

finn schneider
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

August 4, 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 finn schneider -FS
3
4 AJ: So, hello.
5 FS: 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 August 4, 2017, and I
8 am in south Minneapolis with finn Schneider. Hi, finn.
9 FS: Hello, Andrea.
10 AJ: How are you today?
11 FS: Doing just fine, thanks.
12 AJ: Thank you so much for being willing to be a part of this project. I really appreciate it and, if you
13 don't mind, can you state your name and spell it, just so we make sure we have the correct
14 spelling, your gender identity assigned at birth, your gender as you identify it today, and the
15 pronouns that you use?
16 FS: Sure. So, my full name is finn jakob schneider. f-i-n-n j-a-k-o-b s-c-h-n-e-i-d-e-r. Assigned sex at
17 birth was female. How I name my gender now is as . . . depends on the day, but usually I'll say
18 transgender queer, non-binary, trans masculine, one of those, but the non-binary piece is really
19 important to me. And the pronouns that I use are they, them, and theirs.
20 AJ: Do you ever use that whole gender identity moniker as one thing?
21 FS: If I'm with other trans people, yes. Generally, no, I'll just say trans or maybe gender queer,
22 depending on the level of knowledge of the lingo of the people I'm with.
23 AJ: Because it rolled off like it could – transgender queer . . . what else was it?
24 FS: Non-binary trans masculine.
25 AJ: Non-binary trans masculine. That could just be it.
26 FS: That could just be it, that's right – it could be. It's a lot of syllables. I don't think there's going to
27 be a checkbox for that one.
28 AJ: Right, yeah, it's probably not going to be on the demographic sort of sheet that people can
29 identify on. Thank you, finn, for sharing that. jakob, j-a-k-o-b.
30 FS: Yeah, that's right.
31 AJ: That's the Jewish, Talmudic spelling.
32 FS: Which I didn't know. So, I changed my name and when I chose my new middle name, I've
33 always loved the name Jacob, but I wanted it to look different than Jacob would often look.

- 1 AJ: With a “c”.
- 2 FS: With a “c”, and so I decided to spell it with a “k”. I didn’t know . . . I had done no research on
3 that whatsoever. And, my family is very German and my father, who is retired now, was doing a
4 lot of family tree research and one day he called me up and he was asking me about the middle
5 name that I chose when I changed my name. He was like, “Did you know that’s the Jewish
6 spelling?” I said, “No, I had no idea.”
- 7 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 8 FS: He’s like, “Yeah, I learned that doing some of our family history.” I was like, “Oh, interesting.”
- 9 AJ: OK. So, Schneider is not Jewish in your family tree?
- 10 FS: No, Schneider is German and my family tree is very German.
- 11 AJ: I mean, Schneider . . . there were German Jews who were Schneiders.
- 12 FS: True, yeah.
- 13 AJ: Awesome. So, just to kind of get us going, finn, and I do want to learn more about your name
14 too, you talked a little bit about the middle name, but before we get deep into our interview,
15 can you just tell me what’s the earliest thing you remember in life? What’s your earliest
16 memory?
- 17 FS: The earliest memory I have is, I believe it was my birthday party when I was turning three years
18 old and I had gotten a stroller for my birthday, which I was very excited about. My dad had just
19 put it together. The fabric, it was one of those strollers that’s just a frame with a piece of
20 umbrella fabric in it, and there was a flower print on it and it was pink – I remember that, it was
21 very bright. I was really excited for the stroller to get put together so I could push my dolls
22 around in it. So, it was just a very brief snippet of a memory but that’s probably the earliest
23 thing that I remember.
- 24 AJ: And, that was kind of a gendered moment.
- 25 FS: Perhaps, right.
- 26 AJ: In our culture and society, I mean within that context it doesn’t have to be, I wish it wasn’t. I
27 think if little boys could feel comfortable with a stroller we might live in a much better world.
- 28 FS: Pink strollers, right.
- 29 AJ: But, that’s . . . in this context, it is sort of gendered and it’s interesting that that was a happy
30 memory for you, I take it.
- 31 FS: It was, yeah. I was excited about that stroller.
- 32 AJ: Where did you grow up?
- 33 FS: I grew up in Menomonie, Michigan, which is right on the border of Wisconsin. I grew up in Twin
34 Cities, not these Twin Cities. But Menomonie, Michigan and Marinette, Wisconsin is one large

- 1 community on two sides of the river. So, that's where I was born and grew up, all the way
2 through graduating high school.
- 3 AJ: Oh, wow. The Upper Peninsula.
- 4 FS: I'm a Yooper.
- 5 AJ: Yooper. Wow, yeah, you guys get some pretty tough winters up there.
- 6 FS: That's true.
- 7 AJ: I mean, not to say that it's that much different from Minneapolis. But, born and raised?
- 8 FS: Yes, in a small town. There's about 10,000 people in my hometown, so not too big at all.
- 9 AJ: Yeah, I've heard of Menomonie, Wisconsin, but not Michigan.
- 10 FS: It's the other Menomonie.
- 11 AJ: Wow. It kind of makes you want to break out into a Muppet song, but I'm not going to do that.
- 12 FS: OK, we'll save that for after the interview.
- 13 AJ: Exactly. So, what was it like growing up in a small town for you?
- 14 FS: At the time, it was great. I don't think I had much critical consciousness of the larger world
15 around me. So, Menomonie is a small town, almost exclusively white folks. I grew up in a
16 religious family, so a lot of Christians, particularly Catholics in the town that I grew up in. I did
17 grow up in the Catholic Church. I grew up in a middle-class family, my folks were school
18 teachers. So, things felt very normal to me.
- 19 AJ: Yeah.
- 20 FS: There wasn't much that I encountered in the way of feeling out of place. And, a part of that
21 narrative is that my . . . many trans people have a story of having known from a very early age
22 that there was something different about their gender, I certainly grew up exhibiting cross-
23 gender behavior, but I never felt like there was anything wrong with my body as a child. And so,
24 I didn't really have anything that made me feel super out of the ordinary and uncomfortable.
- 25 AJ: There was no gender distress for you.
- 26 FS: Yeah, I've never heard that phrase, but no, there was not . . . as a young child, there were
27 moments of gender distress. I have one very vivid memory. We were getting ready to go to
28 church on Easter, I think it was Easter morning, and my mom was getting me dressed in my
29 Easter dress – in our family, you wore a dress to church on Easter if you were a girl. I had picked
30 the dress out, Andrea – it's not like someone handed this dress to me and said, "You have to
31 wear this." My mom had taken me to the store, I had picked this dress out, and I, for whatever
32 reason that morning, did not want to put it on. So, I had a full-on meltdown in the kitchen. I
33 remember this very vividly, just crying and crying and crying. And, my mom kept asking me,
34 "What's wrong? What's wrong? What's wrong?" "I don't want to wear this dress, I don't want
35 to wear this dress." But, even in my mind, I couldn't say why. I still, to this day, don't know

- 1 why. I just know that I did not want to wear that dress. So, there were moments of maybe
2 gender distress, looking back, but at the time I don't think that I would have called it that.
- 3 AJ: I'm going to trademark that phrase. I don't think I've ever really heard it either, it just kind of
4 blurted out.
- 5 FS: I'll tell everyone I heard it from you.
- 6 AJ: Oh, wow. Gender distress, maybe that will be the name of my book. I don't know.
- 7 FS: That has promise.
- 8 AJ: So, when is the last time you wore a dress?
- 9 FS: Oh, let me think. I wore a skirt to my oldest sister's wedding and that was in . . . actually, it's her
10 10th anniversary right now, so it's been a decade. What's interesting, though, is since . . . so,
11 since my presentation has become more masculine, I guess is what we call this, and since I have
12 started hormones and had top surgery, I have become more interested in expressing femininity.
- 13 AJ: Huh?
- 14 FS: There was many years of my life where I completely suppressed and had great disdain for
15 femininity and swore that I would never wear a dress again or shop in the women's department
16 again, and that felt great and very validating and very empowering, and now sort of in the
17 evolution of my gender journey, I'm at this place where I'm interested in exploring my
18 femininity and, often, find myself at Target veering towards the women's section and wanting to
19 try things on, but feeling very nervous about the optics of that in a highly gendered space. So,
20 there's this interesting way in which stepping into what we might call masculinity has gotten me
21 very curious just in expressing femininity in ways that I wouldn't have anticipated.
- 22 AJ: Wow, there is so much to unpack there. (A) We need gender-neutral dressing rooms, right?
- 23 FS: Yeah.
- 24 AJ: That would help a lot of people. But, this whole idea that the expression of masculine identity
25 has now created more space to embrace . . . I guess I would call it traditional feminine norms.
26 And, you're certainly not the first person to express that. I know a lot of trans masculine men
27 who now date and/or in relationship with cis gender men or other trans masculine men.
- 28 FS: Right.
- 29 AJ: Very much or they're on Tinder or Grindr looking for a date. Trans, gay male masculinity is a
30 thing.
- 31 FS: Yeah, absolutely. And other people I've talked to, I've heard some similar narratives around this
32 increasing interest in femininity or exploring femininity. I think the ways that that is enmeshed
33 for some people, not for everybody, with sexuality is also really fascinating. Many people
34 equate outward gender expression with sexuality. So, right, would it mean something for me as
35 a trans masculine person to then express myself in a feminine way? What, if anything, does that
36 mean for my sexuality? I just identify my sexuality as queer, so it doesn't really mean anything

1 for me in that way. But, I know for some people it has really shifted their way of thinking about
2 relating to other people.

3 AJ: Have you always identified as queer?

4 FS: Not always, no. Well, I came out in college as a lesbian first, a lesbian woman – actually, to a
5 nun, which is one of my favorite stories.

6 AJ: Let's hear this story.

7 FS: The first person I came out to in college was a nun, the most wonderful, loving, beautiful
8 Catholic nun I've ever met. She was an instructor, she was a faculty member at the college I
9 attended, which was a Catholic college. So, even coming out as LGBT in that context was
10 difficult. But, I was sitting in her office and she had had me for a number of classes, she taught
11 in our Women's Studies program and just a fierce feminist- very, very progressive older woman
12 who was a Catholic nun. I said, "Sr. Kathy, I think I'm a lesbian." And, Andrea, she started
13 laughing and she said, "I was wondering when you were going to realize that."

14 AJ: Wow.

15 FS: So, it was very . . . it felt like a load off of my chest to be able to say that and be met in such a
16 loving way, from someone that I deeply admired and really trusted. So, yeah, I came out as
17 lesbian my senior year of college, so I was probably 21 or 22.

18 AJ: You went to a Catholic school?

19 FS: I did go to a Catholic college.

20 AJ: Which one?

21 FS: St. Scholastica, up in Duluth, Minnesota. Interestingly, I didn't . . . I was raised Catholic, like I
22 said, but I didn't choose the college because it was Catholic. I chose the college because I
23 wanted to be . . .

24 AJ: Close to home?

25 FS: I wanted to be close to Lake Superior.

26 AJ: Oh, OK.

27 FS: Which is kind of an interesting part of my whole story. But, I wanted to be as close to Lake
28 Superior as possible, so I knew I wanted to be in Duluth. So, that is why I ended up there. So,
29 yeah, first came out as lesbian and then I . . . once I was solidly settled in that identity, of course
30 something then had to come up next. That's when I . . . I was actually in the middle of a year-
31 long post-college volunteer program that was specifically for women, so it was all women in this
32 program. It was rooted in social justice leadership community. I was volunteering my time at an
33 all-woman's college. So, I was in a lot of all-women environments, and that is when I started
34 questioning my gender identity – not from this place of . . . I didn't have the language of trans or
35 anything like that, but something just felt off, something felt like I didn't quite fit into those
36 spaces, and that was kind of the beginning of me exploring my gender in ways that I had never

- 1 even really known were possible up to that point in my life. So, then I came out as gender queer
2 while I was in my masters program . . . so then I was probably 24 or 25. I have been out as
3 gender queer, transgender queer or some sort of variety of that idea since then.
- 4 AJ: Wow, that's fascinating. So, what have been some of the challenges that you had to overcome
5 or face since you've begun to express this gender identity? Usually my question is framed, "true
6 gender identity," but I just feel like maybe leaving that adjective off is important in this
7 conversation. Or not, I don't know.
- 8 FS: That's a great insight, because it does feel important . . . that does feel important to me because
9 I think a part of my identity as a non-binary gender queer person is that I don't have this sense
10 of . . . that I had a true gender identity that I couldn't live into until this point in my life. I feel
11 like fluidity and impermanence are big and important ideas in my world and so I think, right
12 now, I'm experiencing and expressing my gender in this particular way and that may not look
13 the same in 10 years. So, where I'm at right now is as a trans masculine gender queer person
14 who is often times assumed to be a trans man. One of the current struggles . . .
- 15 AJ: Or cis man.
- 16 FS: Or a cis man, right.
- 17 AJ: Before I started recording, you said in this environment a lot of people just . . .
- 18 FS: Assume that I'm a cis dude, which is a total mind fuck because I moved here from the Bay area a
19 year ago, and I think that space, in general, is read generally as more trans and more queer than
20 the Midwest. I went, literally, from one week being often times read as trans, or even butch
21 lesbian, to being read as a straight cis dude. So, that just kind of threw me for a loop. So, that's
22 one of the obstacles right now is figuring out how do I take up space in a way that feels good
23 and honest to what my masculinity is calling me. And also, not lose my trans-ness and my
24 queerness in that. One thing I was talking about recently with a group of other trans and gender
25 queer folks is one of the pieces of going on . . . for me, one of the pieces of going on
26 testosterone and having surgery has been that I can . . . there's a certain comfort that comes
27 with being able to navigate binary spaces. I can walk into a men's restroom and not have to
28 deal with the same kind of awkward and uncomfortable gazes, really rude conversations, or just
29 that kind of fear that I would often times experience when I was more ambiguous in my gender
30 presentation. So, there's this sort of comfort that has come along with . . . and I don't like the
31 idea of transitioning, I don't feel like I am transitioning my gender, but in terms of where my
32 gender is at right now and how I present where my body is at, there's this sort of comfort that I
33 can easily stay in if I want to. But, the flip side of that is there this sense of loss, for me, of my
34 trans-ness and of my gender queerness, in particular, because my non-binary identity is very
35 much in my core. An obstacle for me is losing that, feeling like that has been invisibilized as I am
36 increasingly perceived to be a cis dude, or a trans dude – which is closer to what feels authentic
37 to me but still not quite right.
- 38 AJ: It's just not who you are.
- 39 FS: Right.

- 1 AJ: Any other challenges? That's real and I'm not in any way trying to diminish that at all, that's an
2 internal struggle that people don't necessarily know about, unless you express it to them and
3 I'm sure you do in order to feel whole. But, have there been challenges in educational
4 environments or medical institutions or police or those types of things.
- 5 FS: There have been some. I think it's . . .
- 6 AJ: Employment, per se.
- 7 FS: Yeah, sometimes I feel a little bit conflicted about talking about the things that I have
8 experienced because as a white and masculine presenting trans person, the barriers that I do
9 face feel pretty minuscule in many ways to what I know other folks are experiencing. So, often
10 times . . .
- 11 AJ: But, we're only talking about your experience. You can bring up examples of other people's
12 experiences too, but we're here to really talk . . .
- 13 FS: About what I've experienced, sure. I mean, absolutely, yes. The short answer to your question
14 is yes. In educational spaces, being referred to with the wrong pronouns. What I'm navigating
15 right now is what does it mean to be a trans teacher. I'm an instructor of university students,
16 many of whom are first-years, many of whom probably have never interacted with another
17 trans teacher. So, that has been a new obstacle for me. Even down to what do the students call
18 me when they . . . so, when they first meet me before I tell them to call me finn, they'll often
19 times email me and they'll say, "Dear Mr. Schneider." My immediate reaction is, "Oh, my gosh, I
20 am not Mr. Schneider."
- 21 AJ: OK.
- 22 FS: So, there's this sort of having to reveal myself to them right away, even over email about I'm
23 non-binary and I don't use gendered prefixes. That's something I've experienced in educational
24 spaces. Feeling particularly about higher education, and I feel like I can say this really honestly
25 because I work in higher education, at the same tokenized and marginalized – so there's this
26 hypervisibility and invisibility that I feel like can come with being trans on a college campus
27 because diversity is the big rage in higher education right now and so many campuses want to
28 attract and retain diverse students, and trans students usually meet the bill for that. While at
29 the same time, these campuses may not be doing the work that they need to do to create the
30 infrastructure that can make a space feel safe and welcoming for trans students. So, that's the
31 invisibility piece. So that's the constant, "We want you here, we want you on this committee,
32 we want you to give us feedback on this policy," and then, "Oh, there's not a place where you
33 can actually go and take a shower in the gym that feels safe and welcoming for you. Sorry." Or,
34 "We're working on it."
- 35 AJ: Right.
- 36 FS: So, there's those kinds of everyday facilities issues – restrooms, locker rooms. And then, just a
37 lot of what I would call microaggressions – being mis-gendered. Just recently, which really is
38 puzzling to me, is because my legal name has been my legal name for nearly five years now so I
39 don't even know how this happened, but seeing a name that was previously my first legal name

- 1 show up on a university record, completely unbeknownst to me and having no idea who has
2 seen that, who has access to that, how did that even happen.
- 3 AJ: Wow.
- 4 FS: I didn't apply to the university under that name, so I don't even know how they have that name.
- 5 AJ: Transcripts maybe?
- 6 FS: Yeah, that could be – maybe from my undergraduate degree. I'm not sure.
- 7 AJ: But why would they perpetuate that?
- 8 FS: This was like an HR record, so it wasn't even attached . . .
- 9 AJ: To your academic record.
- 10 FS: Yeah, I need to go back and figure out how that happened and how I can get that changed. So,
11 that's kind of the educational context is those kinds of things. Medical, yeah. Generally,
12 honestly, it's a lot of just doctors not really knowing anything about trans health care and
13 making really ignorant assumptions. I was working on getting some mental health services
14 recently and had . . . actually, multiple practitioners just say really awful things to me about
15 being trans or asking me to educate them on how to be a therapist for a trans person.
- 16 AJ: In 2017?
- 17 FS: Yeah. There's a lot of places where that still happens. So, those kinds of things. Although I do
18 consider myself really lucky in that most of my doctors . . . since I've come out as trans, most of
19 my doctors have been . . . well, I have sought out doctors who I know to be very supporting and
20 knowledge. So, when I'm having these experiences, it may be when I'm going to the dentist or
21 going to more of a specialty provider, whereas my actual practitioner who I choose for my
22 medical doctor, I've had pretty good experiences with, for the most part.
- 23 AJ: That's good. What have been some of the more positive aspects of expressing this gender
24 identity?
- 25 FS: This gender. I feel much more at ease in my body. And, I sometimes . . . I'm not sure if I like to
26 even talk about it that way because I think often times trans people's genders get reduced down
27 to just bodies and I don't like perpetuating that because I think . . . for me, gender is so much
28 more complicated than that. It's spiritual, it's emotional, it's intellectual. But, I will say, I feel, at
29 this current point in my life, just more at ease in my body. I used to bind, I spent close to five
30 years binding my chest and that was very physically uncomfortable. So, to be at a point in my
31 life where I'm not doing that feels really good physically. And, I just feel like when I am in my
32 body, I'm just more relaxed. So, that's one thing that is great. Another thing that I really like
33 about my current space is that I'm building really beautiful and rich relationships with other
34 trans people. I think that at other points in my life maybe I didn't . . . I wasn't feeling confident
35 enough or I wasn't feeling grounded enough, maybe that's a better word – grounded enough in
36 my own journey to kind of really actively reach out, either to ask for support or offer support to
37 other trans people and that's something that I'm just doing a lot more often now and it feels

- 1 really great to be in community with folks of all different kinds of gender presentations and
2 gender identities because I feel like it continues to help me feel connected, to avoid some of
3 that isolation that we were kind of talking about before.
- 4 AJ: Sure. Do you have siblings?
- 5 FS: I do, yeah.
- 6 AJ: Yeah.
- 7 FS: I have all sisters.
- 8 AJ: Really?
- 9 FS: Yeah. So, my parents divorced when I was young, when I was three. So, I have a sister, a half-
10 sister, and two step-sisters. Age wise, I'm kind of smack in the middle of all of that sister-ness.
- 11 AJ: All of that sister-ness. How has your family reacted to your gender journey?
- 12 FS: Fairly . . . really well. For the most part, you know, at first I think it was, "We've never even
13 heard of this," from a small town. And then different people react differently, but a lot of, "We
14 love you and who you are is who you are." I never felt like I had to risk being disowned or
15 shunned by my family.
- 16 AJ: Awesome.
- 17 FS: I have, more so, sometimes with extended family, sometimes felt like I've been an
18 embarrassment or people don't want to talk about me and who I am, but not so much with my
19 immediate family.
- 20 AJ: Which can be painful, but . . .
- 21 FS: It can be.
- 22 AJ: Yeah.
- 23 FS: Not so much with my immediate family. I also had the . . . I think, for me, it was a benefit,
24 maybe not for everybody they would have looked at it this way, but I left the region that I grew
25 up in, I grew up in the Midwest, and I left . . . well, first I moved from Michigan to Minnesota for
26 college, so there was some distance when I was coming out as lesbian. But then, I was in
27 Vermont at the time that I was first really coming out as gender queer. So, I had a lot of physical
28 space and distance to try things out on my own and figure out how and when I wanted to talk to
29 my family and kind of build up some of my own confidence in who I was before I felt like I had to
30 explain that or justify that to anybody.
- 31 AJ: Sure.
- 32 FS: So, space and distance from my family is always hard, I'm very close to my family. But, I think in
33 that context, that physical space actually was helpful to me. And then, even again, when I
34 moved out to California, that is when I was first considering surgery and hormones and so to
35 have that space for some of those initial very visible or vocal transitions that my body was

- 1 undergoing . . . to give me the time to kind of adjust and re-adjust before having to navigate that
2 with my family, I think, helped me in that process. So, that might have also been why my family
3 journey has felt fairly smooth, because I kind of had some space to work through things as I
4 needed to.
- 5 AJ: Wow, that's awesome. How did you come out to your family? What's your relationship like
6 now?
- 7 FS: Yeah, I'm trying to remember. So, I think it was when my youngest sister was graduating from
8 high school and she's seven years younger than I am. I was home from Vermont for her
9 graduation and that's when I told some of my family that I was gender queer, that was the word
10 that I used then. And, basically, all I said to them was I don't identify as a woman or a man and
11 I'm still kind of figuring out what that means. And, I would like you to start calling me finn,
12 that's the name I would like you to use for me. I think most of them were sort of just like,
13 "What? OK." They didn't really have a strong negative reaction but it also wasn't a strong
14 positive reaction. It was just sort of, "This is new to us, we don't really even know what to make
15 of it." And then, over time, I started telling more and more of my immediate family, more of my
16 siblings, and some of my closer extended family. And then, when I changed my name legally
17 was another kind of big milestone for me. That's when I chose to . . . I actually wrote a letter to
18 pretty much all of my aunts and uncles and explained, "I'm changing my name, I also use these
19 pronouns. Maybe I haven't seen you in a couple of years and I don't know when I may see you
20 again, but I just wanted to let you know, this is kind of where I'm at and these things are
21 happening for me." So, then when I would go back home for holidays and such, I would see
22 folks and sometimes they'd call me by finn and sometimes they'd call me by a different name.
- 23 AJ: Sure.
- 24 FS: Almost usually everyone got the pronouns wrong, but that takes a little bit longer, I think. So,
25 they all were making an effort, I think, in their own unique ways to make me feel like I was still a
26 part of the family and I was still loved. That has been true throughout, so I would say, for the
27 most part, my relationships across all my different family connections are pretty strong.
- 28 AJ: Wow, that's awesome. I'm so glad to hear that.
- 29 FS: Right, I know that's not everyone's story.
- 30 AJ: It's not everyone's story, but it's more and more becoming a reality for a lot of people. You
31 know, you talked about this to some extent, around medical interventions, and so I appreciate
32 that. You're on hormones.
- 33 FS: Yes.
- 34 AJ: You've had top surgery.
- 35 FS: Yes.
- 36 AJ: Are you considering other medical interventions? And, if so, or if not, what are some of your
37 thoughts around . . . and, you even talked about how the body is not the sort of main driver
38 around trans identity. This is an opportunity to dive into that just a little bit deeper.

- 1 FS: Sure, sure. So, interestingly the only thing I would still consider is going off of hormones. So, as
2 a gender queer person, I was never like, "I must go on hormones." It was actually a very difficult
3 decision for me to make. I talk about it, even now, as I make that decision over and over again.
4 I don't ever assume this is my trajectory and I'm going to keep going down it. There may come a
5 point in time where I don't want to be on testosterone anymore and I have no qualms at that
6 point about going off of testosterone. And so, when I did make the decision to go on hormones,
7 I intentionally chose a very low dose because I wanted whatever was going to happen to my
8 body to happen slowly so that I could continue to check in with myself about that. This fall,
9 September, it will be three years since I started testosterone. So, at this point in time, that's the
10 only sort of medical intervention that I would consider is actually going off of hormones.
- 11 AJ: Wow, OK.
- 12 FS: Having the chest surgery was less of an uncertainty for me. I felt pretty confident in knowing
13 that I didn't want to have traditional feminine breasts, I guess – whatever that even means. I
14 wanted my chest to look and feel differently than it did. I knew that. When I was trying to make
15 the decision around hormones and chest surgery, one of the things I was really confused about,
16 because the narrative I heard over and over again, was, "First people go on T and then they get
17 top surgery, and that's the way it's done." And so, I was like, "Well, what does it mean if I don't
18 know if I want to go on T but I know that I want to have surgery." And so, kind of having some
19 really crucial conversations with people who helped me to understand that there's so many
20 different ways to access medical interventions, there's not one path that works for everybody,
21 that some people will choose some things and not choose others, really helped me to feel
22 liberated in that . . . that it was about what felt right for me and not feeling like I had to follow a
23 script and do things a certain way. Yeah, I did have both top surgery and started hormones
24 within one year of each other. I'm not interested in any other surgeries at this point. I feel
25 really, really good about my body and I'm just excited to continue to see how my gender evolves
26 and if and how those ideas will change over time, as I age. Because aging brings in a whole
27 other piece of it that I wasn't really thinking about.
- 28 AJ: Yes, let me verify that for you, finn. Yes, it does.
- 29 FS: Right.
- 30 AJ: Wow. How old are you?
- 31 FS: I will be 33 in September, so just about 33.
- 32 AJ: Wow, well thank you for sharing that. That is . . . you know, it's one of the more challenging
33 questions for me to ask people about and I really do want every perspective. If you remember
34 the historic Laverne Cox-Katie Couric interview where Laverne sort of schooled Katie on the
35 appropriateness of her asking about genitals and such.
- 36 FS: Right, right.
- 37 AJ: So, I always want to be respectful but recognizing, from my own experience, that body is a part
38 of it and I absolutely agree with you that it's about spirituality, it's about emotional connections,
39 it's about sort of all of these other . . . but, body image is a very real thing and it's been a part of

- 1 my trans journey, if you will. So, thank you for responding to that. One of the things that you
2 mentioned is this idea of invisibility and sort of being read as a cisgender male. I imagine maybe
3 even, I'm just going to go out on a limb, and say a straight cisgender male and it's very likely
4 because you are in relationship with a very beautiful . . . well, I'm just going to assume,
5 cisgender woman.
- 6 FS: Yes.
- 7 AJ: And, I'm not assuming – they have expressed that to me. But, is that a piece of it and what does
8 it feel like to be considered a hetero couple in the perception of others? Just talk to me about
9 love, dating, and relationships. A gender queer, trans masculine person.
- 10 FS: That's a big question, Andrea. One thing I will say is a big fear, and I've heard a lot of folks echo
11 this, but a big fear that I had, and sometimes still have, as a trans person, is feeling like, in some
12 ways, unlovable. So, focusing on losing love during the process of becoming, or living more fully,
13 into my gendered self. There was a relationship in my life that ended when I stopped identifying
14 as a woman and that was painful. It ended because I should say, not when, but because I
15 stopped identifying . . . partially because I stopped identifying as a woman. And so, that is
16 something . . . and you hear stories of that, and so that is something that is always on my mind
17 and . . .
- 18 AJ: And this was a queer relationship?
- 19 FS: Yes, this was a queer relationship. And, this person and I have re-connected and we're very,
20 very good friends now. But, at that time for both of us, that was a piece of why that relationship
21 ended. But, what I will say about the now is that one of the things I thought about when going
22 on . . . when wondering if I should pursue hormones, was would my relationship with my
23 partner at the time, who is still my current partner, change immensely once I was on hormones
24 and would that be something that would be a deal breaker for her. We talked about it and, as
25 much as you can't make any promises, we both felt strongly that we could work through what
26 that would mean for me and what that would mean for us. Much to my great privilege, that
27 relationship has stayed strong. I feel very lucky to have a stable and loving partnership that has
28 been kind of a rock for me as I have experienced a lot of different kinds of emotional things over
29 the course of being on hormones. It is kind of destabilizing within the context of a relationship.
30 I think for one person's . . . even if not their identity but for their outward appearance, to
31 change drastically. Even in our world, between the four walls of our house, everything feels the
32 same.
- 33 AJ: Super queer, super . . .
- 34 FS: Exactly. We're the same queers we have been.
- 35 AJ: Super trans-ness and all of that.
- 36 FS: The outward appearance can look incredibly different and that has been a mind fuck for me, just
37 to be really blunt. Because, for me, the very last thing that I want to be is sort of normal and
38 palatable and a big part of my queerness and gender queerness is disrupting the normal,
39 challenging sort of notions of what people have to look like and how people have to be in a

- 1 relationship that's important to me. And so, now I find myself intentionally striving to do that –
2 like trying to be . . . I talk about trying to be more gay or more trans or making it known to
3 people that I am trans and that I'm in a queer relationship because I feel like, in my ways, my
4 partner and I blend in as a straight couple and there's times where, honestly, I just don't have
5 the emotional energy to try to make it known and I just go with it.
- 6 AJ: Right, I mean, you're at Applebee's and it's like, you know, "Can I help you folks?" And it's like,
7 "Yeah, I want a burger and some fries," or, "I want the vegan option," or whatever the situation
8 is.
- 9 FS: Right. Well, one thing that's been interesting . . . and, this is not interesting, it shouldn't surprise
10 anybody, but to experience male privilege in a way that . . . well, (a) it's just not in line with my
11 identity because I don't identify as a man, yet I still benefit from male privilege, and white male
12 privilege on top of that. But, to experience that also within the context of being perceived as in
13 a heterosexual relationship, so when servers do come with the bill and automatically hand it to
14 me. Or, servers do come and ask if we want any drinks and look to me first.
- 15 AJ: And, just to be clear, you pay for it, right?
- 16 FS: Listen, I'm the student, Andrea. I'm the student. I pay what I can when I can.
- 17 AJ: Oh, OK, OK.
- 18 FS: But, just seeing those moments play out right in front of me, and knowing exactly what's
19 happening – because my partner and I are both very conscious, we try to be very critically
20 conscious of power dynamics related to race, gender, sexuality – all of that. But, seeing it
21 happen, well, also as a white person seeing my whiteness, because my partner is a woman of
22 color, seeing my whiteness play into that piece as well.
- 23 AJ: Wow.
- 24 FS: So, there's just a lot going on in those super brief exchanges and there's times where I, and we,
25 are really intentional about asserting our queerness and pushing back against some of those
26 things, and then there's times where I, or we, just go with it.
- 27 AJ: You're just exhausted.
- 28 FS: Right, we're just like, "Whatever, we're going to let them think that we're this straight couple
29 right now and just . . . whatever."
- 30 AJ: And, have fun in that – that can be fun.
- 31 FS: Right, it can be disruptive in its own way. Sometimes . . . right, just to go with whatever other
32 people . . . whatever assumptions they're making.
- 33 AJ: Yeah, wow. When is the first time you met a trans person? And, who were they?
- 34 FS: Yeah, so it wasn't until I moved to Vermont, actually . . . well, actually let me re-phrase that. The
35 first person who I knew that was trans, because I'm sure I met trans people and just was
36 completely oblivious. I was 23 and just starting my masters degree. I had just moved to

- 1 Vermont and this person became a very good friend of mine, and a mentor in many ways for my
2 own journey around trans-ness. And, he helped me to ask a lot of really important questions
3 and pointed me to a lot of really great resources. Yeah, I would say that's probably the first
4 close trans friend that I had and it's someone that I'm still connected to. So, I feel really lucky to
5 have him in my life.
- 6 AJ: You don't want to name him? You don't have to, but . . .
- 7 FS: No, I can name him. TJ Jourian.
- 8 AJ: Is that right?
- 9 FS: Yeah.
- 10 AJ: He's a good friend of mine, actually.
- 11 FS: Oh, yeah, you know TJ too?
- 12 AJ: Well, not exactly . . . maybe not a good friend, I should re-frame that. I like him a lot.
- 13 FS: Yeah.
- 14 AJ: But, we have worked together on projects.
- 15 FS: So, we first met at the University of Vermont. I was working there and I was a grad student
16 there. We're both in higher ed so we've stayed kind of . . .
- 17 AJ: Yeah, he's working on a doctorate now too, right?
- 18 FS: He's done.
- 19 AJ: Oh, he's done.
- 20 FS: Yeah.
- 21 AJ: Oh, cool.
- 22 FS: He was the first trans person I knowingly met.
- 23 AJ: Let's go political for a little bit.
- 24 FS: Sure.
- 25 AJ: Even though you've been injecting a little bit of politics.
- 26 FS: It's in everything.
- 27 AJ: It is, it truly is. What do you think the relationship is between the LGB and the broad TGQ non-
28 binary?
- 29 FS: Sure, yeah. I think it's a contentious relationship. I think it's a relationship that, in many ways, is
30 born out of experiences of marginalization and any time we see communities that are
31 marginalized try to organize often times, there is this necessity of coming together to build any
32 sort of resistance. I always think back to Stonewall, right, and that the trans women who really

- 1 fought back and led the way, they were trans women of color and I feel that that narrative and
2 that truth, in many ways, has kind of gotten lost in the larger LGB movement. Which, I think, to
3 get really political, the more mainstream LGBT, LGB maybe fake T, movement, is rooted, in a lot
4 of ways . . .
- 5 AJ: Woo, you are going political.
- 6 FS: It's rooted in a lot of ways in sort of neo-liberalism and doesn't always do a great job of looking
7 at who within our communities are the most marginalized. So, I see a lot of ways in which
8 marriage equality movements really stood . . . who do they stand to benefit the most? Well,
9 they stood to benefit white gay or lesbian folks who had money.
- 10 AJ: Cisgender.
- 11 FS: Right, yeah.
- 12 AJ: Because you can be trans and be lesbian . . .
- 13 FS: That's true, you're right. You're absolutely right, yeah. So, I think in many ways the more sort of
14 political . . . or, not political, nationwide political movements, the mainstream ones is what I will
15 say, have been, I think, less radical and less resistant to some of the more violent systems of
16 oppression that are killing queer and trans folks in favor of opting for things like fighting for gay
17 marriage. I am in no way in opposition to gay marriage, I think people should be able to marry
18 whoever they want, I just am not a big fan of the institution of marriage to begin with. So, if I
19 were running an organization, I wouldn't prioritize gay marriage rights as the thing that I would
20 focus on. I think the relationship is contentious because what I see is that a lot of the issues that
21 have been prioritized are those that seem to be most important to probably gay and, maybe
22 sometimes, lesbian folks. And then, issues that face a lot of trans folks like homelessness, health
23 care, not being discriminated against in the workplace, and then housing, are issues that seem
24 to over and over and over again get kind of pushed down to the bottom of the list of priorities.
25 And, the leadership of many of the mainstream organizations are cis folks, in my observation,
26 and it's the trans specific organizations where you see trans leadership. So, I wish that some of
27 these LGBTQ groups/organizations/political factions would really prioritize leadership by the
28 most marginalized – by trans people of color, by poor trans women of color, in particular,
29 incarcerated and formerly incarcerated trans women of color. I think that, to me, is the folks in
30 our community who are experiencing the most marginalization and the most violence and those
31 voices and that creativity and that vision and that leadership coming from those experiences,
32 seems to me like we have the most promise for being radical in making change. Yeah,
33 contentious is probably the word that I would use in terms of the LGB and then the T and how
34 they fit together, if they fit together.
- 35 AJ: Last week, #45 tweeted one morning that trans-identified people were no longer welcome in
36 the United States military-industrial complex.
- 37 FS: That's right.
- 38 AJ: How did that impact you?

- 1 FS: I'm glad you're asking me that question because I've been thinking about this a lot in the last
2 week and I haven't talked about it. I think the reason I haven't talked about it is that I feel really
3 conflicted. There's a lot of layers to this. I remember when Don't Ask, Don't Tell was repealed
4 and many, many folks were celebrating and I was like, "Great, now we can get killed too," right.
- 5 AJ: Or, now we can go and kill people too in the name of shamocracy.
- 6 FS: Right, right. It feels very conflicting to celebrate being able to participate in the military-
7 industrial complex. So, from my position, from my narrow slice of the world, that was my initial
8 reaction to Don't Ask, Don't Tell and then I thought about the folks who are already a part of the
9 military, for whatever reason that they chose that . . .
- 10 AJ: Because we know many poor people join the military for access to education, medical, housing.
- 11 FS: Absolutely, right. Not everyone has the option to not choose the military. So, when I think
12 about those folks, I think about the issue differently. So, this last Friday . . . I didn't even actually
13 hear about it, but I started getting text messages from people. "I love you," "I care about you."
14 So, whenever that happens, I know something transphobic is going on, because suddenly all
15 these people want to tell me how much they care about me.
- 16 AJ: That is so fascinating because I got the same thing.
- 17 FS: So, I was like, "What's going on?" So, of course, I went on Facebook and quickly found out.
18 And, at first, Andrea, I really just insulated myself from it because that's been a coping
19 mechanism for me, just to be honest, ever since the election. Kind of, in some ways, keeping
20 myself ignorant . . . not to what's going on but to specifically what that person is saying because
21 his rhetoric I don't really need to hear. So, I kind of didn't really look into it that closely and
22 didn't really . . . I would kind of just be like whatever, it's something that doesn't affect me. It's
23 not even a policy, it's just a tweet – who knows if it will even become policy. I kind of played it
24 off and was like, "I'm not even going to give that my emotional energy." As the day went on, I
25 just kept thinking about it and was like, "Why is this still on my heart?" When I was really
26 honest with myself, it hurt because . . . and not even the military can or cannot serve thing, the
27 implication of dehumanization is what hurt and the implication that people, people like me,
28 getting our basic health needs met with too much of a financial liability to be able to allow
29 someone who is trans and desperately maybe wants to serve their country in that way, by
30 joining the military, to allow them to do that is too much of a financial burden. Just how
31 dehumanizing that was, that my needs and the needs of my community and the people that I
32 love, my trans kin, aren't even valuable enough for the government to acknowledge them or
33 protect them. That felt deeply dehumanizing and there aren't a lot of moments in my life where
34 I allow transphobic or dehumanizing transphobic rhetoric to really infiltrate me. I think, in many
35 ways, I've kind of learned to dissociate that or just not surround myself with people or news
36 outlets that will spew that. But in that moment, it got in – it crept in, and it felt really shitty and
37 it ended up impacting me in ways I didn't really expect it to because I am pretty much pretty
38 distant from the military for all practical purposes. But, it was more so that message, the
39 underlying message, of dehumanization.

- 1 AJ: Wow. You're the first interview I've had post-tweet, so thank you for responding to that really
2 difficult question. I found my own self being really surprisingly impacted by it as well. I have no
3 desire, nor can I even physically serve in the military at this point, but the dehumanization
4 factor, as you said, that these lives don't . . . these humans don't matter and have no place in
5 our culture and society, particularly when you think about how the military for all of its
6 challenging, capitalistic and militaristic and colonizing capabilities, has also been the place of
7 sort of diversity and inclusion.
- 8 FS: Right.
- 9 AJ: And spaces where, albeit challenging, but some of the experiments around racial and gender
10 inclusion have first sort of taken place on the battle field, if you will, in the military. So, yeah, it
11 was a pretty deep impact. Thank you for being willing to go down that emotional road with me.
12 I appreciate it.
- 13 FS: Sure.
- 14 AJ: What do you think the agenda for the trans community should be going forward? As an
15 academic, I know you don't study trans community in that way, but certainly you're a critical
16 thinker and . . . yeah.
- 17 FS: Sure. I think that focusing on, and I kind of alluded to this earlier, but really prioritizing the
18 needs of the folks most at the margin. So, those folks experiencing homelessness, housing
19 insecurity, joblessness. I've been really impacted in my personal life about how many youth,
20 trans youth, gender-queer youth are struggling with suicidality and just constant . . . constant
21 feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness. That has really been on my heart in the last,
22 probably, two or three years in some pretty personal ways. So, I think that feels really
23 important to me – just figuring out what is it that we need to do. Is it providing mental
24 resources? Is it working with schools? What is it that we need to do to help young folks feel like
25 they have something worth living for. That feels important to me. Thinking about leadership in
26 ways that are creative and innovative and really centering the leadership of folks who are
27 multiply marginalized. There are a lot of white trans . . . we were talking about this. There are a
28 lot of white trans masculine folks, and that's great, who have voice and . . .
- 29 AJ: Absolutely.
- 30 FS: . . . are taking up leadership in ways that haven't happened before. As someone who is kind of
31 a part of that demographic, I'm happy for them. I'm happy to see more people who look like me
32 who I can relate to in higher education, and, at the same time, there's a lot of danger in that
33 becoming the trans narrative that we hear. And so, I think that not always . . . for myself what
34 that means is stepping back sometimes, like when I am asked like at a previous institution, to
35 chair the trans commission or what it was called at that institution, it was something different,
36 but saying, "No, I actually don't want to take that on because I think there are other folk's voices
37 who need to be elevated more than mine." So, I think, for myself, understanding where is my
38 place in whatever it is that we're moving forward as a trans community and how do I give power
39 and also understand who is experiencing the most violence and how to get resources and
40 support to those folks. After learning a lot more about CeCe McDonald's story, I think prison

- 1 abolition is absolutely tied up into what we need to be working on. I think the criminalization of
2 trans-ness, trans bodies, is a major problem and the ways that white supremacy and anti-Black
3 racism play into the prison-industrial complex also has huge implications for trans communities.
4 So, that feels like an important priority is intersectional justice, not just justice for trans folks,
5 but justice for trans folks that is truly intersectional and is constantly always already challenging
6 racism and sexism and some of those bigger major forms of violence and oppression – alongside
7 transphobia.
- 8 AJ: Wow, you are a smarty-pants.
- 9 FS: Huh, I don't know about that.
- 10 AJ: Intersectional justice, I love that phrase. Have you ever worked for or been involved with a
11 trans specific or LGBT organization? If so, which one?
- 12 FS: Yeah, I have . . . well, I'm a part of kind of a more higher ed focused group of trans educators, so
13 we're not necessarily a political organization but we do different kinds of research together, we
14 go to conferences and present on things together. We kind of just have developed this network
15 of kinship, is what we call it. For many of us . . . for some of us, families of origin are not places
16 of support and so we developed this kinship network of support of our chosen families. So, that
17 has been really useful for me, not only to challenge my thinking around gender and gender
18 identity, but to feel met and seen within the context of my profession, which may or may not
19 have happened without that. When I was living in the Bay area, I was involved with this
20 awesome organization – I so wish that I could still be involved with them, called, "Gender
21 Spectrum." They were really focused on, and they're still active – so Google it if you're
22 interested. Gender Spectrum is based in Emeryville, California, but they do things all over the
23 country, and they're really focused on education and working with teachers, really at all levels.
- 24 AJ: Which – ville?
- 25 FS: Emeryville.
- 26 AJ: Emeryville.
- 27 FS: Right next to Oakland, California. They're focused on working with educators, primarily, and
28 then also with the families of trans youth. They used the language, "Gender-expansive youth."
29 That's how they named these youth and they put on this awesome conference every summer, it
30 just happened. I was volunteering at it the last couple of years. They bring in, they invite in,
31 gender-expansive youth and it's really set up to be really holistic, so the caregivers of that youth,
32 whether that's their grandma, their aunt and their uncle, whomever their caregivers are, as well
33 as any siblings, come and spend a long weekend in the Bay and it's this completely immersive
34 experience where the gender-expansive youth, themselves . . . it's like a camp for trans kids.
35 They go hang out with other trans kids, they can be affirmed and validated in their gender
36 identity, they do arts and crafts and all kinds of fun stuff, there's a dance. The siblings have their
37 own kind of separate camp experience.
- 38 AJ: Oh, wow. OK.

- 1 FS: And then the caregivers, the parents or whomever is custodially in care of the children, gets to
2 go to these rad workshops all day long that are put on by legal folks, folks that are in education,
3 people who are in mental health, people who know about the physical health side of it –
4 surgeons and all that stuff, to kind of get some of that information that is so hard to get
5 oftentimes for parents of young ones. And then, also, the thing that I thought was the most
6 beautiful to see, is the way that these families would come together and support one another.
7 Many of them love their kiddo to death, but they don't know . . . they feel very isolated
8 themselves as the parents of a trans youth. So, I would volunteer at that conference and I got to
9 sit in on the workshops that the families would go to. It was always one of my favorite
10 weekends of the summer, just to be in this place where I was surrounded by queer people and
11 trans people, and the cis people who were there were there because they wanted to be there.
- 12 AJ: And they totally get it.
- 13 FS: They get it, they're fighting for it because someone they love is trans. That was probably the
14 most seen I've ever felt in my gender, was in that experience. Because pretty much all of the
15 volunteers were trans people ourselves. So, I was there volunteering with . . . so, it was one of
16 those kind of by/for events – by trans people for trans people, and that felt really important at a
17 time when I see a lot of activism happening on behalf of trans people that isn't always
18 necessarily taking our perspectives into consideration. It's just like, "Oh, this is what we think
19 trans people want." Sometimes it's helpful and sometimes it's not, but it feels to me more
20 empowering when some of that change comes from and by the community. So, it was just this
21 really great organization that I was proud to be a part of.
- 22 AJ: I love it. Do the siblings and the trans kids ever come together?
- 23 FS: Yeah, they do. There's some things that are just for the trans kids and then there's a lot of
24 where the kids are all . . .
- 25 AJ: There's so much of a "teachable moment" if you will, for the siblings even though I'm sure
26 they're related to . . . I mean, they relate with their personal sibling, but to see trans kids in a
27 broader context would be pretty powerful.
- 28 FS: Yeah, and there were a lot of times . . . like they had this whole art thing. It was really cool,
29 actually. My partner was volunteering in the art space where the kids would come together and
30 they would do all kinds of really fun art things together. So, there were lots of opportunities for
31 the siblings to interact with the gender-expansive youth too.
- 32 AJ: Wow.
- 33 FS: So, that was really cool.
- 34 AJ: What's the future for the trans community? Where is the trans community going to be 50 years
35 from now, finn?
- 36 FS: I really hope that . . . I really don't say this to be egotistical, but I think as trans folk, and I don't
37 mean just myself, I think as trans people, many of us have capacities to see the world in much
38 more nuanced ways than cis people, because we are constantly straddling borders. Many of us

1 were socialized into one gender, live in another gender, we can see things . . . I think we can see
2 things and we can provide creative and innovative leadership in ways that aren't available to
3 just everybody. So, I hope that in 50 years, we get from trans-ness, gender-queer-ness from
4 being a liability or a pathology or right now something that people think will lead to violence. I
5 feel like we're being criminalized, that we can't even use bathrooms safely. I hope we can get
6 out of that place of having to defend our existence and fight for basic civil rights into this place
7 where we're seen as an asset. I think we are an asset. I think the most brilliant people I know
8 are trans.

9 AJ: I have to agree.

10 FS: So, I hope that in 50 years, and maybe this is ambitious, but that we can be in a place of not only
11 openly acknowledging and celebrating our existence individually and collectively, but seeing the
12 value that we bring. And not just in this capitalistic pipeline. I hear a lot of language around,
13 "How do we get more people in the pipeline?" I'm like, "That's one piece of it." People need
14 jobs but beyond just this narrow vision of success - you have a good job, you own a home, you
15 do XYZ things as a trans person and you're stable and successful, but to see it more of just a shift
16 in thinking about the world in more complicated ways. I like complicated questions and not
17 simplifying answers and I think we're at a place in our society right now where we really want
18 simplifying answers. So, I hope that as trans folks we can usher in this sort of creative,
19 complicated way of thinking about, and leading, our communities in the next 50 years.

20 AJ: Wow, that's beautiful. Last question.

21 FS: OK.

22 AJ: Is there anything that I did not have the foresight to ask you that you want to share and you
23 think is really important to share?

24 FS: You asked a lot of very good questions. I think, for me, something that I'm working through
25 right now, at the current manifestation of my gender – two things really and I'll talk about each
26 briefly. One is, for many years of my life, I think I separated my gender journey from my
27 spiritual journey. I'm at a point in my life where that is just not going to work anymore, so
28 there's something stirring in me spiritually that is really longing to convene more with what my
29 gender process has been. I mentioned earlier I was raised Catholic. I don't participate in any
30 sort of organized religion now and I definitely don't identify as Christian, but I still have a very
31 strong sense of spirituality. For me, that's rooted in the earth and trying to find what those
32 points of juncture are between my earth spirituality and my gender, feels really off for me right
33 now and that's not something I would have ever anticipated being an important part of my
34 process. The other thing that I would say is that along the way there has been just so many
35 unexpected, or unanticipated things that have come up in my journey that the only really solid
36 thing I can learn and say with confidence is that that will continue to be the case. I feel like I can
37 never really get settled or comfortable in something, or assume that it will always be that way.
38 One example that I like to give, as many times people often ask me, "Why do you intentionally
39 lower case your name?" The first letters of my name, both my first and last name, are lower
40 case on purpose.

- 1 AJ: I didn't realize that, I'm sorry.
- 2 FS: That's fine. When people ask me that, I say, "Well, one, I was really inspired by bell hooks and
3 she intentionally lower cases her name."
- 4 AJ: e.e. cummings also.
- 5 FS: Yeah, you're right – e.e. cummings, as well. And, for me, one piece of that, there's another
6 piece around humility, but one piece of that is that finn, my name right now, is not the first
7 name that I have been known by, and it may not be the last name that I'll be known by. So, for
8 me, it's sort of a reminder of for right now this name, this body, is what works and what feels
9 good, and that may change, and that's OK. And so, rather than fearing that change or holding
10 on too tightly to stability or no ability, trying to be more open all of the time to unknown, and
11 exploring new things and just accepting that this journey will continue to go in directions that I
12 probably can't anticipate and may not always be comfortable or predictable, but that the
13 process itself will be beautiful and transformative because it has been up to this point. And so, I
14 feel confident that there is beauty in that unknowability.
- 15 AJ: Yeah.
- 16 FS: Yeah.
- 17 AJ: This has been an incredible hour and 12 minutes and 44 seconds, finn. Thank you so much.
- 18 FS: Thank you, Andrea.
- 19 AJ: It's been a joy to be able to get to know folks in a different way. But, even more importantly, to
20 document your story.
- 21 FS: Yeah, thank you for all the great work you're doing as a part of this project.
- 22 AJ: You are welcome.
- 23 FS: I appreciate it.
- 24 AJ: Thank you, my friend.
- 25 FS: Thank you.
- 26 AJ: Until we meet again.
- 27 FS: That's right.
- 28 AJ: Peace.
- 29 FS: Bye-bye.