

Cressida Silver
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

January 31, 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 Cressida Silver -CS
3
4 AJ: And hello.
5
6 CS: Hello.
7
8 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins. I am the oral historian for The Transgender Oral History Project at
9 the University of Minnesota, the Tretter Collection, which is, what is it, the archives of LGBT
10 Special Collections, Special Archives of the LGBT holdings here at the University of Minnesota.
11 Today is January 31, 2017. I am on campus at the University of Minnesota, and I'm here today
12 with Cressida?
13
14 CS: Correct.
15
16 AJ: Silver.
17
18 CS: Correct.
19
20 AJ: Yeah.
21
22 CS: Or CJ.
23
24 AJ: Or CJ. How are you, Cressida? I'm going to ask you, if you don't mind stating your name, so let
25 me make sure we have the correct pronunciation. Spell your name and tell me your gender
26 identity as you claim it today and your gender identity assigned at birth and the pronouns that
27 you use.
28
29 CS: That's a lot to remember.
30
31 AJ: If you need help, just let me know.
32
33 CS: Name is Cressida Silver. [spelling name out] C. R. E. S. S. I. D. A. Silver, just like the color, [spelling
34 name out] S. I. L. V. E. R. And I also go be CJ. My middle initial is J. I'm a transgender woman. I
35 was born male or...
36
37 AJ: Assigned.
38
39 CS: Or however we're— whatever is in vogue for that.
40
41 AJ: Mhm.
42
43 CS: What else was it?
44
45 AJ: And your pronouns.
46
47 CS: Female pronouns.

1
2 AJ: Yeah, she/her/hers, right?
3
4 CS: She/her, right. They/their. I mean you get called all of them. Or I get called all of them.
5
6 AJ: Really?
7
8 CS: Sure, yeah.
9
10 AJ: How does it make you feel?
11
12 CS: You know, it depends. I mean it's—I always like to try to tell myself that it says a lot more about
13 the individual who's using the incorrect pronoun than it does about me.
14
15 AJ: And it does.
16
17 CS: So—but you get the range of emotions, I suppose. Sometimes it's family making a mistake and
18 it's easy to let that roll away.
19
20 AJ: Roll off? Mhm.
21
22 CS: Other times, you know, it can really sort of, you know, it can kind of rock you for a minute.
23
24 AJ: You're at CVS.
25
26 CS: Yeah. Sure.
27
28 AJ: You got your makeup on.
29
30 CS: Subway, yeah. I just got my hair done and, yeah it was just repeatedly and I don't like to correct
31 people.
32
33 AJ: Mmm.
34
35 CS: And you could say that, that's to my detriment but, again, it's, it's sort of, uhm, if I'm meeting
36 someone. Let' say I'm going to have a friendship or a relationship, meaning like just work
37 friendship, anything, then of course I will but if it's a random individual that I—
38
39 AJ: That you'll never see again.
40
41 CS: Right. Exactly, but uh it's just not fun.
42
43 AJ: Yeah, no.
44
45 CS: But it's not the end of the world either.
46

- 1 AJ: It's not the end of the world, you know, I know that a lot of people in the community, in the
2 transgender community, uhm, particularly younger folks get really bent out of shape about it.
3
- 4 CS: Yes. Absolutely.
5
- 6 AJ: And I'm not judging. I'm just saying, there seems to be a little bit of a generational divide around
7 the issue.
8
- 9 CS: Yeah. It seems only natural. I mean you go— you think about it as a progression and maybe
10 think back to like, sorry to just like jump on something but like do you think—
11
- 12 AJ: No! Let's go! This is your interview.
13
- 14 CS: If you think of how treatment was done 50 years ago whenever Christine Jorgensen was... like
15 the 40s or something like that.
16
- 17 AJ: Mhm. Just coming out, yeah.
18
- 19 CS: Although she chose to live very publicly about who she was. And at that time, it wouldn't have
20 been what any doctor would have said, you know? The model became to become stealth, to
21 disavow everything. So, I mean, you start there and you start to move forward. One generation
22 sort of hits a milestone and now there's something else that we may need to progress towards.
23 And if the next generation feels extremely passionate about language and pronouns then that
24 can be a good thing.
25
- 26 AJ: Sure.
27
- 28 CS: I suppose maybe that's their battle.
29
- 30 AJ: [Laughs].
31
- 32 CS: It's not mine. It's not a battle that I really fight.
33
- 34 AJ: Yeah, uhm, well. I love that conversation. I kind of want to keep on track with sort of how the
35 rest of the interview— we may come back to this whole thing but what is your earliest memory
36 in life? What is the first thing you remember in life, Cressida?
37
- 38 CS: I knew you were going to ask that cause I did do some research.
39
- 40 AJ: Okay.
41
- 42 CS: And, you know what, I'm not sure. I believe it involves the front yard of the house that I grew up
43 in and my dad sitting on a picnic table.
44
- 45 AJ: Yeah. Where did you grow up?
46
- 47 CS: St. Paul, Minnesota.

1
2 AJ: Is that right?
3
4 CS: Mhm. Not too far from here.
5
6 AJ: In the city?
7
8 CS: Yeah, in the city.
9
10 AJ: Uhuh. Uhm, what was that like?
11
12 CS: Growing up in St. Paul?
13
14 AJ: Yeah.
15
16 CS: It was good. It was great. I had a basketball hoop. I had a bike.
17
18 AJ: [Laughs].
19
20 CS: I biked around. I played sports. It was good. I enjoyed growing up in St. Paul.
21
22 AJ: Yeah.
23
24 CS: I lived in the house until '87 and then we moved to Roseville.
25
26 AJ: The whole family?
27
28 CS: Right, yeah.
29
30 AJ: Okay.
31
32 CS: Because there were some seedy elements, and I think my father, who was in law enforcement,
33 wanted to take me in at that time, my sister, who would have been like 2 years old or a year old,
34 wanted to move to Roseville.
35
36 AJ: So, uh, a little safer?
37
38 CS: Yeah, I guess so.
39
40 AJ: Your dad a police officer?
41
42 CS: He was, yeah.
43
44 AJ: Okay.
45
46 CS: Detective.
47

1 AJ: Wow. Is that your only sibling, your sister?
2
3 CS: Correct.
4
5 AJ: How about, like, the family structure? Did you have mom, dad at home or just your dad?
6
7 CS: Yeah, no. Mom and dad. They did divorce. That was after... I graduated college.
8
9 AJ: Oh wow. Okay so they stayed together for quite some time.
10
11 CS: They did. I think it was a stay together for the kids. So, but home life was good.
12
13 AJ: Yeah.
14
15 CS: Other than dad working all the time. [Laughs].
16
17 AJ: Yeah. Kind of a scary job too.
18
19 CS: Yeah. He, yeah, I mean, he worked mainly fraud and forgery claims so it wasn't—
20
21 AJ: He wasn't walking the streets and busting drug dealers and that kind of stuff.
22
23 CS: And it's— right, yeah. You have a fair number of drug users committing fraud and forgery to
24 support their habits. He certainly had his interactions with that but, I mean, the bottom line is
25 that he was an extremely caring individual. There was a newspaper article, I still have it in the
26 basement, from probably the '90s. Just all about how he treated everyone with respect. I think,
27 even if he had been in those situations, his personal choices would have made him safer.
28
29 AJ: Wow, that's cool.
30
31 CS: He wasn't very adversarial.
32
33 AJ: Uhm, so you went to grade school in St. Paul, high school in Roseville, I guess?
34
35 CS: I did, yeah.
36
37 AJ: What was it like in school? I mean, were you— You said you're pretty normal typical kid. Bikes
38 and basketball. Did you experience any kind of bullying around your gender or sexual
39 orientation at all?
40
41 CS: No. I mean, from a very young age, I knew— people say it in so many different ways but I knew
42 something was not right. Just sort of a feeling of uncomfortable, persistent, you know? It's not
43 constant. It's not every second of the day but you're reminded of it. There was that but I also
44 had a huge family so I had three cousins, all boys. I had tons of cousins but there were three
45 boys about my age so I did what they did. I just did sports, academics. So, I mean, I excelled at
46 school. I was decent, I was pretty good at soccer. I think I hid behind those things.
47

1 AJ: Yeah. Yeah, conformed.
2
3 CS: Absolutely.
4
5 AJ: You fit in with everybody.
6
7 CS: Absolutely.
8
9 AJ: Yeah, uhm, how about high school?
10
11 CS: As far as bullying, not really, but that's when... you have that time in your life. Puberty. And it's
12 just an awkward time and that's hard enough. And then you throw, I mean, even then... even
13 then, I couldn't say I knew I was transgender cause I— That wasn't a word.
14
15 AJ: Right.
16
17 CS: I didn't even know what that was.
18
19 AJ: Mhm.
20
21 CS: So it was, you know, it was a difficult experience. Just knowing... feeling alone. Just completely
22 isolated. That sensation of maybe being in a room, and I was a bit of a class clown so maybe I
23 was the life of the party or whatever but almost not there. Almost like watching myself perform
24 is what it felt like.
25
26 AJ: I've been there. I've experienced that actually.
27
28 CS: Yeah.
29
30 AJ: Uhm, so when did you know? When did you first realize that you were transgender?
31
32 CS: That's that weird question, right? It's like when did I know? I knew when I was 5, 4-5 years old. I
33 had siblings that were girls. And I could tell that they were being treated differently. They were
34 doing different things. They were not doing the stuff the male cousins were doing, the boys
35 were doing. And I knew then that I would much rather be over there.
36
37 AJ: Really?
38
39 CS: For whatever reason. You know, it wasn't just one thing. It wasn't that I liked pink. It wasn't that
40 I liked— it was just I knew.
41
42 AJ: You just felt like that's my tribe over there. [Laughs].
43
44 CS: That's a good way to put it. Exactly. I knew I was out of place. And then of course, you get into
45 high school, puberty and all of that stuff and, you know, that's when I knew I was— I wanted to
46 wear dresses. I wanted to wear tight jeans. I wanted to wear— but instead I wore those
47 ridiculous jnco wide tight pants that were—

1
2 AJ: The big, huge...
3
4 CS: Yeah.
5
6 AJ: [Laughs].
7
8 CS: [Sighs]. Right.
9
10 AJ: Bellbottoms and—
11
12 CS: Right. I remember once I had taken two of my dad's— Well I didn't have bellbottoms. I wanted
13 bellbottoms. When I go back to my... before I moved out of the first house in St. Paul, looking
14 back now, I have lots of memories of, say, having to get dressed for church or a wedding or
15 whatever and my mom wanted me to wear like dockers or whatever it was. And I remember
16 that being the most difficult experience. I literally skin crawled when I would put something like
17 that on. I always wore sweat pants until I think I got to middle school.
18
19 AJ: Wow.
20
21 CS: Sweat pants or shorts.
22
23 AJ: Uhuh.
24
25 CS: But anyway, uhm, back to high school, sorry I digress.
26
27 AJ: No, that's actually interesting. Very interesting to hear clothing choices. Did you ever try like,
28 experiment with the opposite gender clothing like cross dressing or something?
29
30 CS: Not, not until high school.
31
32 AJ: Okay.
33
34 CS: Probably like 14-15, somewhere in there I think I finally would try on like my mom's dress skirt
35 or her blouses or bra or her heels. And that was always a weird experience cause it didn't fit.
36 [Laughs].
37
38 AJ: Right, exactly. [Laughs]. Either too small or too big.
39
40 CS: Right, exactly.
41
42 AJ: You never tried your sister's clothes?
43
44 CS: I did. I did but she was much smaller so it was—
45
46 AJ: Same problem right?
47

- 1 CS: Well worse. [Laughs]. I'd be lucky if I could get like a shirt on.
2
- 3 AJ: Oh wow.
4
- 5 CS: And underwear obviously in high school, that comes around too small. No chance. Mom's
6 underwear, of course, that's pretty normal. So, I mean, but then in high school when this was
7 happening, of course, my reaction was to sort of loath myself and wonder why am I doing this?
8 Why can't I stop doing this? Why can't I tell someone about this?
9
- 10 AJ: Yeah. Mhm.
11
- 12 CS: Pretty common experience, I think, for trans people. I definitely went through it.
13
- 14 AJ: Wow, uhm. You know, in our earlier conversations, you indicated that you went to the Program
15 in Human Sexuality. And you even mentioned that you saw Dr. Waltersbachen who I know has
16 been gone from there for at least 5 years.
17
- 18 CS: Yeah, it's been awhile.
19
- 20 AJ: What made you go there and when?
21
- 22 CS: Well, I mean if I can I guess pick back up in college when that's the first time I heard the term
23 transsexual.
24
- 25 AJ: Okay.
26
- 27 CS: And I think that was literally— I would like— might as well say I figured that out the first day in
28 the dorms when I went to school. You know what I mean? It was just like...
29
- 30 AJ: Something clicked.
31
- 32 CS: Yeah, immediately. Cause that, I was like, uh, well, that's me.
33
- 34 AJ: Really?
35
- 36 CS: That is me. I am, I am a transsexual and that was a scary moment cause it was like if you're
37 serious about this, you know, that doesn't happen overnight. You're not gonna— anyway.
38
- 39 AJ: Where did you go to college?
40
- 41 CS: University of Wisconsin-Madison.
42
- 43 AJ: Oh, the mad city, huh? [Laughs].
44
- 45 CS: Yup.
46
- 47 AJ: Did they, uhm, I mean, how did you hear this term, walking into like—

1
2 CS: The internet.
3
4 AJ: Okay.
5
6 CS: The internet. I think— you know it was— I think I had caught, uhm, like a Maury Povich or
7 something about, who knows what it was called, cross dresser or transsexual or transgender or
8 man becomes woman. I probably caught a couple of those episodes. I think I remember being
9 like, “Oh, Gosh this is embarrassing. Like why are they doing that.”
10
11 AJ: Right. Yeah, those shows are really bad in the ‘80s when they used to do the—
12
13 CS: It’s always the before and after.
14
15 AJ: Three different people and you’re supposed to tell which one is a real woman verses you know?
16 [Laughs].
17
18 CS: Right, yes. That’s right.
19
20 AJ: Yeah. Very low period in transgender history.
21
22 CS: Puh.. and in daytime talk shows.
23
24 AJ: And in television history. Right exactly. [Laughs]. Oh, man.
25
26 CS: But the world is learning.
27
28 AJ: But it actually sparked something in you to go and do some research.
29
30 CS: Right, exactly. So I think when I finally got to college and I felt I was not being watched or no one
31 would discover me I decided I could start figuring things out. And, you know, transsexual, that’s
32 a big porn exploitation thing, you know, and especially when that was in the late ‘90s. But
33 anyway, I finally, yeah, I finally figured it out so that would have been like 1998, late ‘98 early
34 ‘99. And I didn’t go to PHS or the Program in Human Sexuality until late 2006. So, that’s why? 7,
35 it took me seven years before I said to myself internally—
36
37 AJ: Gotta make some changes.
38
39 CS: Yeah, well I’m a transsexual, I’m transgender, whatever, yeah, well put that I gotta do something
40 so little delayed reaction.
41
42 AJ: Some people delay it much longer than that.
43
44 CS: Absolutely.
45
46 AJ: Can you say Caitlyn Jenner?
47

1 CS: Right? Or even, absolutely. Some people... I mean that's—
2
3 AJ: I mean Caitlyn says that she knew for a long time but... and even tried hormones at one point
4 but she didn't—
5
6 CS: Did she really? I knew she said she knew but I didn't know about the hormones.
7
8 AJ: Yeah, but didn't come out until she was 65 years old.
9
10 CS: Right, yeah, I don't mean to.... it's different for everyone is the bottom line.
11
12 AJ: It is.
13
14 CS: There's no, at least to date, there's no real clean-cut way to—
15
16 AJ: Yeah, and I don't think there ever will be but that's just my little opinion.
17
18 CS: That's life, no. I think I would agree with you.
19
20 AJ: So '98 you kinda made this discovery in 2003?
21
22 CS: '98 I figured it out. 2006 I think is when I first went to see Walter.
23
24 AJ: Yeah. What was the experience like?
25
26 CS: It was good. I mean, if we're talking about the— I finally made it in the door. "Hi, I need help." It
27 was fantastic.
28
29 AJ: Did it feel like a weight was lifted, maybe or like shedding some pounds.
30
31 CS: Yeah, I mean. It did but you gotta rewind the clock a little bit there too, which is coming out.
32 And at this point finally saying it myself. Just saying it out loud.
33
34 AJ: That's the biggest coming out.
35
36 CS: Well, right right but, you know, that's when the weight started to lift. But you're right, it felt like
37 a new chapter. It felt like a new beginning. It felt like a fresh start. It felt like, you know,
38 sometimes you get overly optimistic. All the stuff in the past is gone now, but that's a great
39 feeling. It's a great feeling.
40
41 AJ: Yeah. Euphoria kinda.
42
43 CS: There you go, yeah.
44
45 AJ: Did you... come out to anybody else at that time like your folks. Were you married at the time?
46
47 CS: Yeah, I was engaged.

1
2 AJ: Okay.
3
4 CS: Ultimately that fell apart which worked out for both of us.
5
6 AJ: You came out to your fiancée.
7
8 CS: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I came out to her and then my aunt who works in the VA and had
9 actually talked to me about some trans individuals in the past. I don't know why she had talked
10 to me about them but that was another sort of piece of information that got put in my ear along
11 the way so... And I heard her talk about them positively, which was very helpful for me cause I
12 go all like my aunt can't love and appreciate and have friendship with trans individuals. That
13 means maybe there is hope for me too.
14
15 AJ: Right, exactly.
16
17 CS: So I came out to her and then my parents and my sister.
18
19 AJ: Was this pretransition?
20
21 CS: Oh, yeah, absolutely.
22
23 AJ: Wow. How did they respond?
24
25 CS: Everybody was positive.
26
27 AJ: Really?
28
29 CS: If there was any reaction other than positivity from those immediate people that I told it was
30 just the desire to take a moment to process, but other than that, I received nothing but support
31 and love. I'm extremely lucky in that regard. I've been luck in a lot of regards. It makes me a
32 little emotional to think about— [long pause].
33
34 AJ: I brought some tissues just in case you needed some.
35
36 CS: Thank you. I think for a lot of trans people they, you know, we don't come out until we hit low.
37
38 AJ: Right.
39
40 CS: And to lose family, it just, uhm, it's sad and I was lucky. Sorry.
41
42 AJ: No, that's fine. I'm really happy that, uhm, you were able to keep your family intact. How has it
43 been post-transition? Like are people still in your corner? Still get invited to Thanksgiving
44 dinner? Get Christmas gifts and that kind of stuff?
45
46 CS: Oh, yeah.
47

1 AJ: [Laughs].
2
3 CS: Well I don't get Christmas gifts anymore but that's because I told them to stop giving gifts.
4
5 AJ: [Laughs]. Oh, okay.
6
7 CS: You know we all agree on that but, uhm, yeah if anything, you know, love and support continue
8 to grow.
9
10 AJ: Mhm.
11
12 CS: So... we marched in the Women's March. I have some LGBT members from my extended family
13 as well so I think that was—
14
15 AJ: So you were rocking a pink pussy hat?
16
17 CS: I did not wear the hat.
18
19 AJ: Ohh. [Laughs].
20
21 CS: I did not wear the hat but I was there.
22
23 AJ: You were there.
24
25 CS: And I walked and I— and we—
26
27 AJ: Did you make a sign?
28
29 CS: Gosh, you make me look like the worst protester ever.
30
31 AJ: No! I'm just asking [Laughs]. I'm sorry.
32
33 CS: No, no, no. It's just—
34
35 AJ: You were there.
36
37 CS: Right.
38
39 AJ: You were there. I was— I didn't even go. I didn't go. I was out of town actually. That actually is
40 not an excuse because I was in Philadelphia and they had a big march, and I could have probably
41 road a bus to D.C. cause there was a busload of people who went to D.C. from Philadelphia.
42
43 CS: That's true.
44
45 AJ: But, no, I was working. I was actually, during the march I did an interview.
46
47 CS: There you go. There you go. I think that's equally powerful.

1
2 AJ: Yes, exactly. I did an interview actually with Mara Keisling who was the director of the National
3 Center for Transgender Equality, and we talked about the march and we talked about the new
4 administration and what that would mean for transgender people. I'm glad you went to the
5 march.
6
7 CS: Thank you.
8
9 AJ: I mean just because it's got to be empowering to be able to be in solidarity with other women.
10 Uhm, and standing up for equal rights for everybody.
11
12 CS: For everybody.
13
14 AJ: Yeah, that's powerful stuff. Good on you. [Laughs].
15
16 CS: Just a body in the crowd. It's about sending the message, and I agree.
17
18 AJ: I heard there were like a hundred thousand people over in St. Paul.
19
20 CS: Yeah, I— it was crazy. I think I saw the numbers afterwards too. It was triple what they were
21 expecting. Yeah, it was packed.
22
23 AJ: Yeah.
24
25 CS: Most of my time was just standing in the parking lot waiting to march.
26
27 AJ: Okay. [Laughs]. Wow, but other family members went with you.
28
29 CS: Right, yeah, point was, yes, there's love and resolve and there's strength and support and, like
30 you mentioned, with the new administration has only grown. I mean my sister has said, you
31 know, she's scared for LGBT people but she thinks LGBT rights are important.
32
33 AJ: Mhm, wow.
34
35 CS: Of course, I mean, uhm, maybe that's— things don't necessarily go your way. I won't even say
36 your way, a positive way. Uhm, it's good to see a lot of people responding.
37
38 AJ: Sure.
39
40 CS: And my family included. It was a good experience.
41
42 AJ: I'm so happy that you're in communication and relationship with your family. I mean, uhm,
43 studies and research has shown that when trans people have family support they tend to do
44 80% better in terms of housing, employment, and the suicide rate goes way down. So I'm really
45 happy to hear that.
46
47 CS: Life alone is difficult. Some people have it easier than others but it's still difficult.

1
2 AJ: Yeah.
3
4 CS: And I think you need support to make it happen anyway. And then you throw something, you
5 become marginalized or you become a part of a marginalized group. Yeah, absolutely, you're
6 gonna need all that support even more.
7
8 AJ: Yeah.
9
10 CS: I think that's why I get— it's just a little emotional thinking about it. Somebody can— family can
11 do that to people. It doesn't make sense.
12
13 AJ: Let's make this a little more personal though. To the extent that you feel comfortable, Cressida,
14 uhm, what have been some of the medical interventions you've pursued or undergone since
15 you—
16
17 CS: Transitioned?
18
19 AJ: Came to terms with your journey, as people call it for transition. As a part of your transition, yes.
20
21 CS: Sure. As a part of life?
22
23 AJ: As a part of life. [Laughs].
24
25 CS: [Laughs]. Hormone replacement therapy and breast augmentation.
26
27 AJ: Okay.
28
29 CS: And I was, not that I need to, but I reserve the right to do just about anything else at any time in
30 the near or distant future.
31
32 AJ: Good for you. You, uhm, mentioned to me earlier you are in the mist of starting a family.
33
34 CS: Yes, we are expecting a baby boy.
35
36 AJ: So you're married?
37
38 CS: Yes, I am married.
39
40 AJ: Uhm, and, don't want to assume, but—
41
42 CS: She?
43
44 AJ: You're married to a cisgender woman?
45
46 CS: Yes, correct.
47

1 AJ: Cool. Wow, how did you guys get pregnant?
2
3 CS: Uh, in utero insemination. IUI.
4
5 AJ: Oh really? Okay. [Laughs]. What made you make that choice?
6
7 CS: Uh, it's our only choice, really.
8
9 AJ: It's your only choice, okay.
10
11 CS: Well I shouldn't say that, I shouldn't say that. She had actually... I don't think I read it, but she
12 said she had read of some trans women who stopped the hormones for a period of time and
13 were actually able to produce viable sperm. I guess that wasn't something I was willing or
14 wanted to do.
15
16 AJ: Okay. Wanted to do.
17
18 CS: And I know when I first saw a doctor I think they just— I'm sure they discussed freezing sperm
19 but at that point it was like, "You think I have money for that?"
20
21 AJ: [Laughs]. It's kind of expensive isn't it?
22
23 CS: Well, I mean, at that time I could barely afford rent so. Not gonna say, "Sure, I'll wait to save
24 some money to put some sperm in a sperm bank cause that could take a couple of years. Let's
25 just get the ball rolling.
26
27 AJ: Yeah. Right. [Laughs]. Let's get these hormones flowing, huh? [Laughs].
28
29 CS: [Laughs]. Exactly.
30
31 AJ: Estrogen?
32
33 CS: I think I started with—
34
35 AJ: Spironolactone?
36
37 CS: I think I just started with spironolactone. And even that was— I mean who wants to start a
38 testosterone blocker, as I'm sure you know, even just being on that was like...
39
40 AJ: Relief.
41
42 CS: Right. Testosterone is a very powerful thing.
43
44 AJ: It is.
45
46 CS: So I've been told.
47

1 AJ: It is very powerful.
2
3 CS: But yeah.
4
5 AJ: So she's nineteen weeks pregnant. Congratulations.
6
7 CS: Thank you very much.
8
9 AJ: Wow. And a baby boy you said?
10
11 CS: Correct.
12
13 AJ: Wow. That's awesome. Have you thought about like when baby boy silver uh, is able to talk, will
14 they— do you want them to call you Mom or some other name?
15
16 CS: We haven't really decided yet. Uhm, cause in addition to me being trans, so having to sort of
17 address that portion of it, there is the two mothers aspect of it as well. My wife has done some
18 research and some reading on it and has formed her sort of opinion.
19
20 AJ: Sure.
21
22 CS: I'm horrible cause I like don't remember exactly what that was but something along the lines
23 of—
24
25 AJ: [Laughs]. She will remind you, trust me.
26
27 CS: Something about there being a mommy and a momma or a mom. Something about the natural
28 progression of how children use language and etcetera.
29
30 AJ: Sure.
31
32 CS: It'll be mom. I'll be mom.
33
34 AJ: Okay. Wow.
35
36 CS: Until the child might begin to feel uncomfortable with it, who knows?
37
38 AJ: What's your sexual orientation? How do you define that? I mean I know you're married to a
39 cisgender woman but--
40
41 CS: Lesbian.
42
43 AJ: Lesbian, yeah.
44
45 CS: Yeah, nothing too exciting.
46
47 AJ: [Laughs].

1
2 CS: I guess that goes back to the... well I won't go back to that but, yeah, lesbian.
3
4 AJ: Okay. Does your wife identify as a lesbian as well?
5
6 CS: Yes.
7
8 AJ: Was she identifying as a lesbian prior to your relationship?
9
10 CS: Yes.
11
12 AJ: Yeah.
13
14 CS: We met online so...
15
16 AJ: Oh wow.
17
18 CS: Lesbian seeking lesbian.
19
20 AJ: Cool.
21
22 CS: Yeah, I was kind of shocked it worked.
23
24 AJ: You met online and then you got married and then you're having a baby like that's pretty
25 flipping awesome. You have been lucky. [Laughs].
26
27 CS: Only one more example right there, that's so true.
28
29 AJ: You have been very luck in your life.
30
31 CS: So true.
32
33 AJ: How has being transgender affected your employment life?
34
35 CS: The only, uhm, I mean— I made a conscious decision to work for a company with LGBT inclusive
36 language, you know, preexisting. So when I in 2006 when I finally decided to come out that's
37 when I started working where I work currently. Uhm, and I did it because they were trans
38 friendly. I had actually heard of some people who were transgender that worked in the area
39 where I was trying to get a job. So, I mean, it's like tough to say from that regard it's been—
40 being trans and working it was good. It pushed me to get a job that I probably wouldn't have—
41 an entry level job—that I probably wouldn't have gone for in the first place. And I've turned that
42 into ten years later, you know, I've turned it into a career. They've helped me get a master's
43 degree. So what I'm saying it's just one more example of me being lucky but I guess you could
44 turn around—I could turn around and start wondering things like why is it that I applied for a
45 bunch of jobs and never got an interview or why is it I was interviewed for a job eight times and
46 didn't get it until the ninth time. But it could be because I was not the most qualified, you know
47 what I mean?

1
2 AJ: When these things were happening, were you out as a transgender person?
3
4 CS: Mhm.
5
6 AJ: Yeah, so, it could have been around your gender identity.
7
8 CS: It could have been.
9
10 AJ: I mean there's lots of reasons why people don't get hired for jobs.
11
12 CS: Right. Absolutely, so I mean I guess I—
13
14 AJ: And I'm pretty sure they never said, "Oh, you're a transgender. We're not going to hire you."
15
16 CS: Oh, absolutely not.
17
18 AJ: Yeah.
19
20 CS: I think they would face some repercussions as a result of that. I guess I only bring up the
21 potential for negative things because, I mean, that's what you hear.
22
23 AJ: That is the reality for very many people.
24
25 CS: Right, is discrimination, yeah. I have not experienced overt discrimination in the workplace. I
26 guess specifically relating to employment and job growth.
27
28 AJ: What about other institutions? I'm gonna go on a limb and assume that, given the timeframe
29 that you've given me, like your master's degree came since you've been out.
30
31 CS: Yeah.
32
33 AJ: As a transgender woman.
34
35 CS: Gosh.
36
37 AJ: Did you have any challenges with school? Degrees and institutions?
38
39 CS: Not with getting my master's degree. I was, uhm, I got a master's in Technical Communication
40 and almost, not every, but almost every project or paper or whatever that I had to do, not only
41 was I a trans woman doing it and out and whatever. I was able to write about things that affect
42 or could affect or intersect with being trans, with being marginalized, with minority individuals.
43 It's another...
44
45 AJ: So you include your identity in your research.
46
47 CS: Yeah, absolutely, yeah.

1
2 AJ: All of that kind of stuff.
3
4 CS: My capstone project was all about gender and technical communications.
5
6 AJ: And, I mean, that's kind of a fairly heavily male dominated occupation isn't it?
7
8 CS: Well, see, I— traditionally, yeah, I believe so. I mean there is, um, I mean, I had the opportunity
9 to work with some very, very intelligent, very educated women in the field who were able to
10 open my eyes to efforts of feminists in technical communication. And just by sort of default
11 technical communication being writing, sort of about the feminist movement in general and
12 getting recognition. It was a wonderful experience.
13
14 AJ: Cool. [Laughs]. Wow.
15
16 CS: If we're getting at being— you know I wondered why, it's weird to think that I would have like
17 some, at least a handful of negative experiences. It's just that I would have assumed by now I
18 would have collected those but I don't from institutions, I would say. It's more from people who
19 are not very nice on the street.
20
21 AJ: Yeah? So you get catcalled and?
22
23 CS: I get called faggot. I mean, I don't know if they hear my voice. I don't know if I'm on the phone
24 and they hear that. It's almost worse than— well the word is horrible. People shouldn't call
25 people that.
26
27 AJ: Mhm.
28
29 CS: But it's, uh, really makes me wonder am I doing it right? Am I woman enough? Am I girly
30 enough? Do I— I mean, and I know I am but moments like that call your confidence and self into
31 question or can. They can do that.
32
33 AJ: They can, yeah.
34
35 CS: You don't have to let them but it's always not— it's hard to keep your guard up all the time.
36
37 AJ: Have you had negative experiences like trying to access the restroom or other public facilities?
38
39 CS: Yeah. Being afraid to use the woman's room.
40
41 AJ: Yeah.
42
43 CS: Absolutely.
44
45 AJ: In public, and I mean, I shouldn't be but I can be at work. I can be afraid. Cause I don't know. I
46 don't know what— I don't know what everyone thinks of me.
47

1 AJ: Sure.
2
3 CS: I can only get a read on the people that I know. Yeah, I'll watch the bathroom, you know, give it
4 time. Make sure I don't watch anyone walking in, hopefully, you know, I— it's, it's ridiculous but
5 it's—
6
7 AJ: So even with all of the quote "good luck" you've had—
8
9 CS: Bathrooms.
10
11 AJ: You still— somewhat reluctant or apprehensive about accessing public bathrooms.
12
13 CS: Sure, yeah. Sure. Scared. It could be scary.
14
15 AJ: Yeah.
16
17 CS: I mean, it could be a range of emotions—
18
19 AJ: Has anyone ever said anything?
20
21 CS: Yeah, I mean, I've gotten some looks and some mutterings under their breath, like department
22 stores, bathrooms at the park, you know, it happens. But thankfully I've never been—
23
24 AJ: Harassed.
25
26 CS: Right it's just more someone intentionally being rude to me because they don't like my presence
27 or something. Whatever.
28
29 AJ: Yeah. Wow. Have you ever worked for any LGBT organizations or groups?
30
31 CS: I have not.
32
33 AJ: I know you mentioned that you— or volunteer—I mean, you don't have to necessarily have
34 worked for them but, volunteering is work.
35
36 CS: True, true. You're getting your time. Uhm, I mean, I volunteered at a Pride Parade through my
37 employer and I participated in the pride network so I'm... I don't know, I think I was a lot more
38 gun hoe and really let's get out there and change things and get the word out before I came out.
39 And, obviously, it wasn't about— I wasn't gun hoe about transgender but I was passionate
40 about antiwar, peace, and equality.
41
42 AJ: You're an activist so to speak.
43
44 CS: Yeah, yeah. You're an activist.
45
46 AJ: [Laughs].
47

1 CS: You're an activist. I don't know if I would call myself, you know.
2
3 AJ: I don't necessarily call myself an activist but...
4
5 CS: Fair enough.
6
7 AJ: I don't know. People do, so. I don't deny it.
8
9 CS: There you go. But not since transitioning, it's not— it's, it's a little strange.
10
11 AJ: Well there's a thing about safety. I mean, I think that, you know. And know you're starting a
12 family.
13
14 CS: Well, as you grow up, sure.
15
16 AJ: Yeah, you have to just think about things a little bit, a little bit more cautiously, I guess.
17
18 CS: Yeah, absolutely. Something that people have always consistently told me along the way is it's
19 gonna be these— and I'm not saying this is the only way, I'm just saying, I've constantly been
20 told it's those one to one interactions where you're going to change minds and make a
21 difference so.
22
23 AJ: Mhm.
24
25 CS: I guess I hold onto that it's okay that I don't advocate as much as I probably feel like I should.
26
27 AJ: Well, I just want to acknowledge at this point that you sitting in this chair and doing this
28 interview is an act of resistance. It's an act of revolution. It's an act of creating a one on one
29 situation with a whole bunch of people.
30
31 CS: That's true.
32
33 AJ: So, thank you for your activism in this moment here. It's much appreciated.
34
35 CS: Thank you.
36
37 AJ: Uh, Cressida, I like your name. I used to drive a Cressida. A Toyota Cressida. They don't make
38 them anymore.
39
40 CS: No.
41
42 AJ: How did you come about the name? Was it related to the car at all? Is it some Greek goddess?
43 Like, I don't know about this name.
44
45 CS: Yeah, I'm not sure I know either. I will say, I do at work have the plastic decal from the back of a
46 Toyota Cressida.
47

- 1 AJ: Is that right? [Laughs].
2
- 3 CS: I was able to get it on Ebay for, like, two bucks.
4
- 5 AJ: Okay.
6
- 7 CS: My initials, before I transitioned, were CJ. So I was called CJ by my dad. And I think I have a little
8 bit of respect and a little bit of fear and a little bit of wanting to stay comfortable, I chose
9 Cressida and a middle name, Jaylynn, so I could still have CJ. So I could have. And that narrowed
10 down, in my opinion, at the time, the number of C names that I would be willing to live with and
11 I was, for whatever reason, Cordelia and Cressida came to mind. And I think there's something
12 about the, if you Wikipedia Cressida, I think there's some transgressing, some crossing between
13 the character does throughout some, I don't know if it's during a Shakespeare play or if it's—
14 the name goes back to like Greek theater, things like that.
15
- 16 AJ: Okay.
17
- 18 CS: So I was like, "Okay, that's what I'm going to go with."
19
- 20 AJ: Cressida. It's very pretty. It's a beautiful name.
21
- 22 CS: Oh, thank you.
23
- 24 AJ: Yeah, absolutely. It's always interesting to kind of hear how people come to selecting a name for
25 themselves. It really is quite all about sort of self-determination. I mean, you know,
26 acknowledging, developing, creating a transgender identity is just that. I mean, you know.
27
- 28 CS: Yeah. It's not easy.
29
- 30 AJ: Yeah, it is not. At all. What do you think the agenda for transgender community is? Do you think
31 there's an agenda? If not, what do you think it should be? Or should there be an agenda? Should
32 we just— everybody just live their life on their own?
33
- 34 CS: That's a difficult question. I think if you make an agenda, by default, you're going to leave some
35 people out. So of course, you know, the easy answer is no agenda that way we make sure
36 everybody can fit in. But we all know if you don't have an agenda, what is it that you're doing?
37 So I really appreciate the work that GLAAD is doing.
38
- 39 AJ: Mhm. Mhm.
40
- 41 CS: Gay and Lesbian, uh, affirmation—
42
- 43 AJ: Anti Defamation, yeah.
44
- 45 CS: There you go, that's it. Uh, the HRC and Mara Keisling.
46
- 47 AJ: The National Center for Transgender Equality.

1
2 CS: Right, so I like that there is multiple groups maybe having their own agenda. And trying to
3 impact some change. And I guess from my perspective, I like that. Not being someone who gets
4 out there all the time, I'm very appreciative. I support them. I donate money. I actively read to
5 stay up to date.
6
7 AJ: Sure.
8
9 CS: Who knows maybe I can help at some point or something like that. But that's tough though
10 cause it's uh— I wish everyone would just be nice.
11
12 AJ: Yeah.
13
14 CS: Can't we just not hate?
15
16 AJ: Hm, yeah, that would be nice. [Laughs].
17
18 CS: [Laughs].
19
20 AJ: I wish it could be so too, Cressida. Unfortunately, we've got a lot of work to do to get to that.
21
22 CS: It's not the world we live in. Yes, we do.
23
24 AJ: Yeah, uhm. Wow. Has there ever been like a person, individual that helped you to become or to
25 recognize yourself. Or that you count as sort of your mentor. I know you mentioned Walter but,
26 you know, he's a professional. He was sort of paid to be your cheerleader. I mean, what there
27 anybody that had an influence on you that was just sort of a friend?
28
29 CS: You know, I mean, I have an aunt who is a lesbian and had come out. You know, it's funny. I
30 didn't know growing up that, that just made me think, I don't remember when I became aware
31 of that or when my family recognized that or was okay to talk about that.
32
33 AJ: Mhm.
34
35 CS: That's quite some time ago, you know? Uhm, but her, when she did come out she was open and
36 she's since married and has a child and stuff but knowing—
37
38 AJ: Married to a woman or—
39
40 CS: Yup. Correct.
41
42 AJ: Okay. [Laughs]. I mean it could be either way, man. Life is a transition— I mean, you know?
43
44 CS: Absolutely.
45
46 AJ: Gender and sexuality is fluid, like, I could say I'm a lesbian today and next week I'm married to a
47 guy, like that can happen.

1
2 CS: Yeah. Free to make choices.
3
4 AJ: Yeah.
5
6 CS: So her existence was huge. It gave me a lot of strength.
7
8 AJ: Mhm.
9
10 CS: But, I don't know, I mean—
11
12 AJ: But you don't have like a transgender friend who you credit with helping you to get to some
13 acceptance?
14
15 CS: No. I mean I've had lots of, along the way, you know, in therapy, in group therapy, you meet
16 people.
17
18 AJ: You meet people, yeah.
19
20 CS: And they help you.
21
22 AJ: Sure.
23
24 CS: And I think that they, they sort of help you get over the roadblocks, but I mean, being trans is a
25 part of who I am. I mean, it's not everything.
26
27 AJ: Absolutely.
28
29 CS: And I think it's a given that we all know that. I think all those other people in my life that were
30 just, that just showed me love and respect and care—
31
32 AJ: Mhm. It's just as important.
33
34 CS: Right, I was surrounded by so many people with that sort of outlook that I think I picked up on a
35 lot from a lot of different people. Isn't one person I would point to.
36
37 AJ: Wow, that's cool. When was the first time you ever met a transgender person?
38
39 CS: Knowingly, that's a good question. When I mentioned my aunt, she had given me a phone
40 number of a trans woman. So at first it was a phone call. Uhm, and the first time I had actually
41 met, like personally met someone, probably, it was probably in the office of Program in Human
42 Sexuality.
43
44 AJ: Makes sense.
45
46 CS: It makes sense but it's kind of, well, I mean you never know. I may have met plenty of them.
47

- 1 AJ: Yeah, you just never know. [Laughs].
2
3 CS: I mean, yeah, they don't all talk like me. [Laughs].
4
5 AJ: [Laughs].
6
7 CS: Actually that was a riff on my deep voice.
8
9 AJ: Oh, okay. [Laughs].
10
11 CS: Or what I perceive to be my deep voice.
12
13 AJ: Yeah. Well women's voices come in every octave as evidenced by your speaking tone right now.
14
15 CS: That's a very valid response. That's very true.
16
17 AJ: Yeah, so tell me what do you see the transgender community 50 years from now? And I'll just
18 give you some context like, children are coming out at six and eight and ten, right now this
19 month on the cover of National Geographic the whole issue is about gender and gender
20 revolution and there's a transgender girl on the cover, like what's your thoughts on the future of
21 gender in America and where we will be 50 years from now?
22
23 CS: I have a positive outlook on that. I think slash I hope that acceptance— love—something more is
24 inevitable, uhm, that that will set in motion and it will get there. It's just a question of how long
25 and I, I think— Hopefully it will sort of fall away. It won't be a topic of conversation. There will
26 be no need to have it in National Geographic or it will just be a back-page story just like some
27 other thing that wasn't the front story. It doesn't need to be.
28
29 AJ: Sure.
30
31 CS: But, unfortunately, there's going to be a lot of, just a lot of negativity with the bathroom bills
32 and things of that nature that we're going to have to get through first but I believe that we, you
33 know, you and I and our trans brothers and sisters with those one to one, you know,
34 interactions with the help of activism, groups— it's inevitable. We'll get there so I have a
35 hopeful outlook. It just pains me that there's going to be a lot of tears and a lot of unnecessary
36 hate, pain, struggle but when you look back through history that's, I don't know, it's a necessary
37 evil. For any new change, something new that's gonna sort of say whatever you thought was
38 normal, whatever you thought was mainstream, whatever you thought was predominate. You
39 don't just show up and sadly get treated equally. People have to fight—
40
41 AJ: Fight.
42
43 CS: —to say I'm just like you. I'm a human being.
44
45 AJ: I'm a human being. Wow. What a great way to end, but I don't necessarily want to end right
46 there. I want to give you an opportunity to just share anything that you feel really important or
47 compelled to say that I haven't asked you about.

1
2 CS: [Thinking]. Love, respect, I don't— there's nothing— Love your neighbor.
3
4 AJ: Yeah. Well, maybe I should ask this question cause I've just be kind of thinking about it. You said
5 something that, uhm, you talked about the VA. Were you ever in the military?
6
7 CS: No.
8
9 AJ: Okay.
10
11 CS: I took the ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test].
12
13 AJ: Yeah.
14
15 CS: But that's as far as I got.
16
17 AJ: Uhm, no, I know that you said your, uhm, aunt worked at the VA.
18
19 CS: Right, well my dad served, my sister served, my brother-in-law served.
20
21 AJ: Wow. So it's a family kind of occupation to some extent but never you.
22
23 CS: No. [Laughs].
24
25 AJ: [Laughs].
26
27 CS: Thankfully.
28
29 AJ: Thankfully, yeah. Well, uhm, one of the cool things President Obama did before he left office
30 was pardon Chelsea Mannin, uhm, and regardless of how you think about her transgression of,
31 uhm, government secrets or whatever, her sentence was way too long and the cruelty of not
32 respecting her gender identity, given her treatment, was really horrible so I'm glad he did what
33 he did.
34
35 CS: Yeah.
36
37 AJ: Yeah, I'm not sure how I worked Chelsea Manning into this interview.
38
39 CS: Yea! Army! That makes sense.
40
41 AJ: Okay. Well listen I really appreciate you coming in to sit and talk with us today, Cressida. It's
42 been a great conversation. And good luck with the baby, the new baby coming, and, uhm, until
43 we meet again.
44
45 CS: Thank you.
46
47 AJ: Alright. Bye-bye