great. I didn't when I first moved here because I was scared, but the
16 more I learned about Minneapolis and myself and just getting over the fear, the deeply
17 internalized fear of being vulnerable or wearing what I wanted or . . . yeah, I really came into my
18 own in that restaurant. And, that was another example of telling friends working there that I
19 was not a straight man but a trans woman. There were some folks that I really was impressed
20 about . . . who, I changed their views and I'm still friends with them, really close friends with
21 them.
- 22 AJ: Wow. How did the management take it?
- 23 HS: Well, the Russian manager thought . . .
- 24 AJ: A Russian manager who owns a Lebanese restaurant.
- 25 HS: Yup, pretty strange. Natalia Mishova and two other Russian people serving Lebanese food, with
26 some Ecuadorians in the back and one Lebanese cook.
- 27 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 28 HS: It was a very strange work environment, but I liked it a lot because the people were good, the
29 food was good and it was within walking distance from my house. Yeah, she thought I was going
30 the other way when I . . .
- 31 AJ: Is that . . .?
- 32 HS: It was Zakia Lebanese Deli.
- 33 AJ: OK.
- 34 HS: I like Emily's though, if can get to . . . Emily's is great. So, I like the food and the Russian boss
35 there thought I was . . . when I told her, "I'm trans, I'm Hannah," she said, "Oh, what is your real
36 name." I was like, "Hannah." And she took that the wrong way, she thought I was a trans

- 1 woman . . . no, a trans man, sorry. That's what it was, she thought I was going the other way, so
2 that really confused me so we had a little bit of a spat on the dress code or something.
3 Eventually, after setting her straight, I worked there for a while, but left to work at a clothing
4 store – a women's clothing consignment store, which was awesome. I learned a lot about
5 vintage and different styles. I typed clothing descriptions all day, sold clothes – it was great.
6 Two years I did that and worked unsupervised in the most ideal job ever, pretty much. Playing
7 music for the store . . . but yeah, it was a small business, so they had to let me go after one of
8 the two owners moved to California and they couldn't keep me on. Now, I work at a jazz club
9 and it's very nice. I see nice music all the time. I do theatre.
- 10 AJ: So, you've been pretty lucky with employment.
- 11 HS: I have, yes. I've worked ever since I was 15 pretty much – with different jobs.
- 12 AJ: When is the first time you ever met a trans person?
- 13 HS: College.
- 14 AJ: Yeah. Do you remember who?
- 15 HS: It was Andy Rudd, Luna Rudd.
- 16 AJ: Who Rudd?
- 17 HS: Yeah, Luna Rudd.
- 18 AJ: L-u-n-a?
- 19 HS: Yeah. She went by Andy at the time, but I think she goes by Luna now and she was a director of
20 mine at Lawrence University, who also happened to live nearby me. I would talk her ear off
21 about stuff, about, "What is your experience like?" "How did you decide that you're really
22 trans?" Or, whatever – and all the stupid questions I had were real received, I guess, by her.
23 That she lent an ear to me, I was very grateful. She is from Milwaukee and I appreciated her
24 direction, how together she had it, and sort of . . . yeah, her kindness in answering my questions.
25 I felt that . . . yeah, dang, maybe I'm trans. I kind of tried to come out as bi mid-way through
26 college, right? And, that worked OK for dating boys and whomever, but I do still feel
27 comfortable in, I guess, a pansexual/bi way. I'm more attracted to the person but at the time I
28 was struggling with trying to actualize my gender identity with that attraction. I was . . . I got a
29 trans resource guide from the library. Lawrence has a great library and, even though I didn't
30 take any Gender Studies classes, I fucking read the big old textbook about transgender history
31 through some German fellow back in the 1930s through to now. And that was very helpful.
- 32 AJ: Is that Marcus Kirschfeld?
- 33 HS: Yeah, you got that – you're the historian. Yeah, I fucking . . . yeah, I didn't even check it out. I
34 was so scared to even have anyone even think I might have any question about my gender –
35 ever.
- 36 AJ: Well, the book is huge.

- 1 HS: It is also huge, yes. So, I would just go to the library to study and bring that out and read it
2 secretly and put it back. Yeah, I did that a lot. I would read a thing, I would go on hour-long
3 reads about trans stuff and then close it and be like, “Well, yeah, that’s not part of my actual life
4 – forget that. That’s done.” It grew worse and worse and senior year especially I felt that the
5 closing in of the real world was upon me and I didn’t even know what I wanted to do with my
6 life – at all. I was also just aware that when I was in a room of girls in dresses and dudes in
7 jackets I would get so anxious I would clench my shoulders because I wasn’t either . . . or didn’t
8 feel like wearing a fucking suit. “What the fuck am I supposed to do? I’m acting.” I was acting, I
9 was a theatre major and I felt like I was acting all the time.
- 10 AJ: Wow.
- 11 HS: I remember going to the school therapist and being like, “Yeah, I’m kind of suicidal. I’ve got
12 some worries about my gender, but maybe I just have depression. Can you give me an anti-
13 depressant?” And she was like, “That doesn’t cause gender dysphoria, depression or anxiety –
14 none of that would . . . I think you’re trans.” I was like, “Fuck,” and cried. I mean, she didn’t say
15 that . . . after a while I kind of came up with it. So, yeah, I wasn’t out really until after college. I
16 graduated one way and then floated around some jobs while transitioning.
- 17 AJ: Wow.
- 18 HS: Going to groups helped. Café SouthSide, I remember I drove there once and was too scared to
19 get out to talk to other trans people.
- 20 AJ: Right, that’s real. That’s a real think.
- 21 HS: It was like, “Oh, fuck, I don’t know . . .” I went the second time and I still have friends from that
22 group too. Having community is huge.
- 23 AJ: That’s . . . yeah. What role does community play in your transition and subsequent life?
- 24 HS: I rely on my friends a lot. I feel that the people I met at group have normalized a lot of the
25 doubts or anxieties I have about society. I feel like they can empathize with me a little more
26 than the average cis person. I love talking to trans people, that’s my folks. I have a trans
27 neighbor – two trans neighbors.
- 28 AJ: Is that right?
- 29 HS: Yeah, Samara and a guy, I guess.
- 30 AJ: Did you move there on purpose? Did you know that they were there or you just met them after
31 living there for a while?
- 32 HS: I met their roommate, who is also trans. They live nearby me and while visiting their house,
33 there’s other trans people there. So . . . new friends.
- 34 AJ: You found some community.
- 35 HS: Yeah, exactly. Totally good. Working with 20% Theatre Company really helped me too.
- 36 AJ: Oh, really. What do you do at 20% Theatre?

- 1 HS: Well, I'm going to be a director for The Naked I.
- 2 AJ: Wow, congratulations.
- 3 HS: Thank you, Andrea.
- 4 AJ: For the Naked I . . . what is it? 5.0 now? How many have they done?
- 5 HS: Five or six. We were three, weren't we?
- 6 AJ: Yes.
- 7 HS: I helped Andrea as a production assistant. I was a stage hand for something before that, but
8 now I'm going to direct.
- 9 AJ: We worked together, I think, on the second one – The Naked I: Self-Defined.
- 10 HS: Cool, yeah.
- 11 AJ: Well, congratulations, that's awesome. You were a theatre major?
- 12 HS: I was.
- 13 AJ: So, this is in your path of interest?
- 14 HS: It is.
- 15 AJ: Do you know what the play is?
- 16 HS: No, I haven't selected it yet. Cole Bernadette has a cool one that they . . . I need to read . . .
- 17 AJ: What was that, I'm sorry I missed it? Cole . . .
- 18 HS: Cole . . . there's a lot of really good works that I haven't decided which I'm going to do. It's due
19 on the 5th of November. I have to read them, select them, and so does the assistant director. I
20 guess I have somebody helping, which is really good.
- 21 AJ: That's nice.
- 22 HS: Yeah, it feels so fancy.
- 23 AJ: Yeah, tell us a little bit about 20% Theatre.
- 24 HS: Well, they're focused on telling queer and women and minority stories, ones that are 20% . . .
- 25 AJ: People of color stories.
- 26 HS: Yeah, sorry – what did I say?
- 27 AJ: Minority, but . . . yeah.
- 28 HS: My bad – POC stories. I really admire that they think that's crucial in this day and age. Clare
29 there is really particularly inspiring and I admire their actualization of different things like scaled
30 ticket prices for people of all walks to come see the shows.

- 1 AJ: Sure, who may not have the means.
- 2 HS: Yeah, pay what you can. And, they pay their actors and have advocated for me getting paid
3 during times where I wasn't going to get paid. But, yeah, to pay your artists for their work is . . .
- 4 AJ: Yeah, because you . . . did you work on . . . ?
- 5 HS: Mixed Blood's . . .
- 6 AJ: Production of *Charm*. *Charm*, yes.
- 7 HS: I did, I was the assistant director.
- 8 AJ: Mama Gloria.
- 9 HS: Yeah, Mama Gloria. That's right.
- 10 AJ: That was a great production.
- 11 HS: Thanks. I do . . .
- 12 AJ: I interviewed most of the cast.
- 13 HS: Ahhh, yeah.
- 14 AJ: Which was pretty awesome.
- 15 HS: Aly Taylor, did you . . . ?
- 16 AJ: Yeah, Alexandra
- 17 HS: Alyssandra – yeah.
- 18 AJ: Alyssandra, was it?
- 19 HS: Yeah, I just call her Aly.
- 20 AJ: Aly, yeah. That's what she has everyone call her.
- 21 HS: Yeah.
- 22 AJ: So, theatre is a place that you find joy.
- 23 HS: Yeah, I enjoy putting the realities aside to make a production as good as it can be, to actualize a
24 script – hopefully with the playwright, which is my favorite – the person who wrote it, to try to
25 make a compelling story on stage for however long, to transport the people watching it to think
26 maybe something they weren't thinking before and take some considering into stuff. That's key.
27 I don't know . . .
- 28 AJ: Hannah, to the extent that you feel comfortable, tell me about any medical interventions you
29 have undergone on your journey towards living your true gender identity? And, if you don't feel
30 comfortable you don't have to.

- 1 HS: No, that's cool. I am on hormones and I've been on them for some time. I started taking them,
2 actually, right after college – before I was out really even.
- 3 AJ: Really?
- 4 HS: I came out to my family and some close folks, but then remained closeted for a while, but taking
5 hormones, when I first moved to Minneapolis. So, the first jobs I had at the Environment job
6 and the Lebanese job, I was on hormones, but under stealth, I suppose, at work. That's pretty
7 much all I've done. I have a roommate who is also a trans woman and she had her GRS surgery
8 recently, in April. It's been helpful to watch her go through all that and . . .
- 9 AJ: Is she happy?
- 10 HS: Yeah, she is. So, that's cool. It's a lot of work too. She has been having trouble with the
11 insurance that was supposed to cover it, not covering things.
- 12 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 13 HS: Yeah, I want to make sure that I don't wind up in a ton of debt no matter what I decide . . .
14 whatever.
- 15 AJ: Are you considering . . .?
- 16 HS: Yeah, considering it. I feel fine though as far as I don't have as much dysphoria as I know a lot of
17 other people do and I am lucky for that. But, talking is a pain . . . yeah, as far as medical
18 interventions, relatively none related to my gender identity.
- 19 AJ: Well, I would say hormones is a pretty big intervention.
- 20 HS: Yeah, that's true, and it has helped a lot. Honestly, my skin is better. I used to have bad acne in
21 middle school. I've had laser, a lot of laser on my face and some on my legs.
- 22 AJ: That's an intervention.
- 23 HS: That's an intervention – totally. Yeah, I forgot about that – laser. And, yeah . . . that's helped a
24 lot. I think . . .
- 25 AJ: Have you noticed physical changes from the hormones? I mean, you talked about your skin and
26 . . .
- 27 HS: Yeah, I have more boobs than I did before. I remember when I told my parents I was going on
28 hormones, my mom said, "Well, don't count on any genetic luck from my end." Yeah, my family
29 has never been strong in that department.
- 30 AJ: Small breasted?
- 31 HS: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I don't care though, it's fine. I'm happy.
- 32 AJ: Well, you just fit right in with the rest of your relatives.
- 33 HS: Yeah, exactly. Totally. My aunt jokes about going out and buying a boob . . . she's getting a bra
34 right, buy a boob . . . yeah, it's fun. I was on more hormones, like before my doctor said that,

1 you know, “You’ve been on these for a few months with no real changes, you could probably
2 just scale it back a little bit.” So, I did kind of, so . . . on a medium dose if that makes sense, I
3 suppose. But, yeah. I’ve noticed I can’t drink as much booze or coffee without getting thirstier.
4 I think it has something to do with spironolactone – something to do with your liver. But, that’s
5 OK. And, yeah, my hair is softer. Yeah, I don’t know – I like hormones and I feel like they’ve
6 helped me calm, I guess . . . my dysphoria used to be the worst, probably around the end of
7 college, and when I felt like I was doing nothing and just watching more body changes that I
8 couldn’t stop. God, I remember when my dad was like, “You need to shave.” That was my first
9 time I needed to shave a mustache and I was like, “Fuck, oh no, it’s really happening.” I thought
10 I could just ignore puberty and . . .

11 AJ: And it wouldn’t happen, right.

12 HS: Watching yourself go the wrong way is really fucked up, I think. I remember I’d cross dress
13 closets of friends or their relatives or whatever, and remember being like, “Wow, I could pass as
14 a girl if I wanted to,” or whatever. That was pretty early in my life, but I stopped doing that or
15 whatever. But, it was a time when I came back from college to visit my parents, who had moved
16 to Texas, that I shaved closer than I ever had, or whatever, put on more make-up and this outfit
17 I had gotten from Goodwill and was fucking like, “I’m going out, I’m going to Wal-Mart,”
18 because it was across the street.

19 AJ: And, this was in Texas?

20 HS: In Texas, a suburb in Texas. I was so scared – and it was hot, beating down sunlight. I was kind
21 of sweating. I get to Wal-Mart, no one says anything. I’m kind of walking around and I’m like,
22 “OK, I’m going to look at some soup, I’m going to look at hair ties.” I got a blouse and walked
23 over and I was like, “I’m going to try this on,” and the lady said, “Right this way,” and took me to
24 the women’s dressing room. That was when I was like, “Wow, I could do this. I could be trans
25 just like . . . I could do what I want.”

26 AJ: Yeah.

27 HS: It was as I was leaving that this one lady said, “Have a nice day, sir.”

28 AJ: Ohh.

29 HS: And, I was devastated. It was the first time I’d ever done anything like that out and about and I
30 felt so silly and foolish and just tore off all the clothes. I was walking back in the sun and I threw
31 them out. That set me back a couple years – that one fucking bitch at the Wal-Mart. And, it’s
32 weird – you never know what’s going to set off an anxiety or a deep-seated thing.

33 AJ: That’s true. What have been some of the challenges of you transitioning? Or, since you’ve
34 transitioned?

35 HS: I guess people thinking I’m a sex object – you know, out of the kitchens of jobs I’ve had. It’s like
36 not necessarily an object to be desired, but one that you can make lewd comments at that are
37 inappropriate towards . . . but it’s all a joke to men. I don’t know how to deal with that, I guess.

38 AJ: So, sexual harassment, basically.

- 1 HS: Yeah. Anyway, so yeah . . . that wasn't really anything I'd faced before. I'd say random people
2 being like, "Oh, wow, you've got a low voice." And, I'm like, "Yup, I sure do." "Are you sick?" "
3 (cough) Yeah." That's the best defense. Or, well OK, this one artist came to the jazz club where
4 I work and invited me to his hotel room after the show.
- 5 AJ: Right.
- 6 HS: OK, I can hook up with some guitarist who played with Herbie Hancock or whatever, has his own
7 Wikipedia page – wow, cool. But, I'm like, "Does he know I'm trans? Do I do this? What if he
8 doesn't and it goes terribly wrong?" I agonize over . . . that element too. Like, "Oh, man, do I
9 tell him?" Do you just say over a text, "Hey, I'm also trans . . . FYI"? No, I don't know how to
10 really tell or whatever, when do you . . .?
- 11 AJ: Did you go?
- 12 HS: No, I didn't – I chickened out. I fucking chickened out. I was like, "Maybe we could get a drink
13 or something before?" And he was like, "No, come to my hotel room and stay warm." That only
14 means one thing really. So, I just kind of dodged it, I guess. I don't know. If I had been spunkier,
15 maybe, but I didn't. But, yeah, I guess fear.
- 16 AJ: He probably knew.
- 17 HS: Probably. I'm pretty visibly trans.
- 18 AJ: It's not that, but I just think sometimes people have a connection and sometimes certain people
19 can just see you.
- 20 HS: Yeah.
- 21 AJ: No, I don't think you're visibly trans, I'm not suggesting that at all.
- 22 HS: Yeah, you're right. Sometimes when people are attracted legitimately, I too just dismiss it out of
23 fear. There are so many shields that I have up all the time, that sometimes I don't know what's
24 real and what's not. I don't know . . . fucking shields. One time, on 4th of July this year, I
25 dropped my friend off at the Greyhound station and pulled over in my car to text her to see if
26 she got on the bus, and a dude . . . it was the summer so my windows were down. He walked up
27 and he was like, "Do you have any food? I'm homeless, what's your name?" I'm like, "I'm
28 Hannah, I have some food. I have carrots . . ."
- 29 AJ: Broccoli.
- 30 HS: Yeah, I'd just been grocery shopping. And, he was like, "No, I'm a vegan." I said, "Well, you
31 know, that's the one thing you could eat." I had never heard . . . I'm going to get out of here,
32 right. And he was like, "No, baby, don't go," and he opens my car door and my purse falls out.
- 33 AJ: Oh, my God.
- 34 HS: And, he fucking takes the money out of the wallet that has fallen out. I crawl out of the car to
35 be like, "No, give me my wallet, what are you doing?" And he was like, "Here you go." And I'm
36 like, "Give me my money, I saw you take my money, I just want . . ." And his response was to hit

1 me in the face, to just wham. I was like, “What the fuck?” He was hitting me. “I bet you feel
2 like a big man, don’t you? Fuck you.” But, I hold on to his shirt as he was hitting me, “Let go,
3 Hannah.” As he pulls away, I yelled, “You fucked with the wrong bitch,” and hit him across the
4 face. We’re rolling on the sidewalk hitting each other, I can’t see anything. He runs away,
5 somebody else tackles him and the police arrest him and he goes to jail.

6 AJ: Did you get your money back?

7 HS: No, they said I had to know the serial number of the god-damn bills.

8 AJ: No way.

9 HS: Right. I was livid – and my phone was broken. It was a bummer. But, yeah, there was a trial
10 and it was a criminal case and I didn’t actually go so it was dismissed. He’s already had a lot of
11 breaking and entering shit and then a bunch of other shit, so I guess he spent two days in jail,
12 and that’s fine, I guess. Fuck. Oh, man.

13 AJ: That’s awful.

14 HS: Yeah, that was a challenge thinking people can just hit you and take your shit, that really sucks.
15 I’ve never been in a fight in my life and that was the first time I had ever . . . and the car was
16 idling next to us as we were hitting . . . and then directly after, other people . . . I don’t need to
17 talk about that anymore. The point is, difficulties are there and . . .

18 AJ: Yes, absolutely.

19 HS: And what do you do when somebody fucking . . .?

20 AJ: What have been some of the joys?

21 HS: I don’t know. What?

22 AJ: What have been some of the joys?

23 HS: The joys . . . oh, I’d say fucking . . . fucking.

24 AJ: Fucking – yeah. So, you get over your shyness every once in a while.

25 HS: Yeah, exactly.

26 AJ: Who do you date?

27 HS: Oh, God.

28 AJ: I mean – guys, girls, other trans people?

29 HS: I’ve dated guys, girls and other trans people. The trans men are . . . one tried to marry me once.

30 AJ: Without your permission?

31 HS: So, it was two months that we dated and then on the last day before he went to Seattle to move
32 away, he asked me to join him and marry him – in a year. See if we could do long distance for a
33 year and then move to Seattle. And Seattle is on the other end of the country from where I’m

- 1 from. I've never been to the west coast and I'm already in exotic Minnesota and I was like, "Oh,
2 I'll think . . ." I fainted. It was at Café SouthSide that he got on a knee and had a ring. It was
3 white gold and . . . oh, my God. I just had a tough . . . you know, all the blood went to my head
4 and people were clapping. I was like, "Yeah, I'll give it a shot."
- 5 AJ: So, it was in public.
- 6 HS: Yeah, we were both 24 and I guess I was fiancé #3 of his. So, I chickened out and didn't do it and
7 I mailed him the ring. But, yeah, that was fucking stupid. I guess I fucking had the . . . I had a
8 couple exes now. The first boy I dated . . . I'd hooked up with a few, but one was Patrick
9 Boateng, a grad student from Northwestern University.
- 10 AJ: How do you spell Boateng?
- 11 HS: It's like Boat and -eng. His family was Ghanaian.
- 12 AJ: -eng?
- 13 HS: Yeah, Patrick Boateng.
- 14 AJ: So, he's African.
- 15 HS: Yeah. He was great, and so smart and nice. We went skinny dipping in the lake around Chicago
16 and had a wonderful . . .
- 17 AJ: He went to Northwestern or Northeastern?
- 18 HS: Northwestern. Yeah. I was an intern at a theatre, American Theatre Company, there one
19 summer. That was great. Yeah, I dated a few . . .
- 20 AJ: But, you were sort of male presenting at that time?
- 21 HS: Yeah, that's true. I guess since . . . OK, well all right. So, I dated Patrick. Then I dated Ruth who
22 is a cis woman, when I was graduating college – who is the first person I came out to.
- 23 AJ: OK.
- 24 HS: And stayed at her house when I worked in Appleton. Then, I came to Minneapolis and damn, I
25 dated a cis boy, Coleman Gilbert, who was an art student. I dated Eli Harkness who tried to
26 marry me. I dated Mariah Schultz, this violinist, a cis woman, who moved away. And, Cody
27 Masbak, who is a trans guy and a cis guy, Tom Almquist, who pretty much . . . my friends call
28 him Christmas Boy because we just dated around Christmas and then broke up. But, it was fun.
29 I've had flings, but those are relationships, I guess, that I've had. And, you learn all kinds of stuff
30 dating other people – about yourself and music and . . . I feel a lot more comfortable dating
31 people as an openly trans woman. I feel a sense of stability in my own identity, right? And
32 knowing thyself is important. But, yeah, different people have been more extroverted than me
33 and different people have been more introverted than me. It's always a matter of that sort of . .
34 . over the problems with . . . I'm pretty open sexually.
- 35 AJ: OK. So, you kind of answered this a little bit, but has there been a specific moment, person or
36 organization that has had a significant impact on your life related to your gender identity?

- 1 HS: OutFront Minnesota is another one. 20% Theatre is one, but OutFront is nice. Café SouthSide,
2 Roxanne Anderson and all those fucking . . . that was key.
- 3 AJ: Yeah.
- 4 HS: Yeah, I love Café SouthSide. I met CeCe McDonald through the Trans Equity Summit – through
5 you. That was another thing – the Trans Equity Summit has been really nice. That really makes
6 me feel great every time it rolls around.
- 7 AJ: Right.
- 8 HS: Yeah, that's huge. I don't know.
- 9 AJ: Wow, that's awesome. Have you ever worked for an LGBT or transgender-specific organization?
10 Or volunteered?
- 11 HS: I mean 20%, Gadfly Theatre is another queer one that I've acted for, but I really have just done
12 phone calls for OutFront. That's really not that much.
- 13 AJ: Yeah, no – that's awesome. Around the marriage stuff?
- 14 HS: Yeah, that shit. And, it was a couple years ago with . . . it was mostly . . . yeah, the marriage
15 stuff. But, yeah . . . I do appreciate the spirit of activism in this city and whenever some fucked
16 up police brutality shit happens, people get out on the street no matter if it's cold as hell and
17 that's what I love about this city also. That's fucking huge. I remember when I worked at a
18 clothing store in St. Paul, some people came in whose kids went to school where Philando
19 served them lunch and shit, and he knew their names – the kid's names, and what they ate and
20 shit. That was fucked up. I have had the chance to go march on some highways and . . .
- 21 AJ: So, you're an activist.
- 22 HS: Yeah, I'll go out there and march on whatever.
- 23 AJ: Wow. What do you think the relationship is between the LGB community and the trans
24 community?
- 25 HS: Disenfranchised folks. I don't know.
- 26 AJ: Do you think those letters should all go together?
- 27 HS: I do. I think that . . . yeah, any non-cis straight behavior is seen as other. It's the non-specific
28 straightness that's a given in this society, almost – all the jokes or movies or ambitions of people
29 is like, "You want to be straight and married, right?" And, any rejection of that leaves some
30 people not knowing what to talk about, leaves some people thinking about that and only that
31 and dismissing any other elements of their lives on the basis of preference in how they were
32 fucking born or how they interact with other people that they love or are attracted to. I think
33 that it's important to group together. I think that they are different issues – sexual orientation
34 and gender identity, but often they are intertwined, often they are both under attack by cis
35 people and straight culture that is pretty fucking rigid. It's a conservative-ass world out there.

- 1 They lump us into a group so why shouldn't we stick together. I feel that often the infighting is
2 real and cis gay men have said some terrible things to me.
- 3 AJ: Really? Like what?
- 4 HS: I don't know, that I'm not femme enough or I'm really just a gay man, or whatever. Fuck that –
5 you don't tell me what I am or how I feel or what the fuck are you to say. I don't know. I don't .
6 . . . I mean, everyone has a capacity for good and bad and there is good and bad members of each
7 community. But, I think the good outweighs the bad and I think . . . I don't know. I think we
8 have to ban together in the light of Trump-ism and the three branches of government that are
9 controlled by the Republicans for the next four years. There's, you know, shit flying . . . I don't
10 want to have any of it hit my allies in the community. I think that . . . yeah, shit. I think that they
11 should be lumped together, for now. I think that the more community the better, honestly. I
12 don't understand how people who are LGBTQ can still be socially conservative or fiscally . . . I
13 guess . . . I don't know. People who hate on other members of our community are snakes and I
14 don't like it. So, I don't know. I wish that we could all get along.
- 15 AJ: Yeah, I do too. I do too, Hannah. When you came out to your mom, you said she didn't believe
16 you – or you had to tell her three times. What did you tell her?
- 17 HS: Well, I was like, "I'm seeing a therapist about being suicidal and depressed about my gender.
18 I'm figuring it out." She was like, "Well, good, keep seeing the therapist. That's great." Then
19 the second time, I was like, "So, it's been a couple months, I still feel like I've always felt
20 throughout my life – like I'm repressing my gender identity." She was like, "Well, I mean, do you
21 really have to with all the millions of ways to be a guy. Do you have to change your name and
22 everything?" I was like . . . I mean, "Yeah." And, that's when my sister and her boyfriend walked
23 in and so we had to cut the conversation short. So, the third time we talked about it was over
24 the phone and she just kind of was like, "All right, fine. OK, all right. Tell your father right now –
25 here he is," and put him on the phone.
- 26 AJ: Oh, wow. OK.
- 27 HS: And it was like, "Dad, I'm feeling like I don't . . . I'm not a man, I've never felt like a man and I'm
28 making my own decisions in my life. First things first, I don't like feeling repressed, emotionally
29 stunted – like I have to fit this role of a . . . whatever. I've got to make some changes, dad." And
30 he was like, "OK, we'll still love you, you're still our kid. How's the weather?"
- 31 AJ: Wow.
- 32 HS: Really funny.
- 33 AJ: No tears?
- 34 HS: No, and I will say he was a lot more emotionally empathetic. He did have some strokes when I
35 was in college and I think that may have set up a little more of a shift from my childhood to after
36 I'd totally . . .
- 37 AJ: He saw a little mortality in himself.

- 1 HS: Yeah, totally – that really makes people fucking think. Like, “Oh, shit, I’m going to die and . . .
2 you’ve got to only live this life once. It’s a single-player game and if I’m miserable living one
3 way, I should probably stop living that way.” I really value relating to people how I want to. I’m
4 very clumsy but I like trying to have grace in how I talk or interact with people. I don’t know –
5 an intention to . . . I don’t know how I interact with people – feeling authentic and nice.
- 6 AJ: Yeah, authenticity – that’s important to yourself and to the people that you relate to. We’re
7 getting pretty close to the last question, Hannah. What do you think the agenda should be for
8 the transgender community and where do you think the trans community is going to be 50 years
9 from now?
- 10 HS: Well. I think we should dedicate more to justice for trans folks that are often not prioritized. As
11 in, people who can’t, perhaps financially, afford to transition or whose insurance doesn’t cover
12 hormones or what they feel they need to survive or interact with the world on their terms. I
13 think that people who get incarcerated, that their preferred gender . . . they should be jailed
14 with the gender that they identify as. Or, figuring out some sort of other way so that they don’t
15 throw trans women in with the men. Yeah, I think that’s a key thing that we’ve got to address
16 because there are plenty of times that happens.
- 17 AJ: Yeah, it happens a lot.
- 18 HS: Yeah, it’s fucked up. I think that addressing justice for people who have been discriminated
19 against in jobs who are easily just fired for being trans or fired for just not fitting the bill
20 anymore if they come out as trans. There’s so many casual discriminations still that don’t go
21 checked, that are just, “Well, yeah, if you wanted to not be in jail, don’t commit a crime.” It’s
22 like, “No, fuck you – treat them with respect and humanity at least.” I don’t know. I feel that
23 there should be more confrontation on behalf of intersex and folks that fall outside of male and
24 female. I think the trans community has a lot to work on in terms of gender queer identity and
25 legitimizing gender fluid identities and treating them as real and valid and with the respect of
26 fucking any other gender. And, that’s hard for plenty of people.
- 27 AJ: It’s hard.
- 28 HS: It’s hard, but I think necessary if we’re going to move forward. That’s part of it too, that’s part
29 of our community.
- 30 AJ: Absolutely.
- 31 HS: That’s something that we’ve got to advance, I think. Challenging what it means to have a
32 meaningful life is part of being trans too. To actualize your identity often takes priority over
33 capitalist dreams or dreams of . . . I mean, for theatre, for me, my roles have been severely
34 changed because of not acting as a cis white man actor. It’s different, and harder, and providing
35 stories and roles that tell those stories is also a thing to develop. What was I . . . tell more
36 stories, actualize more . . . I don’t know. Live your life, don’t let the world get you down.
- 37 AJ: Yeah, no – that’s real, that’s very real. Has there been anything that I haven’t asked you that
38 you feel really compelled to say?

- 1 HS: We live in an era of corporate rampage.
- 2 AJ: Hmm, that's true.
- 3 HS: We're often just exposed to what they want and buy more stuff and just fucking float on
4 through life until you die. I don't know. I think finding meaning in life is separate from that shit.
5 You've got to find what's important to you and not what is going to get you the most money or
6 the most fancy, flashy product. Finding what the world can bring . . .
- 7 AJ: Or, what you can bring to the world.
- 8 HS: Yeah, what you can bring to the world – exactly.
- 9 AJ: Thank you, Hannah. Thank you so much for sharing this hour with me, and your life and your
10 story, very personal story. I really deeply appreciate it. Until we meet again, my friend.
- 11 HS: Until we meet again.
- 12 AJ: All right, peace.