

Carter Thurmond  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

September 16, 2015



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 Carter Thurmond -CT

3

4 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project  
5 at the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies at the University of Minnesota. Today is September 16,  
6 2015, and I am here interviewing Carter. And so, Carter, can you tell me your full name and  
7 your preferred gender pronouns, your gender identity as it is today and your gender assigned at  
8 birth.

9 CT: My full name is Carter Lynn Thurmond. It used to be Catherine. I identify . . . what else?

10 AJ: What's your preferred pronouns?

11 CT: That's complicated; that's up in the air right now.

12 AJ: OK.

13 CT: Right now, I think I'm feeling more comfortable with gender neutral pronouns, although I  
14 haven't really specified that to other people yet right now.

15 AJ: So, then and they, kind of?

16 CT: Yeah, I'm thinking of leaning towards that although I have told some people that . . . well, when I  
17 came out on Facebook, I told people it's still OK to refer to me as she/her. But, I think I'm sort of  
18 shifting away from that. What else?

19 AJ: And then your gender identity.

20 CT: OK. My gender identity, I really identify as an assigned female at birth trans dyke. Do you want  
21 me to explain?

22 AJ: Yeah, talk about it – sure. What's a trans dyke? That's an identity that I have not encountered  
23 yet.

24 CT: It's just something that personally I've been trying . . . seeking for, or something to describe me  
25 because I feel like lesbian doesn't completely capture what I'm going for or how I perceive  
26 myself. But then, I also identify very strongly with being a lesbian, but I also, at the same time,  
27 really identify with being trans. So, bringing those two things . . .

28 AJ: Which trans people can be lesbian, bisexual or . . .

29 CT: Right. But, for me, I really like the idea of bringing those two together and being able to state  
30 them together – like trans dyke.

31 AJ: Wow, trans dyke.

32 CT: Yeah. What else can I say? I don't know.

33 AJ: Well, thank you. That's again, like I said, it's an identity that I have not encountered, it's a very  
34 valid identity, and based on your explanation it totally makes sense. Tell me a little bit about  
35 your earliest memory, Carter.

- 1 CT: Just in general, my earliest memory?
- 2 AJ: In general, yeah.
- 3 CT: I don't know, just being . . . I don't know, just being a little girl, I guess, and just playing outside.  
4 I had some friends that were my age, when I was like around five, so my friends Nia and Maria, I  
5 remember playing with them a lot outside in my back yard. I used to have a playhouse that my  
6 dad built for us and we'd play in there. We had a pool and we would play in there, and I would  
7 play in their backyards. Just stuff like that, I guess.
- 8 AJ: Where did you grow up?
- 9 CT: Slidell, Louisiana, which is 30 to 40 minutes outside of New Orleans.
- 10 AJ: Slidell, Louisiana – what was growing up like in Slidell, Louisiana? How do you spell Slidell?
- 11 CT: S-l-i-d-e-l-l.
- 12 AJ: OK, just like it sounds.
- 13 CT: Yeah, just like it sounds. It's also known for being The Dell, it's like a nickname, I guess – The  
14 Dirty Dell.
- 15 AJ: The Dirty Dell.
- 16 CT: It has a dirty underside, I guess. It's how I perceive Slidell anyways – it's very . . . it's kind of like  
17 a white-flight city away from New Orleans. A lot of white people, like my family, moved out of  
18 New Orleans to live in Slidell.
- 19 AJ: OK.
- 20 CT: So, it's a lot of middle class white people and their families. And so, I grew up . . . it feels like a  
21 high school place where a lot of people . . . I don't know. I'm trying to put together what I'm  
22 trying to say. It feels like a family-friendly town, I guess.
- 23 AJ: How many people, do you know?
- 24 CT: I don't know, exactly. I'm really bad with numbers. It's not big – it's not small either, though.  
25 It's a mid-sized city, I guess. It's got Wal-Marts and a nice, cute little mall and . . .
- 26 AJ: Multiple high schools?
- 27 CT: Multiple high schools. There's North Shore High School and Salmen. Yeah.
- 28 AJ: So, did you go to elementary school in Slidell?
- 29 CT: Yeah, I attended my whole . . . I've been in Slidell all of my childhood and I went to high school  
30 there.
- 31 AJ: So, what was your elementary school like?
- 32 CT: What was elementary school like? I was pretty much . . . for me, I was pretty much . . . I really  
33 stuck to myself, I was pretty much a loner, I kind of stuck to myself. I had a few friends but I was

- 1 always . . . well, I don't know in elementary school. But, I don't know, I kind of just remember  
2 sitting at a desk and observing other people, which is what I tend to do – just observe other  
3 people.
- 4 AJ: So, no bullying or . . .?
- 5 CT: Hmmm, no. Not that I can really remember.
- 6 AJ: And, you also . . . it sounds like maybe you weren't running for class president or homecoming  
7 royalty or anything like that?
- 8 CT: No, no. I was just there. I was there and I'd just go home and do my own thing, hang out with  
9 my friends.
- 10 AJ: When was the first time you realized that you may not be the gender you were assigned at  
11 birth?
- 12 CT: That's complicated. I don't know exactly. Well, I guess . . . OK. It was probably when I started  
13 reading Holly DeVor's, or Aaron DeVor's, big tome . . .
- 14 AJ: Yes.
- 15 CT: Reading all those interviews that he had done and that's kind of when I started . . . this was in  
16 grad school, so this was Fall 2012 . . . was it 2012? I think it was 2012 . . . 2013 . . . no, it was  
17 2012. I was taking a Gender & Sexuality course and I was just getting into reading a bunch of  
18 stuff. I don't know how I ran into that book, but I just bought it and started reading some of it. I  
19 never got through all of it, but I think I pretty much read the introduction. I read that and I read  
20 some other things and then shortly after I cut off all my hair and I got rid of everything that I  
21 perceived as feminine. Like, I remember dropping everything off at Goodwill with my previous .  
22 . . the person who I was with before, who was pretty much a gay guy.
- 23 AJ: Your partner?
- 24 CT: My partner, yeah. And, he's the one that cut my hair and we went to Goodwill together. I  
25 dropped off all of my feminine clothing and I got new clothes.
- 26 AJ: And that was in 2012, you said?
- 27 CT: I think so, that was 2012. And, for me, I was also reading a lot of second-wave feminism books  
28 and really getting into the idea of lesbian feminism and also this idea of . . . for me, what felt like  
29 trying to escape femininity, I guess. The way that I was raised, the way that . . . in Louisiana, the  
30 gender norms are very, very polarized.
- 31 AJ: Or binary.
- 32 CT: Very binary. And so . . . and the way that I was raised, I was raised to be a girl or a woman and  
33 the expectation was to get married and have kids and to be very feminine and be very girly, to  
34 enjoy wearing dresses and make-up. I actually have an older sister and so she would . . . one of  
35 our activities that we would do together is she would do my hair and she'd do my make-up. She  
36 loves that – she loves doing that stuff.

- 1 AJ: OK. How old is your sister?
- 2 CT: She's . . . I think she's around 30. She's four and a half years older than me and I'm 26.
- 3 AJ: So, do you have other siblings too?
- 4 CT: No, just my sister.
- 5 AJ: OK. So, you were trying to shed this sense of femininity.
- 6 CT: Yeah, that was . . . I felt like I needed a change, I guess.
- 7 AJ: Did you feel like femininity didn't fit or a more masculine identity was more appropriate?
- 8 Because I think there's a difference.
- 9 CT: Right. At that time, I feel like it was more me trying to get out of the role of being a woman –
- 10 like me reading a lot of feminist books and stuff like that and really wanting . . . and not just
- 11 that, but me wanting to identify more strongly with other women in the sense that having more
- 12 open relationships with women, not in a sexual way necessarily. I actually, around that same
- 13 time, I started running a feminist-consciousness raising group.
- 14 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 15 CT: I ran it for two years, mainly over the summer.
- 16 AJ: So, talk a little bit about . . . in your mind, or in your configuration, what was this feminist-
- 17 conscious raising group? What did you guys do?
- 18 CT: So, it was very much based off of a pamphlet that was made during the 1970s.
- 19 AJ: The 1970s, yeah.
- 20 CT: I think we followed it pretty closely – they had the questions and everything.
- 21 AJ: OK, wow.
- 22 CT: That we could ask.
- 23 AJ: I was going to make that reference because I'm fairly familiar with it, but I just wanted to hear it
- 24 from you. So, it is the feminist-consciousness raising activities that were sort of . . .
- 25 CT: Right, I tried to follow it pretty right on.
- 26 AJ: . . . formed in the 1970s. OK.
- 27 CT: I think we followed it pretty well at first but then we started changing up the questions because
- 28 they were, obviously, outdated. But, it was me and a group of other women in the group and
- 29 we would just go around and answer all these different questions – like each one of us
- 30 answering one question, the same question, so we could get an idea or feel how everyone else
- 31 felt – or their own experiences, and then bringing that all together. But, it was a wide range of
- 32 questions. I think we also had topics for each time we met and they ranged from pregnancy to
- 33 menstruation, masturbation, marriage, kids, just any of those. I think that was a really great
- 34 experience for me and really important to my development. It gave me a better understanding

- 1 of what women go through and my own experiences and what's happened to me and stuff like  
2 that, I guess.
- 3 AJ: And then your identity sort of began to shift during that timeframe?
- 4 CT: Yeah, that's when . . . so, I was running that consciousness-raising group and then around the  
5 same time I was reading Aaron DeVor and that's when I cut my hair and all that stuff. I think  
6 that was actually a little bit later . . . because that was the summer, I ran the feminist  
7 consciousness raising group that summer and then at the end of the summer, that's when I read  
8 Holly DeVor/Aaron DeVor's book.
- 9 AJ: Have you experienced any challenges since you have changed your gender identity?
- 10 CT: Can you repeat that?
- 11 AJ: I guess . . . yeah, have you experienced any challenges with employment, street violence, or any  
12 sorts of hardships since you have come out as being trans identified?
- 13 CT: I think it's mostly, so far, it's been like in the family – like my mom, my parents. Yeah, I actually  
14 wrote . . . I came out to them as trans. I wrote them a letter, an email, and I sent it to them. I  
15 talked to my sister to get an idea about where my mom is, my parents are.
- 16 AJ: Did they respond to the email at all?
- 17 CT: No, they didn't respond. My sister said . . . I asked her about it, like was she consulted about it  
18 or anything and all my mom, my sister said, was that she's going to ignore it and just not going  
19 to do anything with it. So, that's where I am right now with my mom. She still refers to me as  
20 Cathy. I know she saw it on Facebook and everything.
- 21 AJ: Yeah, she's one of your Facebook friends?
- 22 CT: Yeah. She sees everything. So, I came out on Facebook as trans and later changed my name to  
23 Carter – I know she saw that, but she's just ignoring it.
- 24 AJ: OK. Anything from your dad at all?
- 25 CT: My dad is kind of quiet and reserved and he doesn't . . . I take after him a lot. He just doesn't . . .  
26 I really don't know my dad that well. I'm close to my dad in the sense that . . . I don't know, but  
27 he's just not very communicative. He's just not into sharing feelings or anything like that.
- 28 AJ: How is your sister doing with it?
- 29 CT: My sister . . . she's funny. She's very vocal . . . not vocal, but open. She says what's on her mind  
30 without really thinking about too much. I tried to explain to her my identity and she didn't seem  
31 to really understand it. I identify more as non-binary.
- 32 AJ: Sure.
- 33 CT: And she really could not get it. She only can see man and woman and she couldn't really  
34 understand how I couldn't be either. I don't know, she just doesn't . . . but she's fine with it,  
35 she's been really supportive.

- 1 AJ: Oh, good. Does she have children?
- 2 CT: She has four kids – four boys.
- 3 AJ: And she's married.
- 4 CT: She's married. She got pregnant at 16 and she's still with the same guy that she was with.
- 5 AJ: OK. Is she concerned about you spending time with your nephews?
- 6 CT: I do know she said that she was . . . so, I came out through the email and then a few days later  
7 we had all gone to a beach house, like a family . . . and Ally came with me. She pretty much did  
8 say that she didn't want it to be a big deal for me to come out and talk to my parents about it in  
9 front of her kids because she didn't want it . . . it sounded more like she didn't want it to come  
10 out . . . I don't know what her point was exactly. She didn't want her kids to witness that and  
11 conceive trans identity or any of that stuff as a bad thing, I guess. She doesn't want them to . . .  
12 I don't know.
- 13 AJ: So, you went with your parents . . . your parents went to this beach house too?
- 14 CT: Yes.
- 15 AJ: And, they still never brought it up?
- 16 CT: No. I even said in the email – like, "I don't shave my legs, I prefer masculine clothing," and  
17 things like that. I never showed them my legs before and so I just went and was like, "I just  
18 don't do it, I don't care anymore, they know so it doesn't matter anymore, so I'm just going to  
19 do it." But, no, they didn't say anything.
- 20 AJ: Well, maybe that's . . . silence is acceptance.
- 21 CT: Maybe – yeah, we'll see. I am planning to talk to my mom on the phone about it at some point  
22 but I just haven't gotten around to it yet.
- 23 AJ: So, on the trip, they were not mean to you or anything?
- 24 CT: No.
- 25 AJ: You guys got along, just like family?
- 26 CT: Yeah.
- 27 AJ: That's good.
- 28 CT: Yeah.
- 29 AJ: What have you experienced as some of the positive aspects of your life since you've come out?
- 30 CT: I really . . . for me, I really enjoy my gender and sexual evolution, you could say. This kind of  
31 started with a professor at Southeastern who taught gender and sexuality sociology courses.  
32 She's just really kind of an out there, in your face . . . she can make kids cry in the sense that she  
33 really brings you to a completely emotional space.



- 1 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 2 CT: When talking about racism and sexism and gender and sexuality and all this stuff. Because  
3 before that, before I had taken her classes, I identified as a straight woman and I was with a guy  
4 at the time. But, going through her course, it was such a transformative experience, I guess. I  
5 thought really differently about gender and sexuality because of her and I started identifying as  
6 bisexual, at that point. This has happened for a lot of other students. Another one of my  
7 friends, Ashley, she took one of her classes, not the same class as me, but she had taken one of  
8 her classes and she went through her own thing – like questioning her identity and sexuality and  
9 all that.
- 10 AJ: Wow, this is a pretty powerful professor.
- 11 CT: Yeah, she is – she's out there, I love her.
- 12 AJ: What's her name?
- 13 CT: Rebecca Hensley. She's a . . . how is it?
- 14 AJ: And she teaches at Louisiana State?
- 15 CT: Southeastern – yeah, she should still be teaching there. She's very, very much anti-racist, power  
16 relations – very much dealing with power relations, a very strong advocate of African Americans.
- 17 AJ: Is she Black?
- 18 CT: No, she's not – she's white.
- 19 AJ: OK. Wow, so she has shifted many people's ideas around their own personal lives, that's pretty  
20 incredible.
- 21 CT: Yes. I don't think it's that hard in Louisiana to do something like that because their conceptions  
22 of gender and sexuality are just very strict and narrow. So, her coming into this college and just  
23 teaching all these students – it's pretty conservative there, so it's not that hard to jumble things  
24 up, I guess, for people. But, yeah.
- 25 AJ: Let me ask you this, Carter. Do you have any thoughts . . . have you done any medical  
26 interventions to date? And do you have any plans to do any?
- 27 CT: That is a question I'm not sure of right now.
- 28 AJ: Hormones, surgery?
- 29 CT: No, at this point it's no right now, but that could change. I'm not sure.
- 30 AJ: OK, and so nothing to date?
- 31 CT: No.
- 32 AJ: OK. One of my questions you've sort of already dove into, looking back over your decision to  
33 express your true gender identity, what were pivotal moments that defined your new life and  
34 would you have done anything differently?

- 1 CT: Pivotal moments . . .
- 2 AJ: So, it sounds like Professor Hensley, Rebecca, was a pretty pivotal moment.
- 3 CT: That was probably the catalyst, yeah. I think also being with . . . so, I was in a polyamorous  
4 relationship with two men around that same time at Southeastern and I . . . polyamorous in the  
5 sense that I was mainly with Gregory, he's predominantly a gay guy, and he really changed a lot  
6 of things for me – like the way I could see myself in my gender and sexuality. Yeah.
- 7 AJ: So, that was a pivotal moment?
- 8 CT: Yeah, I think that relationship – yeah, it changed a lot of things for me, even how I interacted  
9 with my body and how I could see myself in the sense that I didn't feel like I had to uphold  
10 myself to those feminine standards. I very much was still very, very feminine, but over time in  
11 that relationship, I felt like that kind of started breaking down.
- 12 AJ: How did you guys define your polyamorous relationship? Was it sort of just open, see who you  
13 want to see, or was there some . . .
- 14 CT: Right. I was mainly with Gregory, but there was another guy who I was . . . we all lived together,  
15 and he also had a partner, this other guy had a partner, a woman, and it was mostly me,  
16 Gregory, and this other guy. It wasn't . . . I wasn't very sexual with the other guy, it was mostly  
17 me and Gregory, but there was . . . it was sexual at one point later on, but we both did that – our  
18 main partner, I guess you could say. I had Gregory and the other guy had his partner.
- 19 AJ: Sure.
- 20 CT: But, we all lived together and . . . we weren't seeing other people though. It was just the two of  
21 us . . .
- 22 AJ: Sort of just within that triangle.
- 23 CT: Right. We kind of called ourselves the triad.
- 24 AJ: The triad.
- 25 CT: Yeah.
- 26 AJ: Wow, you are really answering a lot of my questions in the context of your . . . but, I'll just say it  
27 again . . .
- 28 CT: You can still ask them.
- 29 AJ: Tell me about your romance, your relationships, love and how that has impacted your gender  
30 identity.
- 31 CT: So, I've been . . . I was first with a guy named Matt. He was pretty much my first relationship. I  
32 was with him for like a year and a half, that was before I had gone through those classes with  
33 Hensley. That was pretty much . . . I guess you'd call that my straight relationship – very  
34 heteronormative expectations and things like that. He wanted . . . I think the relationship  
35 started breaking down because he wanted kids, I wasn't interested. He's actually married and

- 1 has a kid now; he just had a girl a week ago. But, he . . . at the end of our relationship, that's  
2 when I went through that course with Hensley and I was starting to question my sexuality a lot.  
3 I think I was kind of pulling away from him and I think he knew that, so that relationship kind of  
4 deteriorated. But, I think from that relationship I learned that that's not what I really want. It  
5 was an important relationship, I learned a lot from it but it wasn't . . . now, I couldn't go back  
6 and be in that kind of relationship with being very feminine and the expectation to have kids  
7 and get married and stuff like that.
- 8 AJ: Sure.
- 9 CT: And then I went through Hensley's class and then that's when I met Gregory, who also has a  
10 close relationship with Hensley. I started going out with him and that lasted for two and a half  
11 years, with Gregory. So, one thing I could say, I feel like the way that I interacted with my body  
12 when I had sex was very different as opposed to being with Matt. With Matt, the way I  
13 presented my body, I had a lot of body image issues, I guess. But, with Gregory, I felt like that  
14 kind of broke down in the sense that I didn't . . . the way that he interacted with my body wasn't  
15 the same. He wasn't attracted to my body in that way so I felt like I didn't have to hold myself  
16 to the standards to be . . .
- 17 AJ: Of feminine beauty sort of . . .
- 18 CT: Yeah, I guess so. It felt like it was just much more open space where I could just do different  
19 things and, also the way that I had sex was different.
- 20 AJ: How so? To the extent that you feel comfortable.
- 21 CT: Yeah, yeah, yeah – sure. Just very . . . I don't know. There was . . .
- 22 AJ: Less penetrative?
- 23 CT: No, not necessarily. I don't know how to describe it, I'm having a hard time.
- 24 AJ: But, you thought that it was different from the way that you related to Matt.
- 25 CT: To Matt, yeah. I guess it just felt more like . . . just more like a woman, or a girl, with Matt. And  
26 with Gregory, for a while, it wasn't like that because that's what I knew and how I knew myself.  
27 But, I guess that kind of broke down a little bit and . . . I don't know, just interacting with him  
28 differently and having sex in a different way – like in a much more gay way, I guess. He  
29 predominantly has sex with gay men. I guess just more sexual maybe, in a way. I don't know. I  
30 don't know how to describe it.
- 31 AJ: You know, as a trans-identified person, I can probably imagine some of the feelings too. But, I  
32 know you've only been out for a short time as a trans person. When did you come out?
- 33 CT: Right. I came out probably two weeks before I moved here.
- 34 AJ: OK.
- 35 CT: I knew that I was moving . . .
- 36 AJ: And when was that? I know, but . . .

- 1 CT: So, that was . . . like three months ago.
- 2 AJ: OK.
- 3 CT: So, it's been very recent, even though it's been on my mind, obviously, for a while.
- 4 AJ: Yeah.
- 5 CT: So, yeah. Was that the question?
- 6 AJ: So, when did you come out? Yes, that was the question. And then, since you've come out, has  
7 there been any experiences with institutions, be it educational or the medical industry or  
8 criminal justice system, that you have experienced either hostility or insensitivity since you've  
9 come out?
- 10 CT: I guess it's mostly just the name, like me having to reiterate to people that my name is Carter.
- 11 AJ: That's a big deal.
- 12 CT: Or, just like people assuming that I'm a she or her. That's a little difficult. I'm much more  
13 conscious of gendering other people now because of that. I'm like, "I called him a guy, but is he  
14 a guy? I hope I didn't just do something there."
- 15 AJ: Yeah.
- 16 CT: But other than that, I think it's just still too early, I guess, because I've only been out since just  
17 recently.
- 18 AJ: So, when you apply for jobs now, are you . . .? How are you dealing with that? Are you using  
19 Carter or are you using . . .?
- 20 CT: I am putting Carter and then putting Catherine in parenthesis and then Thurmond.
- 21 AJ: OK.
- 22 CT: So, I don't know how else to put it on there. I don't know if I should identify myself in . . . that's  
23 on my resumé.
- 24 AJ: Have you legally changed your name?
- 25 CT: No, I haven't got to that point yet. I feel like maybe that's something I want at some point, but I  
26 think that's something I will eventually want but right now I feel like it's still too early – even for  
27 myself. I still refer to myself as Cathy when I'm talking to myself.
- 28 AJ: When you're talking to yourself.
- 29 CT: When I'm talking to myself, like, "Cathy, why are you . . .?"
- 30 AJ: "Cathy, why are you doing that?"
- 31 CT: Yeah. It was very strange, also, for my girlfriend/partner to start calling me Carter. It's very easy  
32 to tell people here, people I don't know to start calling me Carter.

- 1 AJ: Right.
- 2 CT: But, people that I know, who I've been with for a long time – like Ally, it's just a very strange  
3 experience.
- 4 AJ: How has your coming out as trans affected that relationship?
- 5 CT: That's a good question. So, when I first came out, I just posted on Facebook. I was in a really  
6 weird mood, I just felt . . .
- 7 AJ: Before talking to Ally?
- 8 CT: Yes . . . yes, I just posted it on Facebook. So, that caused a bit of shock, I guess . . . unexpected. I  
9 tried to explain it to her, I felt like if I didn't post it then, I felt like I would have just buried it and  
10 just not think about it and try not to . . . or not think about it, but just not do it and just wait  
11 forever. So, I think I did hurt Ally because I didn't talk to her personally. She has a hard time  
12 understanding me sometimes . . . it's hard for me to communicate, I'm not very good at  
13 communicating so gets kind of . . . I think about things, but it's not like I don't think about telling  
14 her, to talk to her about it. She did have a little hard time . . . I think she was questioning . . . she  
15 had such a hard time getting to a point of identifying as a lesbian and coming out and I think she  
16 was a little worried about how me identifying as trans would affect how people perceived her.
- 17 AJ: Yeah, that's a real thing.
- 18 CT: So, I think that's . . . that was a little bit difficult for her. I think she's much more OK now, but on  
19 top of me not telling her and then . . .
- 20 AJ: And then what does this say about me as a person who is in a relationship with a trans person –  
21 what does that say about me?
- 22 CT: Right, maybe – yeah. But, it seems like since then she's been great. She's been calling me  
23 Carter and . . . yeah.
- 24 AJ: That's awesome. When is the first time you ever met a trans identified or gender queer person?  
25 And how did that impact you?
- 26 CT: I guess . . . I mean, Gregory is very gender queer, not trans necessarily. But, he did . . . or does,  
27 like when he was small, he would identify very strongly with femininity. I think one thing he told  
28 me he would . . . he would put on a pad or something like that when he was young.
- 29 AJ: Like a tampon or . . .?
- 30 CT: That type of pad, yeah. And he is very . . . he likes dressing up in women's clothes and stuff like  
31 that. But, he's not very . . . I think the strongest relationship I've had . . . so, about two years ago  
32 now, three years ago, I moved out of the place with Gregory because I was ending that  
33 relationship and starting a relationship with Ally. So, I was moving out into my own apartment  
34 and it's kind of like a duplex, it was a hallway and then I had like a neighbor.
- 35 AJ: OK.

- 1 CT: I come to find out that she was trans. When she first introduced me to her, she introduced  
2 herself as Matt and still looked very masculine. But then, she later came out to me and since  
3 then has gone to hormones and changed her name to Margo. So, I think she's been . . . she was  
4 really important to my development, I guess.
- 5 AJ: You guys became pretty good friends?
- 6 CT: Yeah, we did – because we lived right across from each other and we'd just hang out every once  
7 in a while when I wasn't busy working at the rape crisis center. But yeah, I really love her. She  
8 has a really special place in my heart.
- 9 AJ: Is she working class? Upper . . .?
- 10 CT: She actually . . . so, this is what happened. I was in Baton Rouge and then everyone moves away  
11 to New Orleans and so she eventually moved. I was so sad that day she was moving, and she  
12 moved to New Orleans. I think she used to work . . . I don't know how much I should say even  
13 though I didn't give her last name. She used to work for a non-profit, like grant writing and stuff  
14 like that, I think. Then she quit and now she's doing cam work, the last I heard.
- 15 AJ: Which kind of work?
- 16 CT: Cam work – like sex work, camera.
- 17 AJ: Oh, OK.
- 18 CT: Online. And she seems like she's really enjoying it.
- 19 AJ: I don't know that phrase.
- 20 CT: I didn't know it either.
- 21 AJ: Cam work, OK.
- 22 CT: But, that's what she's doing – at least the last I talked to her when I was in New Orleans. That's  
23 what she's doing now. She sounds like she's really enjoying it.
- 24 AJ: Do you think it's a choice that she's doing that kind of work or . . . and I know you can't really  
25 speak for her, but do you think that she may feel like she can't find any other type of work?
- 26 CT: I honestly . . .
- 27 AJ: Or, do you know if she couldn't find other work and that's what she had to resort to?
- 28 CT: I can't really speak for her, but I do know that she was not enjoying her job. I think partly  
29 because of her gender identity, so she quit. She quit and left and started doing cam work, so  
30 that's as much as I know.
- 31 AJ: I'm just curious. I don't know if you're aware, but many trans women, particularly of color . . .
- 32 CT: Right, right – I know.
- 33 AJ: It feels like that is their only access to resources and that's a lot of factors – racism, sexism, but  
34 transphobia is probably the biggest factor and so sex work becomes a way to earn money and

- 1           it's not necessarily because they choose that line of work, per se. It's because that's the only  
2           options that they have available to them.
- 3   CT:     Right, yeah.
- 4   AJ:     So, I was just curious if you were aware if that was sort of Margo's reality.
- 5   CT:     Right. I'm sure it plays into it.
- 6   AJ:     Yeah. Is Margo a person of color?
- 7   CT:     No, she's white.
- 8   AJ:     She's white. But, they had a really big impact on you?
- 9   CT:     Yeah. One of the first times we hung out, I remember being in my kitchen with her and I told  
10          her that I was gender queer. And also before that, I remember being in the hallway and my  
11          girlfriend was just coming up and I introduced her to Matt, at the time, as my girlfriend. I guess  
12          that was a confirmation of being in safe space, I guess . . . I don't know. Because then later on,  
13          she came over and talked and I came out to her as gender queer and she came out to me as  
14          trans.
- 15  AJ:     Oh, wow.
- 16  CT:     I think that was still very new for her too.
- 17  AJ:     Yeah, to come out to people.
- 18  CT:     Yeah, I think she was still . . . I wasn't aware of too much at that time, we were just friends, we  
19          had just met. But, she was very much in the process of getting to work herself out to coming  
20          out, I guess. Yeah.
- 21  AJ:     Wow. How old is Margo, would you guess?
- 22  CT:     She's my age, she's around 26.
- 23  AJ:     Oh, wow. OK. So, this is not a Caitlyn Jenner story where the person is in their mid-60s or  
24          something like that.
- 25  CT:     Right.
- 26  AJ:     Have you thought about the relationship between the L, G, B and the T communities and what  
27          do you think that connection or relationship is, if any?
- 28  CT:     Between those different . . . ?
- 29  AJ:     Different identities, yeah.
- 30  CT:     It's like my thesis . . . I really, I was really trying to conceive of heteronormativity on one hand  
31          and then queerness on the other. So, heteronormativity being everything that's conceived as  
32          good and natural and right concerning what your gender and sexuality is. So, that ranges from  
33          getting married, having kids, being feminine or masculine based on your sex, all of those things  
34          being very feminine or masculine and all that. Then on the other hand, you have queerness,

- 1           which is everything that you're not supposed to do – like you're not supposed to do, it's  
2           condemned, it's silenced . . . anything concerning your gender and sexuality is what I consider to  
3           be queerness. So, that could be getting an abortion, getting a divorce, not conforming to gender  
4           expectations or having sex – just having sex. All of that is silenced and uncovered and  
5           condemned in our society. So, I do very strongly see a connection between LGBTQ, all of their  
6           experiences are very different but there are some similarities, I guess.
- 7   AJ:     Yeah. Do you think there is an agenda for the trans community?
- 8   CT:     An agenda?
- 9   AJ:     Yeah.
- 10   CT:    What do you mean, an agenda?
- 11   AJ:    Well . . . so, for example, in the gay community there was this very strong agenda to make same-  
12           sex marriage legal, sort of heteronormative. But, do you think there should be some type of  
13           goal or goals, set of goals, for the trans community?
- 14   CT:    I think goals are important . . . yeah. I feel like there is a really big push for decriminalization of  
15           sex work or just bathrooms, the whole bathroom situation.
- 16   AJ:    Right.
- 17   CT:    And those sorts of things, yeah. There is definitely a push for that in the trans community.
- 18   AJ:    Have you been involved in any sort of trans activism yourself? Student organizations, non-  
19           profits?
- 20   CT:    Not directly, but I've been . . . I was part of LGBTQ groups at Southeastern and I have attended  
21           one conference in New Orleans several months ago that dealt a lot with trans issues. I am  
22           planning to go to the Trans Summit this coming . . . is that this Thursday, I think?
- 23   AJ:    The Trans Summit that is being sponsored by the Tretter Collection and the City of Minneapolis?
- 24   CT:    I guess so, yeah.
- 25   AJ:    That Trans Summit.
- 26   CT:    Yeah, it is being sponsored by the Tretter Collection, but I am planning to go.
- 27   AJ:    Oh, cool.
- 28   CT:    I think since coming out, I'll be more involved.
- 29   AJ:    Good, wow. What do you think the impact of your trans identity will have on your professional  
30           life?
- 31   CT:    I have no idea, I haven't even really thought about that. I don't know . . . I don't know how to  
32           answer that.
- 33   AJ:    What are your plans?



- 1 CT: Well, obviously, I want to work for the Tretter Collection.
- 2 AJ: OK, great.
- 3 CT: I'll just stay here forever. I am a huge . . . I never considered doing archival work before, until  
4 moving here. In Louisiana, there's not anything like LGBT archival stuff going on.
- 5 AJ: Sure.
- 6 CT: So, I think I really want to go in that direction. I am applying to St. Kate's Library Science  
7 program.
- 8 AJ: Wonderful, good for you.
- 9 CT: Yeah, go into that. I really would love to stay in LGBT archival work, that would be amazing.  
10 Previously, I worked for a rape crisis center in Louisiana and that was a bit difficult because all of  
11 the women . . . all women, except there is one guy working there now, but it was a very, very  
12 feminine space. That was a bit difficult to deal with – not that they're forcing it on you or  
13 anything, but it just felt like this overriding expectation to be feminine in order to relate to the  
14 other women there.
- 15 AJ: Did they have an analysis around trans women in their rape crisis work?
- 16 CT: I think . . .
- 17 AJ: Did they include trans women in their literature? In their services?
- 18 CT: Yeah, they kind of do. They don't have a lot of experience dealing with LGBT people, it seems  
19 like. I mean, they do, because people come in, but it seems like I think they need . . . like a trans  
20 sensitivity training kind of stuff. I just remember . . . I kind of got in trouble for not dressing very  
21 professionally. I don't want to say in trouble but just in my performance review they said, you  
22 know, "You can improve on this." And so, I came the next week dressing . . . at this point, I was  
23 just kind of switching over and getting rid of all my feminine stuff, and wearing more men's  
24 clothes. And, I remember coming in and I was wearing a suit and me just passing by the  
25 executive director and her just having like a giggle come out of her . . . I don't know why she  
26 giggled, but it was just awkward.
- 27 AJ: Oh, wow. And you felt like she may have been laughing at you?
- 28 CT: I don't know, I still don't know quite how to interpret that but all I can is that she's just laughing  
29 at what I'm wearing. So, there was that and then just not fitting in, I guess, just feeling out of  
30 place, I guess, there. It was a great place to work, I feel like it gave me . . . I learned a lot about  
31 communication and other things and I'm very grateful to them for that. But, it was also very  
32 difficult to be in that environment.
- 33 AJ: So, one last question, I guess. Where do you see the transgender community in 50 years?
- 34 CT: Hmmm . . . well, I hear that question and I can just imagine where I would like it to be in 50  
35 years.
- 36 AJ: Well, that could be your response.

- 1 CT: Just a much more . . . like an opening of . . . just more gender and sexual freedom, being able to .  
2 . . so, there's something that I . . . kind of how I interpret, or how I try to understand gender and  
3 sexuality, is like this clustering process of femininity and masculinity and gender roles and  
4 sexuality – there's this clustering of what it means to be a woman, what it means to be a man  
5 and they're kind of tightly wrapped together. Like, what it means to be a woman and be  
6 feminine and to wear dresses and make-up, get married and have kids – all these different  
7 things. Or, heteronormativity is clustered up and these are the expectations. So, I am kind of, in  
8 a sense, a gender abolitionist in the sense that I would like to see those strict boundaries, like  
9 this de-clustering process to happen but not necessarily where you can't identify as a woman or  
10 as a man or whatever, but you can cluster those things together and be whoever you most feel  
11 comfortable being. But, I feel like, for me, this de-clustering process needs to happen where  
12 people can feel comfortable identifying however they want and clustering themselves wherever  
13 they want and not be reprimanded or condemned for it.
- 14 AJ: Or oppressed for it.
- 15 CT: Or oppressed for it – yeah, basically.
- 16 AJ: Yeah. Deconstructing the gender binary is what I hear you saying.
- 17 CT: Pretty much, yeah.
- 18 AJ: Wow. Well, thank you for spending this hour talking with me about some really deeply personal  
19 things. I really appreciate it. Is there anything else you would like to share?
- 20 CT: I guess . . . I don't know, I guess just . . . I don't know. I feel like I have something forming, but I  
21 don't want to say it.
- 22 AJ: Well, this is your opportunity.
- 23 CT: If it wasn't for me coming out as a lesbian and me coming out as trans, I just feel like I'd still be  
24 stuck being the same thing that . . . being in the same position as I see my mom and my sister in  
25 – just married and having kids and still in Louisiana probably. For me, coming out as a lesbian or  
26 as a trans dyke has really changed my life and expanded my horizons about who I am. It's much  
27 more than just about gender and sexuality for me. Or not more . . . I guess it all plays into each  
28 other. I don't know, it's just given me a lot. People should be able to explore and bring  
29 themselves.
- 30 AJ: Wow. Thank you, Carter.
- 31 CT: Thank you.
- 32 AJ: Bye-bye.