

Sandy James
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

September 29, 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.

Andrea Jenkins

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1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 Sandy James -SJ
3
4 AJ: So hello.
5
6 SJ: Hello.
7
8 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins, and I am the oral historian for The Transgender Oral History Project
9 at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries. Today is September 29th, 2017.
10 Uhm, I'm at the University of Minnesota on the west bank on the shores of the Mississippi River.
11 [Laughs]. Just one day after the Fourth Annual Trans Equity Summit. Uhm, and I'm here today
12 with Mr. Sandy Games. Do you prefer Dr. James or...
13
14 SJ: That's a little premature. I gotta finish the dissertation. I'm ABD right now.
15
16 AJ: Okay. [Laughs].
17
18 SJ: I will before that suit. [Laughs].
19
20 AJ: All but the dissertation.
21
22 SJ: Yeah, yeah.
23
24 AJ: Soon to be Dr. Sandy James.
25
26 SJ: [Laughs]. Yeah, Sandy is fine.
27
28 AJ: Uhm, how are you doing today Sandy?
29
30 SJ: I'm doing alright. Uhm, it's good to be here.
31
32 AJ: Yeah.
33
34 SJ: This is, uh, this is something that we've talked about for a while.
35
36 AJ: We have.
37
38 SJ: Like a long time.
39
40 AJ: We actually have.
41
42 SJ: It's nice to finally get to see Minneapolis and to participate in that Forth Annual Trans Equity
43 Summit with something else.
44
45 AJ: Yeah, and I'm gonna get into that in a little bit and ask you some questions about, about that.
46 Uhm, but before we get started, so I'm going to ask you to answer a few things.
47

1 SJ: Sure.
2
3 AJ: State your name. Spell your name so we make sure, I know it's pretty common spelling but, you
4 know, in 2017, you know, Sandy could be spelled with X.A.N.D.Y., right? [Laughs].
5
6 SJ: [Laughs].
7
8 AJ: Uhm, so spell your name, state your name, spell your name, state your, uhm, your gender
9 identity as you describe it today and your gender assigned at birth and the pronouns that you
10 use.
11
12 SJ: Okay, so my name is Sandy James. Uh, that's S.A.N.D.Y.
13
14 AJ: [Laughs].
15
16 SJ: James is the usual spelling. J.A.M.E.S. I do like to go professionally by Sandy E. James.
17
18 AJ: Okay.
19
20 SJ: You know, it's that whole academic thing...
21
22 AJ: Mhm.
23
24 SJ: ... where you have a middle initial.
25
26 AJ: Right.
27
28 SJ: Uhm, and, uh, that stands for Even in case you'd like to know that.
29
30 AJ: Ah, wow.
31
32 SJ: Uh, and my gender identity, uhm, as I see it, you know, can't get too much into language. I know
33 I...
34
35 AJ: You can if you want to. [Laughs].
36
37 SJ: [Laughs]. I'm, uh, I'm, I'm male. I, I usually go ahead and, and use the terminology trans man to
38 describe myself.
39
40 AJ: Okay.
41
42 SJ: Uhm, and but generally only in circles of people who would understand...
43
44 AJ: Sure.
45
46 SJ: ... what that actually means...
47

1 AJ: Mhm.
2
3 SJ: ... uh, and pronouns I prefer to use are he/him. Or you could just call me Sandy.
4
5 AJ: Mhm.
6
7 SJ: Sandy is just fine.
8
9 AJ: Cool. Uh, A.F.A.B. [Laughs].
10
11 SJ: Oh, I'm sorry, yeah, yeah. Assigned, uh, the word on my birth certificate was, uh, you know, girl,
12 female, what have you.
13
14 AJ: Yeah, mhm, mhm.
15
16 SJ: And, uh, that's what's still on my birth certificate.
17
18 AJ: I've, I've seen that acronym. I, I know what it is now but the first time I saw it, I'm like what is
19 afab?
20
21 SJ: Afab, afab, it's, it's all the new lingo.
22
23 AJ: [Laughs].
24
25 SJ: Yeah, it's...
26
27 AJ: You're really interested in language.
28
29 SJ: Very much so. Very much so.
30
31 AJ: Uhm, and you, you sort of declined to go into language around your gender identity but I'm
32 gonna press a little bit because we're trying to understand gender so what language would you
33 use if you had all the time to talk about it?
34
35 SJ: You know, I, [sighs] I feel like part of the reason I was a little reluctant is cause I don't know if I
36 have well formed thoughts on it.
37
38 AJ: Okay.
39
40 SJ: I don't wanna, you know, ramble or go off on a tangent. I'm perfectly happy to, uh, to use the
41 term male to describe myself.
42
43 AJ: Sure.
44
45 SJ: Uh, I think it is important in certain spaces to identify as trans so that people, people know.
46
47 AJ: Mhm.

1
2 SJ: Uhm, but, you know, I think it's that I haven't fully formed the language, my own understanding
3 is evolving.
4
5 AJ: Mhm.
6
7 SJ: Uhm, and in terms of language I do have a lot of thoughts on language, the limitations of it, and,
8 and what we have seated a little bit like in terms of seating the power of words by choosing to
9 use certain language.
10
11 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
12
13 SJ: Uh, instead of using other language, if, uh, and I'm happy to get into what I mean there but in
14 terms of gender identity, I'm perfectly fine just, just...
15
16 AJ: Just male.
17
18 SJ: Using male, yeah.
19
20 AJ: That's great. Uhm, how, how is it being in the world as a black male, Sandy?
21
22 SJ: Well, you know...
23
24 AJ: And maybe not... let me, let me shrink that universe down a little bit.
25
26 SJ: Yeah.
27
28 AJ: Cause being in the world, some places being in the world a black man may be, you know, uhm,
29 elevated and, and there are some places in the world where they are denigrated.
30
31 SJ: Yeah.
32
33 AJ: Uhm, how is being a black male in America?
34
35 SJ: Yeah, I mean that's a great question. It is, I think I'm gonna put an addendum on that, uhm...
36
37 AJ: Mhm.
38
39 SJ: ... being a black trans male. The reason I'm putting that addendum is that... there was a level of
40 choice in my deciding to transition and present as male.
41
42 AJ: Yes. There is a level.
43
44 SJ: You know, of course it's, it's, you know, something that I always knew myself to be.
45
46 AJ: Mhm.
47

1 SJ: One of the most difficult decisions for me beyond some of the social and cultural reasons that I,
2 that I grapple with...
3
4 AJ: Mhm.
5
6 SJ: ... is, was... I was going from being a black female in the world where sometimes in certain
7 spaces and professional spaces and in academic spaces sometimes black women are far better
8 off, uhm, I was going from doing that to being a black man, which seemed to me as a loss of
9 status...
10
11 AJ: Wow.
12
13 SJ: ... in certain ways.
14
15 AJ: Wow.
16
17 SJ: Unlike many of my trans peers who are white...
18
19 AJ: Mhm.
20
21 SJ: ... or it was a little bit more clear to me that while you are still trans if you are perceived as a
22 white man...
23
24 AJ: Mhm.
25
26 SJ: ... then, then it's a clear improvement in the status scale.
27
28 AJ: Sure.
29
30 SJ: Uhm, that is not to, uh, it's not to put aside...
31
32 AJ: Minimize.
33
34 SJ: ... or minimize in any way the reality of being trans.
35
36 AJ: Sure.
37
38 SJ: But I saw it if I was trying to do it in a black and white way, and I thought to myself, I'm not
39 sure... if, I don't know if it will even out if, if that, I don't, I can't think of a better way to say it.
40
41 AJ: Mhm.
42
43 SJ: I get to live my authentic truth but I get to live it as a black man...
44
45 AJ: Wow.
46
47 SJ: ... in America right now.

1
2 AJ: Mhm.
3
4 SJ: I don't know. I don't know...
5
6 AJ: [Laughs].
7
8 SJ: ... what's better. Is it better to just be, uh, a really masculine of center person, uh, person who is
9 perceived as female and just go through the world that way but still get to fall back on being
10 female.
11
12 AJ: Mhm.
13
14 SJ: Uh, and I'll, uh, I'll give you a story to accompany that.
15
16 AJ: Sure.
17
18 SJ: It illustrates it pretty well.
19
20 AJ: Mhm.
21
22 SJ: Uhm, at some point I was in law school. I was coming home from, uh, a concert. It happened
23 actually past by the law school I think to pick up my car, and I was driving home.
24
25 AJ: Uhuh.
26
27 SJ: It was a route I took all the time. And I went to, uh, Georgetown Law School...
28
29 AJ: Sure.
30
31 SJ: ... in Washington D.C. our nation's capital.
32
33 AJ: Yes.
34
35 SJ: And I was driving down, uhm, I'm embarrassed I forgot the name of the road. Independence
36 Boulevard I believe.
37
38 AJ: Independence, okay.
39
40 SJ: Something like that. I was driving right by the Martin Luther King statue.
41
42 AJ: Mhm.
43
44 SJ: I took that strip all the time cause I loved to go by the monuments.
45
46 AJ: Right.
47

1 SJ: I thought it was a beautiful way...
2
3 AJ: Sure.
4
5 SJ: ... to, a beautiful commute.
6
7 AJ: Mhm.
8
9 SJ: An unbelievable commute.
10
11 AJ: Yeah.
12
13 SJ: Uh, and I was pulled over on that road. It was just me. Nobody else.
14
15 AJ: Hm.
16
17 SJ: Just pulled over. And, uh, I had, uh, out of state tags, Florida tags on my car.
18
19 AJ: Right.
20
21 SJ: And I had dark tint on my car. It was a car in Florida.
22
23 AJ: Yeah, you need dark tint.
24
25 SJ: And the cop approached me and didn't even get to the front window before he asked me to put
26 down my rear window so he could search the back of the car. I have an SUV so you can see into
27 the whole back if you roll the window down.
28
29 AJ: Right.
30
31 SJ: Now I know a lot about constitutionality.
32
33 AJ: Mhm.
34
35 SJ: Searches and things like that.
36
37 AJ: Right.
38
39 SJ: I was a law student. I'm very interested in it. I had a background in law enforcement.
40
41 AJ: Uhuh.
42
43 SJ: And I went ahead and put that back window down because I knew that on that road at that
44 moment that cop who pulled me over...
45
46 AJ: Mhm.
47

1 SJ: ... that wasn't the time to debate the constitutionality of his actions.
2
3 AJ: Right. [Laughs].
4
5 SJ: And I went ahead and decided that I was gonna not make it any more contentious and perhaps
6 dangerous for myself.
7
8 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
9
10 SJ: And, uh, you know, he came up to me and he, he mumbled something about, you know, out of
11 state tax and having a cover on my license plate which was a clear cover which is apparently
12 illegal in D.C. and he talked about my tint but I gave him my license and I could instantly see that
13 his face changed. My license had F.
14
15 AJ: Wow.
16
17 SJ: I could instantly tell that when he had pulled me over...
18
19 AJ: Uhuh.
20
21 SJ: ... he had seen a person in a baseball cap...
22
23 AJ: Right.
24
25 SJ: ... in a car with dark tinting who was black.
26
27 AJ: Mhm.
28
29 SJ: He pulled me over...
30
31 AJ: Yeah.
32
33 SJ: ... probably looking for my hoonies in the back or whatever...
34
35 AJ: Right.
36
37 SJ: ... nefarious thing that was going on back there.
38
39 AJ: The, the colt .45 you threw in the back seat.
40
41 SJ: or whatever it is I've got going on back there. His demeanor changed instantly. He became kind
42 of, you know, uncomfortable, didn't know how to handle himself and he just started
43 stammering, and, oh, you know, "I pulled up over because of," you know, we could have lots of
44 conversations...
45
46 AJ: Sure.
47

1 SJ: ... about why he pulled me over.
2
3 AJ: Mhm.
4
5 SJ: But he made a call based on what he perceived.
6
7 AJ: Yeah.
8
9 SJ: And at that point the thing that changed the course of the way that police stop went...
10
11 AJ: Mhm.
12
13 SJ: ... was when he saw F on my license.
14
15 AJ: Wow.
16
17 SJ: So those are the kinds of considerations that when I say a black man about the loss of status and
18 maybe as absurd as it seems the protection...
19
20 AJ: Mhm.
21
22 SJ: ... to lie in having that gender that doesn't represent who I am...
23
24 AJ: Mhm.
25
26 SJ: ... on my identification.
27
28 AJ: Wow.
29
30 SJ: So...
31
32 AJ: Where did you grow up Sandy?
33
34 SJ: I grew up in a town, in a town called South Harrow in, uh, the United Kingdom. It's a suburb of
35 London. It's north of London.
36
37 AJ: Mhm. South... Harrow?
38
39 SJ: South Harrow. It's...
40
41 AJ: H.A...
42
43 SJ: ... H.A.R.R.O.W.
44
45 AJ: ... R.R.O.W. Uhuh.
46

1 SJ: I think Harrow is, uhm, maybe famous for the Harrows School for Boys. It's one of those top, uh,
2 English schools like Eton School for Boys.
3
4 AJ: Oh okay. Is that where you went to school?
5
6 SJ: That is not where I went to school.
7
8 AJ: Okay. [Laughs].
9
10 SJ: I, I went to the public school down the street, Earls Mead, uhm.
11
12 AJ: What's it called?
13
14 SJ: Earls Mead.
15
16 AJ: Earls Mead.
17
18 SJ: First and middle. Yeah. I, uh, I started out in private school actually. My parents put me through
19 private school.
20
21 AJ: Mhm.
22
23 SJ: Uh, and, and one of my sister's was going to school with me, uh, at the time. And then they
24 learned when I was about six, uhm, they made the decision that they wanted to move to the
25 United States, and, uh, so they pulled us out of private school to kind of like save money and
26 such.
27
28 AJ: Mhm.
29
30 SJ: And, uh, we just went to the local public school. But it took six years before we, we actually
31 ended up immigrating because of the, the, you know how long the process takes.
32
33 AJ: It's a long process.
34
35 SJ: It's a long process.
36
37 AJ: Uhm, yeah, and unfortunately Africans have a much harder time immigrating to the United
38 States than, than some other people...
39
40 SJ: Yeah.
41
42 AJ: ... than Europeans even though you guys were Europeans. Like, wait a minute, damn it, that...
43 [Laughs].
44
45 SJ: Yeah, it's interesting. You know, we came in through, uh, my, my father's, uh, my uncle that, uh,
46 sponsored us I believe to come over.
47

1 AJ: Mhm.
2
3 SJ: Because he was already here.
4
5 AJ: Okay.
6
7 SJ: Uh, my parents are from the Caribbean. They're from two different islands...
8
9 AJ: Mhm.
10
11 SJ: ... on the Caribbean, and, uh, my dad is from Dominica which just got ravaged by, Hurricane,
12 uh...
13
14 AJ: Wow.
15
16 SJ: ... Maria.
17
18 AJ: Maria.
19
20 SJ: Yeah, that island is gone.
21
22 AJ: I'm so sorry.
23
24 SJ: That island is gone. Uhm.
25
26 AJ: I mean for the cultural loss. I don't think your dad lives there.
27
28 SJ: It's a, no, no, no.
29
30 AJ: Yeah.
31
32 SJ: Most of the family is not there anymore, uhm...
33
34 AJ: Uhuh.
35
36 SJ: ... that's, you know, colonization does that. It's an independent island...
37
38 AJ: Sure.
39
40 SJ: ... in the country but, you know, a lot of, uhm...
41
42 AJ: But it was colonized at one time.
43
44 SJ: Yeah, it was a British colony, and they came, uh, like my father came to the United Kingdom. A
45 lot of his family also came to the states.
46
47 AJ: Mhm.

1
2 SJ: And, uh, you know, anyway, that aside, that is a devastating loss of course.
3
4 AJ: It is.
5
6 SJ: But, uhm, you know, that's, that's what happens.
7
8 AJ: As is the alley in Puerto Rico...
9
10 SJ: Absolutely.
11
12 AJ: ... and, you know...
13
14 SJ: The Caribbean is just, is being...
15
16 AJ: It's been destroyed.
17
18 SJ: ... ravaged.
19
20 AJ: Yeah.
21
22 SJ: It, it just doesn't have the infrastructure or the support to rebuild in the way you could rebuild a
23 bigger island in a bigger country.
24
25 AJ: Mhm. Yeah, well, I'm not gonna give up hope that we can rebuild that.
26
27 SJ: No, no I'm sure we will. It will be slow. It will take some time.
28
29 AJ: It'll take some time. It'll take some time. Uh, where did you, when you guys immigrated here to
30 the United States where did you live?
31
32 SJ: We, uh, ended up in Deltona, Florida which is in Central Florida. You know, it's kinda
33 equidistance from Daytona Beach and Orlando.
34
35 AJ: Okay. Uhuh.
36
37 SJ: So it's right, right there.
38
39 AJ: It's called Deltona?
40
41 SJ: Deltona. D.E.L.T.O.N.A.
42
43 AJ: Alright.
44
45 SJ: It's a massive, massive, uh, city. Very sprawling, a lot of people, uh, when we first got there in
46 '89 lot of people from New York, a lot of people from Puerto Rico, a lot of...
47

1 AJ: In Deltona?
2
3 SJ: In Deltona.
4
5 AJ: I've never even heard of it.
6
7 SJ: It's a massive city. It's the largest city in, a Volusia County which is the county that Daytona
8 Beach is at.
9
10 AJ: Okay.
11
12 SJ: Uhm, a lot of, uhm, it might not surprise you to know that Daytona, that Volusia County went
13 for Trump I'm pretty sure. And, and it pretty much...
14
15 AJ: Uh, well, pretty much the whole state of Florida.
16
17 SJ: Well, you know, some, some, some pockets went for Trump more heavily than others.
18
19 AJ: How do you spell Volusia? I'm not sure.
20
21 SJ: V.O.L.U.S.I.A.
22
23 AJ: Okay. Thank you.
24
25 SJ: Yeah, it's, uh, it's an interesting, it's an interesting county because it is so large and it
26 encompasses so many different places. Deltona, Deland, Daytona Beach, uh, New Smyrna
27 Beach, it's a, it's a...
28
29 AJ: So is it on the gulf side or the...
30
31 SJ: New Smyrna is on the Atlantic side.
32
33 AJ: Atlantic side. Okay.
34
35 SJ: Yeah.
36
37 AJ: Hm. Wow. So you grew up in this coastal city.
38
39 SJ: Yeah, we, Deltona is a little bit...
40
41 AJ: Is that kind of central Florida?
42
43 SJ: Yeah, Deltona is definitely central but it's about, you know, a thirty, forty minutes to get to the
44 beach.
45
46 AJ: Okay. So you weren't on the beach.
47

1 SJ: We weren't on the beach, no.
2
3 AJ: But you were pretty. I mean it was a part of your life.
4
5 SJ: It was part of my life, yeah, and I came over when I was, uh, twelve and so like high school up,
6 you know, was pretty much where, where I was. It was close enough that if you, if you did want
7 to skip school you could drive to the beach.
8
9 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs].
10
11 SJ: And take a day or something.
12
13 AJ: I'm sure you kids spent a little time at the beach.
14
15 SJ: Yeah, I remember, uh, going to, uhm, back when MTV went to Daytona Beach they had, you
16 know, spring break there.
17
18 AJ: Right.
19
20 SJ: And I remember, you know, I think I saw TLC there...
21
22 AJ: Oh wow.
23
24 SJ: ... at the beach with free, you know, beachside concert.
25
26 AJ: Sure. No, that sounds cool.
27
28 SJ: Yeah.
29
30 AJ: High school was pretty mellow for you? Did you...
31
32 SJ: Uh, high school was what it was. It was, it was a struggle. I was never... it was always a struggle
33 cause, you know, there's the whole blackness thing.
34
35 AJ: Mhm.
36
37 SJ: It was the first time in my life I had moved to a place with so many black people.
38
39 AJ: I was gonna say Florida is one of the blackest states...
40
41 SJ: Yeah.
42
43 AJ: ... in the country.
44
45 SJ: Lots of black people. I was real excited after being like, you know, growing up in England, and I
46 should be clear on this. Growing up in England I saw plenty of racism but most of it was directed
47 towards Indian people.

1
2 AJ: Yes.
3
4 SJ: It was the height of, of the vilification in the of the...
5
6 AJ: Of the Muslim, right?
7
8 SJ: No, like any Indian.
9
10 AJ: Okay.
11
12 SJ: It wasn't, it, it didn't come down to religion at that point. In fact most of the kids that I went to
13 school with were Hindu and Sikh.
14
15 AJ: Mhm.
16
17 SJ: We had like one Muslim girl that I, I knew of in our school.
18
19 AJ: Mhm.
20
21 SJ: Well, my school, my first, it was a first and middle school together, was really, uhm, really good,
22 and they thought it was really important...
23
24 AJ: Mhm.
25
26 SJ: ... to teach us about Indian culture.
27
28 AJ: Sure.
29
30 SJ: So they, they, as much as they could, integrated Indian culture into some of the lessons we had
31 and learning about the food and the, the sweets and the dancing, and I got to have tabla lessons
32 in the school...
33
34 AJ: Oh wow.
35
36 SJ: ... uh, for a short while.
37
38 AJ: Mhm.
39
40 SJ: Uh, and, and it was...
41
42 AJ: I'm sorry. I don't know what tabla is.
43
44 SJ: Tabla is, uh, an Indian drum, an Indian drumming, uh, there are two of them. Tabla there, it's a
45 beautiful form of drumming but, you know, as most people might be more familiar with African
46 drumming and...
47

1 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
2
3 SJ: ... jimbay and such but tabla is just a gorgeous, uh, style of drumming, uh gorgeous drum that,
4 it's just a beautiful sound.
5
6 AJ: Mhm. Okay.
7
8 SJ: And, uhm, it's very, very essential to a lot of traditional Indian music that you will hear.
9
10 AJ: Wow. Uhm, do you know what the drum is made of?
11
12 SJ: I actually do not. I, I, it's been a while since I've been close to them...
13
14 AJ: Sure.
15
16 SJ: ... or played them. I wish I could have...
17
18 AJ: Yeah.
19
20 SJ: ... spent more time studying but, but, you know, there are just some phenomenal players in the
21 world.
22
23 AJ: Hm.
24
25 SJ: And, uhm, strangely enough I've, one of my partner's, uh, colleagues is, is having tabla lessons
26 right now...
27
28 AJ: Oh wow.
29
30 SJ: ... with her children and invited me to come and join them.
31
32 AJ: So you might get re, uh...
33
34 SJ: I'm very excited.
35
36 AJ: ... reengaged with the instrument.
37
38 SJ: I'm very excited about that.
39
40 AJ: I hope that works out.
41
42 SJ: Uhm, yeah, I mean, it, it, I think it's important to talk about my life before and after immigration.
43
44 AJ: Mhm.
45
46 SJ: Uh, because it marks a shift in, in the things that we were allowed to do culturally. So when I
47 was growing up, and I have west Indian parents. It's a fair level of strictness but also...

1
2 AJ: Uhuh.
3
4 SJ: ... you know, my mom, my mother has an impeccable work ethic.
5
6 AJ: Sure.
7
8 SJ: Uh, you know, she worked nights so that she could raise us without having to send us off to
9 childcare.
10
11 AJ: Sure, childcare or nanny or...
12
13 SJ: She sacrificed a lot, and, uhm, we were always in the church. We grew up in the church. We did
14 all that stuff.
15
16 AJ: Mhm.
17
18 SJ: Youth group. Uhm, but I was, you know, so I had to wear a skirt to school. You know, I had to
19 wear a uniform in public school in the UK.
20
21 AJ: Mhm.
22
23 SJ: A lot of places you have to wear a uniform. And it was non-negotiable. I had to wear a skirt.
24
25 AJ: Right.
26
27 SJ: Uhm, and I remember I used to play soccer or football as we called it in the schoolyard with the
28 boys. And I was absolutely forbidden by my parents from playing.
29
30 AJ: Wow.
31
32 SJ: I wasn't allowed to. And also at the time girls, there was no outlet for them to play those kind of
33 sports.
34
35 AJ: Mhm.
36
37 SJ: I wasn't allowed to play but I just played anyway with the boys.
38
39 AJ: [Laughs].
40
41 SJ: I played in my skirt, in my school shoes.
42
43 AJ: Really? [Laughs].
44
45 SJ: And I became good at it.
46
47 AJ: Wow.

1
2 SJ: I became very good at it.
3
4 AJ: Uhuh.
5
6 SJ: I got to the point where the coach of the boys team asked me to actually play with them in a
7 friendly match. He was like...
8
9 AJ: Is that right?
10
11 SJ: ... "You're not, you're not, we can't make you apart of the team, but I want you to come and
12 play with us."
13
14 AJ: Wow.
15
16 SJ: Uhm, and he asked my mother and everything, and she said like, "Okay, I didn't even know you
17 played."
18
19 AJ: [Laughs]. Right.
20
21 SJ: Unfortunately, I was sick at the time, and I didn't ever end up playing that game.
22
23 AJ: Oh wow.
24
25 SJ: It was like a proud moment.
26
27 AJ: Uhuh.
28
29 SJ: Uhm, the other thing was that I always had music in my life. I, I was fortunate enough that my
30 parents prioritized that.
31
32 AJ: Mhm.
33
34 SJ: I got to, to have piano lessons when I was young. Uhm, and in school the school prioritized me,
35 and I got violin lessons in school and things like that. But I always wanted to be a drummer.
36
37 AJ: Wow.
38
39 SJ: But that was, and I always wanted to play guitar.
40
41 AJ: Oh, those are considered sort of genderized.
42
43 SJ: Yeah, yeah, those are things that I would, my, my...
44
45 AJ: Genderized male, I would assume, well, I know, so.
46
47 SJ: Yeah, my parents were never about that.

1
2 AJ: Uhuh.
3
4 SJ: But the reason I brought that up is because when I came, when we came to the U.S., I think
5 partly out of my parents knowing how much of an upheaval it was for us to move...
6
7 AJ: Mhm.
8
9 SJ: ... to a different culture, you know, it's the same language...
10
11 AJ: Right.
12
13 SJ: ... for the most part...
14
15 AJ: Sure.
16
17 SJ: ... but it's still a different culture.
18
19 AJ: Oh, absolutely.
20
21 SJ: So I was coming to a place where, although there are a lot of black people around, I wasn't
22 accepted. I wasn't like in a... I wasn't like an American black person.
23
24 AJ: Cause you probably had a pretty heavy British accent when you first came.
25
26 SJ: I absolutely did, and then I spent the next two or three years, you know, scrubbing it.
27
28 AJ: Mhm. Right.
29
30 SJ: Getting rid of it so that I was less of an anomaly so that people would...
31
32 AJ: Let me hear your southern drawl.
33
34 SJ: I, my, I don't, I can't, I...
35
36 AJ: Say y'all.
37
38 SJ: I can say y'all but...
39
40 AJ: [Laughs].
41
42 SJ: The southern drawl, I think, will come back if I go to Florida...
43
44 AJ: Uhuh.
45
46 SJ: ... or, uh, I went to undergrad in North Carolina so...
47

1 AJ: Yeah.
2
3 SJ: ... it happens there too.
4
5 AJ: Oh, it's in there. I know it's in there.
6
7 SJ: But still when I get around my family...
8
9 AJ: And D.C. gets a little southern too.
10
11 SJ: They get a little southern. When I get around my family then it's the English accent that comes
12 out.
13
14 AJ: Right.
15
16 SJ: So it depends where I am. But with that move, I think, particularly my mother was willing to let
17 us do things we hadn't been able to do.
18
19 AJ: Mhm.
20
21 SJ: And one of the things was that we had a family friend who, who was the JV coach of the
22 women's soccer team at the high school.
23
24 AJ: Mhm.
25
26 SJ: And I was, my mother let us play. Now, we were, we didn't have a lot of money and, and I don't
27 want to get, I don't want to get too much into the story of that.
28
29 AJ: Sure.
30
31 SJ: But I had never, ever formally played.
32
33 AJ: Mhm.
34
35 SJ: I was never allowed to. So I never owned a ball. I never own cleats.
36
37 AJ: Right.
38
39 SJ: And when I tried out for this soccer team at my high school I had these raggedy high-tech tennis
40 shoes that were falling apart.
41
42 AJ: [Laughs].
43
44 SJ: I didn't have like athletic shorts or anything. I tried out. I was thirteen years old playing varsity...
45
46 AJ: Wow.
47

1 SJ: ... cause I knew how to play.
2
3 AJ: Yeah.
4
5 SJ: Cause I had been playing my whole life.
6
7 AJ: Right.
8
9 SJ: And, uhm, you know, I, I did well. I'm not get too much into that story but I, you know, I earned
10 myself MVP of the time that I was there...
11
12 AJ: Mhm.
13
14 SJ: ... and best all around offensive player. I really showed...
15
16 AJ: Were you able to get scholarships for college at all?
17
18 SJ: So that is a complicated story.
19
20 AJ: Mhm.
21
22 SJ: Because now that gets into some of what I think is pervasive in, in particular minority
23 communities.
24
25 AJ: Mhm.
26
27 SJ: And this same friend of our family had a falling out with our family and took it out on me.
28
29 AJ: Wow.
30
31 SJ: And he became our, uhm, coach.
32
33 AJ: Mhm.
34
35 SJ: He became varsity coach Junior year, and he sat me on the bench the whole time.
36
37 AJ: Oh wow.
38
39 SJ: And I was, and I'm not trying to say this as a this as someone with an ego.
40
41 AJ: Mhm.
42
43 SJ: At the time I was the best player on the team.
44
45 AJ: Sure.
46

1 SJ: And, uhm, he would only put me in when he needed me to do something. And it was this very
2 like disgusting, manipulative situation...
3
4 AJ: Mhm.
5
6 SJ: ... uh, where he literally said to me in one game like, "We're down. I need you to go in there and
7 score a couple of goals. We're losing. We shouldn't lose to this team."
8
9 AJ: Right.
10
11 SJ: He put me in. I did it.
12
13 AJ: Uhuh.
14
15 SJ: And then he took me right out.
16
17 AJ: Took you right out.
18
19 SJ: At the end of the year all of the parents and all of the players got together...
20
21 AJ: Uhuh.
22
23 SJ: ... and complained to the school, and we got him removed as the coach.
24
25 AJ: Oh good. Okay.
26
27 SJ: But...
28
29 AJ: Activism!
30
31 SJ: It was activism that worked. The problem being though Junior year is a recruiting year. That's
32 when people are really looking at you.
33
34 AJ: Mhm.
35
36 SJ: Somewhat your senior year but not quite as much. The other thing about recruitment, people
37 don't tell you about and you don't realize and it makes it some much harder for people who
38 don't have resources. A lot of recruitment comes out of club teams.
39
40 AJ: Mm.
41
42 SJ: And I, the club team in Deltona let me play for free because we couldn't afford it but they
43 weren't a good club team.
44
45 AJ: Right.
46
47 SJ: So if you needed...

1
2 AJ: So they weren't looking at you guys because...
3
4 SJ: They weren't looking. They weren't recruiting. And so the people, I mean, I, I ended up walking
5 onto a team and I played and they gave me some scholarship money...
6
7 AJ: Mhm.
8
9 SJ: ... after...
10
11 AJ: After the fact.
12
13 SJ: Yeah, after the fact. They saw, they recognized, but I was... the sad part was that I was really
14 discouraged after that junior year.
15
16 AJ: Mhm.
17
18 SJ: My heart wasn't in it anymore.
19
20 AJ: Yeah.
21
22 SJ: Like to have an adult, someone who's supposed to be looking out for you...
23
24 AJ: It's tough.
25
26 SJ: It no longer became something I was passionate about. I felt used.
27
28 AJ: Mhm.
29
30 SJ: I felt...
31
32 AJ: Tokenized maybe.
33
34 SJ: Yeah, it was really, it was really disheartening.
35
36 AJ: Wow.
37
38 SJ: To be, I think I was the only black player on the team at that time.
39
40 AJ: Mhm.
41
42 SJ: And to have a black coach treat me that way.
43
44 AJ: Wow.
45
46 SJ: You know? Because he, he held, holds a grudge against something that I...
47

1 AJ: Mhm.
2
3 SJ: ... didn't do.
4
5 AJ: Wow.
6
7 SJ: Yeah, it was hard, but, I mean, the positive part about all of that was the move allowed us to do
8 things I wasn't allowed to do.
9
10 AJ: Sure.
11
12 SJ: I was allowed to join the band and play drums.
13
14 AJ: Okay.
15
16 SJ: They let me do that so I became a drummer. I remember my freshmen year I, I was really
17 diligent about it, and I, and I got this part where I got to play the drumset.
18
19 AJ: Mhm.
20
21 SJ: And I remember my, my mom and my cousins came and she, they didn't, my mom knew, but I
22 had a drum solo in it...
23
24 AJ: Wow. [Laughs].
25
26 SJ: ... and after that drum solo they all like got up and cheered, and my cousin still talks about that.
27
28 AJ: Is that right?
29
30 SJ: Yeah, because it was one of those things like see like if like, the, one of the overarching things
31 that I think about in my life is, is not about like transitioning earlier and things like that. It's more
32 like what if I had the full support of my parents in doing the things that I wanted to do?
33
34 AJ: Mhm.
35
36 SJ: What if, uhm, instead of figuring out how to play soccer like just by doing it behind my back...
37
38 AJ: You could have went to...
39
40 SJ: ... I was encouraged...
41
42 AJ: Yeah, mhm.
43
44 SJ: ... to do that. The whole time.
45
46 AJ: Sure.
47

1 SJ: What if when I wanted to start playing drums that had been an option for me.
2
3 AJ: Mhm.
4
5 SJ: What could I have done with it? I still play now. I still play drums now. I taught myself guitar
6 when I was in college. I finally figured out how to do that.
7
8 AJ: Wow.
9
10 SJ: And I, you know...
11
12 AJ: Hm.
13
14 SJ: ... play a lot of instruments because music is, I think music is what allowed me to get through all
15 of the things. It was like this great equalizer. I was a musician. I didn't have to worry about
16 gender and transness...
17
18 AJ: Right.
19
20 SJ: ... to a certain extent because, you know...
21
22 AJ: Yeah.
23
24 SJ: Yeah, there's a...
25
26 AJ: Yeah, it gave you some outlet.
27
28 SJ: It gave me an outlet. It was really, really important.
29
30 AJ: A creative expression, yeah.
31
32 SJ: Absolutely.
33
34 AJ: Uhm, well, you know, I, I'm fascinated by this and I could ask you all kinds of questions about,
35 uhm, your own personal journey but one of the reasons why I'm so excited to talk to you today,
36 uhm, Sandy, is because you are the PI, the Principle Investigator, on the most recent, uh, U.S.
37 transgender survey that was produced by the National Center for Transgender Equality and
38 were there other partners involved in that?
39
40 SJ: Yeah. So it was a, the, the full report and the full survey was done by, uhm, the National Center
41 for Transgender Equality.
42
43 AJ: Mhm.
44
45 SJ: And I just wanted to correct...
46
47 AJ: Can you hold up the...

1
2 SJ: I can absolutely do it. This is the, uhm...
3
4 AJ: ... but please correct me too.
5
6 SJ: This is the full report here...
7
8 AJ: Uhuh, uhuh.
9
10 SJ: ... uhm, that, that is a labor of love and, and people like, like yourself were part of this effort,
11 and, uhm, of being the largest survey...
12
13 AJ: Mhm.
14
15 SJ: ... ever conducted in the United States...
16
17 AJ: Wow.
18
19 SJ: ... of trans people.
20
21 AJ: Yeah.
22
23 SJ: Uh, what I want to just quickly correct for, for the record...
24
25 AJ: Uhuh.
26
27 SJ: ... is that, uhm, uh, technically on this project there were two Principle Investigators.
28
29 AJ: Okay.
30
31 SJ: Jodi Herman and, uh, Sue Rankin, and those people are listed as the Principle Investigators for
32 IRB purposes.
33
34 AJ: Got it.
35
36 SJ: Uhm, and, you know, there are a lot of reasons why...
37
38 AJ: Mhm.
39
40 SJ: ... they're listed that way on, on the application...
41
42 AJ: Sure.
43
44 SJ: ... and in here. Uhm, so I, I was a survey project manager, and at this point my title is Research
45 Director.
46
47 AJ: Okay.

1
2 SJ: But I was the person who led this, uh, this project and led all the parts of it and, you know,
3 development of the survey, fielding the survey, the analysis part, and, and the writing. And I am
4 the led author in, of this, uh, full report.
5
6 AJ: It's the largest survey of its kind.
7
8 SJ: Largest survey of its kind.
9
10 AJ: How many, uh, respondents did you guys...?
11
12 SJ: We had, uh, twenty-seven thousand seven-hundred and fifteen respondents.
13
14 AJ: Wow. Does that, you know, I'm not a statistician, does that allow you to sort of estimate how
15 many trans people there are in the United States?
16
17 SJ: That's a...
18
19 AJ: Trans and gender non-conforming people?
20
21 SJ: That's a really good question because, uhm, not with this survey. You can't do it with this
22 survey. So what this does, because of the type of survey sampling we used...
23
24 AJ: Mhm.
25
26 SJ: ... uhm, it's called convenient sampling where you, you actually have people who self-identify
27 that come to your survey as opposed to random sampling which is the way that you, uh, usually
28 make determinations about population sizes.
29
30 AJ: Mhm. Okay.
31
32 SJ: So you can do it from this survey. There are other, uhm, studies and other bodies of work that
33 have estimated the, the size of the population...
34
35 AJ: Mhm.
36
37 SJ: ... at this time. Like the most recent estimate was 1.4 million trans people. [Loud drilling noise].
38
39 AJ: That is what I have been hearing. Houston we are having a problem. [Laughs]. Maybe it was a
40 onetime event.
41
42 SJ: Yeah.
43
44 AJ: Let's cross our fingers, Sandy. Uhm, so 1.4 million.
45
46 SJ: Yeah, that was a study that was done by the Williams Institute.
47

1 AJ: Will—Williams Institute. And that's the number that I have sort of being going with so I know
2 that it is a much broader, uhm, population than that but because of stigma, because of, uhm,
3 social, uhm, constraints I would say people are still not quite fully feeling able to come out.
4 Several, several people I would say.
5
6 SJ: Yeah, I think, it's hard to identify a population that is so stigmatized and is so marginalized.
7
8 AJ: Mhm.
9
10 SJ: Uhm, we don't have all the tools available to us as we would to identify other populations, uh,
11 for example, federal surveys that might help with those populations...
12
13 AJ: Sure.
14
15 SJ: ... are just not collecting the data.
16
17 AJ: Non-existent, yeah.
18
19 SJ: They're not collecting the data so.
20
21 AJ: In fact one of the biggest things that I'm concerned about, uhm, in the upcoming census is that,
22 uhm, LGBT identities are being completely removed from the census, uhm, at this point.
23
24 SJ: Yeah, who knows, maybe, maybe things will change.
25
26 AJ: Yeah, yeah, but that's a deep concern though, uhm, because data facilitates dollars [laughs] and
27 resources.
28
29 SJ: And also identifies issues.
30
31 AJ: And identifies issues. So, that being stated, uhm, what has this... why, why collect all this
32 information and you talked to twenty-seven thousand five-hundred and fifteen...
33
34 SJ: Seven fifteen.
35
36 AJ: Seven fifteen!
37
38 SJ: So you could just, you could just round it up to about twenty-eight thousand.
39
40 AJ: Twenty-eight thousand.
41
42 SJ: It is the easiest way to say it.
43
44 AJ: What have you learned?
45

- 1 SJ: So we learned a great deal. I mean, part of the reason you asked why, why we are doing this?
2 Why are we launching this survey? Uhm, it's to collect data. And I wanna give credit to the
3 predecessor to this survey which was the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.
4
- 5 AJ: Which was groundbreaking.
6
- 7 SJ: Absolutely groundbreaking.
8
- 9 AJ: Sixty-nine hundred people.
10
- 11 SJ: About, a little over sixty-four hundred and it was fielded in 2008, 2009.
12
- 13 AJ: Mhm.
14
- 15 SJ: And one report came out in 2011. It was the first data of its kind. It allowed people to quantify
16 what had been said all along...
17
- 18 AJ: Mhm.
19
- 20 SJ: ... and what people knew but didn't have the data to be able to show and demonstrate.
21
- 22 AJ: Sure.
23
- 24 SJ: So it meant that you could actually put something in the hand— hands of policymakers and
25 lawmakers...
26
- 27 AJ: Mhm.
28
- 29 SJ: ... who, who wanted to see these issues quantified. So this is the follow-up to that. We wanted
30 to update it. We wanted to ask a wide range of questions, go deeper into the questions, and
31 most importantly we're trying to fill gaps...
32
- 33 AJ: Mhm.
34
- 35 SJ: ... in what we know, uhm, through federal surveys. And so we incorporated dozens of questions
36 from federal surveys.
37
- 38 AJ: Mhm.
39
- 40 SJ: Like the American Community Survey or the current Population Survey, the National Health
41 Interview Survey. All these things that the federal government uses to collect data about people
42 in the United States...
43
- 44 AJ: Mhm.
45
- 46 SJ: ...to make determinations about funding and disparities and issues. We wanted to put those
47 questions in this.

1
2 AJ: Mhm.
3
4 SJ: So we ended up with this, uhm, little over three hundred questions that were, that people could
5 potentially get. Uhm, nobody got three hundred questions worth because there was a lot of skip
6 logic so that you would only get questions based on...
7
8 AJ: Right. If you say yes to this question then you might...
9
10 SJ: You might skip some questions or you might get a new series of questions.
11
12 AJ: Sure.
13
14 SJ: Not everybody would get. And so we needed to collect this so that we could say in some ways,
15 uhm, oh, for example, the unemployment rate in our sample was 15%.
16
17 AJ: Mhm.
18
19 SJ: The unemployment rate at the time of the survey, which was August 2015, in the United States
20 was 5%.
21
22 AJ: Wow.
23
24 SJ: We want to be able to quantify and show that there was a disparity three times as much...
25
26 AJ: Mhm.
27
28 SJ: ... in our sample. So we wanted to do that and we also wanted to collect more data that we
29 knew we didn't have based on the last survey we did.
30
31 AJ: Sure.
32
33 SJ: We wanted to be able to take a deeper dive and collect more information that would be
34 powerful in the hands of trans people and educators and lawmakers and, and just the general
35 public.
36
37 AJ: Mhm.
38
39 SJ: This information is power, and we know that.
40
41 AJ: Right.
42
43 SJ: Data is power, and we know that.
44
45 AJ: Mhm.
46

1 SJ: It is not the only thing out there but it is something that is often a barrier to being able to access
2 certain things.
3
4 AJ: Sure.
5
6 SJ: So it's important to have this to supplement all of those stories, all of those antidotes that we
7 have been saying for years.
8
9 AJ: Mhm. Yeah, I, I'm, I'm thrilled. I interviewed Ignacio Rivera for this, uh, Trans Oral History
10 Project, uhm, about a year ago, so the survey. I think the data was in...
11
12 SJ: Right.
13
14 AJ: ... but it had not been, uh, aggregated at that point.
15
16 SJ: Yeah. Before, it was not out.
17
18 AJ: And, uhm, one of the things that we talked about was how beautifully the survey results could
19 dovetail with the Transgender Oral History Project.
20
21 SJ: Yeah.
22
23 AJ: Because here you have two hundred people telling the sort of, I mean, I guess in some circles
24 you could call it antidotal...
25
26 SJ: Yeah.
27
28 AJ: ... but it's certainly their lived experiences so it's not necessarily an antidote but, uhm, but these
29 surveys, as you noted, quantifies those narratives.
30
31 SJ: Yeah, it's so important. Uhm, you know, I showed you the, the full report about three hundred
32 pages.
33
34 AJ: Mhm. Wow.
35
36 SJ: Uhm, you know, multiple sections, uh, you know, you can, you can get lost in here for days
37 looking at, uhm, charts and graphs and breakdowns by gender...
38
39 AJ: Sure.
40
41 SJ: ... by race and, and things...
42
43 AJ: Uhuh.
44
45 SJ: ... that really show disparities even within the trans community.
46
47 AJ: Yeah.

1
2 SJ: And it's just, it's just something that we, we wanted and needed desperately to be a resource
3 for people.
4
5 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
6
7 SJ: And I also have here, uhm, the executive summary where, you know, we try to give that out to
8 as many people as we can, uh...
9
10 AJ: Sure.
11
12 SJ: We encourage people to find these reports on our website. It's available for everybody.
13
14 AJ: Mhm, so you got the executive summary.
15
16 SJ: Yeah.
17
18 AJ: I mean, what are the top three take-aways from the, from the executive summary?
19
20 SJ: Oh, you're putting me on the spot here cause now I've got to...
21
22 AJ: [Laughs].
23
24 SJ: ... now I've got to say, I've got to say something... I think the things that... I'm gonna talk about
25 three areas I think. So I'll talk about, in terms of economic stability...
26
27 AJ: Sure.
28
29 SJ: ... and insecurity, uhm, and, you know, it's, it's huge. So I already mentioned the unemployment
30 rate in our sample was three times higher.
31
32 AJ: Mhm.
33
34 SJ: The poverty rate was over two times higher.
35
36 AJ: Wow.
37
38 SJ: 20% versus 12% among adults...
39
40 AJ: Mhm.
41
42 SJ: ... in the US in 2015. So it's incredibly important to think about that kind of thing. And then when
43 you go through this and start to look at the other areas where, whether it's access to
44 healthcare...
45
46 AJ: Mhm, mhm.
47

1 SJ: ... whether it's housing, where almost a third of the sample said they had experienced
2 homelessness at some point in their life.
3
4 AJ: Wow.
5
6 SJ: Uhm, the other point I want to touch on is health. Uhm, where just got astronomically high
7 levels of, of, of serious psychological distress...
8
9 AJ: Mhm.
10
11 SJ: ... that is a measure that is used again and in federal circles.
12
13 AJ: Sure.
14
15 SJ: We, we have something we can compare it to.
16
17 AJ: Mhm.
18
19 SJ: So our sample, 39% of our sample said they were currently experiencing serious psychological
20 distress. That's within thirty days of taking this survey. In the U.S. population that rate is 5%.
21
22 AJ: Wow. 30%?
23
24 SJ: 39%.
25
26 AJ: 39%.
27
28 SJ: Versus 5%.
29
30 AJ: 5%.
31
32 SJ: That's nearly eight times higher.
33
34 AJ: Wow.
35
36 SJ: So when you look at that, and you put the picture together with things like people who sought
37 healthcare, a third of them, 33% said, that they had had some problem when they sought
38 healthcare related to being trans.
39
40 AJ: Mhm.
41
42 SJ: And that could have been any form of mistreatment such as being refused care just for being
43 trans or, or getting inadequate care of some sort or having, you know, being verbally abused...
44
45 AJ: Sure.
46

- 1 SJ: ... by your healthcare provider and healthcare standing. So, you know, you look at that sort of
2 thing. I think another thing that I would want to touch on is that when you think about
3 employment, you know, places of employment. That is something that goes right together with
4 economic stability...
- 5
- 6 AJ: Stability, yeah.
- 7
- 8 SJ: ... and housing stability.
- 9
- 10 AJ: Sure.
- 11
- 12 SJ: And people said that they were, uhm, they lost their jobs. They could not get jobs...
- 13
- 14 AJ: Mhm.
- 15
- 16 SJ: ... because of being trans.
- 17
- 18 AJ: Sure.
- 19
- 20 SJ: You know, I don't want to spend time just giving numbers, numbers, numbers. The numbers are
21 all here.
- 22
- 23 AJ: Right.
- 24
- 25 SJ: We've, we've documented them.
- 26
- 27 AJ: Yeah.
- 28
- 29 SJ: This is going to be available.
- 30
- 31 AJ: Mhm.
- 32
- 33 SJ: Uhm, but I think the take-away is that this, this paints a picture of things that are going on for
34 trans people on a daily basis. And the third thing that I will, you know, I will sift through quite a
35 few things that I wanna make sure to highlight...
- 36
- 37 AJ: Mhm.
- 38
- 39 SJ: ... is that people who are at different intersections that were, that had different identities or
40 subject to different forms of discrimination...
- 41
- 42 AJ: So let's say like a undocumented Latina trans woman.
- 43
- 44 SJ: Yeah. Or let's just say a black trans person. Let's just say an undocumented person. Let's just say
45 a person of color or a person with disabilities.
- 46
- 47 AJ: Uhuh.

1
2 SJ: Any, any one of these things...
3
4 AJ: Sure.
5
6 SJ: ... would contribute but often these identities all show up at once, right? Undocumented person
7 of color, maybe a person with a disability. When you compounded those, when you, when you
8 looked at the impact of those it was compounded by those other forms of discrimination, so
9 outcomes were often worse.
10
11 AJ: Hm. For those populations.
12
13 SJ: For those, for those people who are living at the intersection. So absolutely for people of color
14 outcomes were worse across the board.
15
16 AJ: Mhm.
17
18 SJ: And then, and that's one of the reasons why we're right now working on doing breakout reports
19 based on identities.
20
21 AJ: Did you do one in Minnesota?
22
23 SJ: We, uh, well, in terms of identities we, we...
24
25 AJ: Oh, in terms of identities, I'm sorry.
26
27 SJ: We just did a breakdown, breakout, uh, focused on black respondents. We're going to be doing
28 that for other races and ethnicities.
29
30 AJ: Okay.
31
32 SJ: But yes, we also...
33
34 AJ: Did geographical breakdown.
35
36 SJ: ... did breakdown based on state. Yeah. Based on the state and the people in which they were
37 living at the time they took the survey.
38
39 AJ: Wow.
40
41 SJ: Yeah.
42
43 AJ: Okay.
44
45 SJ: And, and...
46
47 AJ: So you got some data about Minnesota then.

1
2 SJ: Got some data around Minnesota.
3
4 AJ: [Laughs].
5
6 SJ: Yeah.
7
8 AJ: Wow. How are we doing here in Minnesota? It was one of the first states to have, uhm, uh,
9 statewide protections that included, that expressly included transgender individuals and the city
10 of Minneapolis, uhm, had protections for, uhm, transgender individuals even before the state
11 like, I think, about twenty years before the state. Uhm, and so, you know, one would think that
12 this is a really great place to live if you're a transgender person. In fact, right here at the
13 University of Minnesota we were the second institution in the country after Johns Hopkins—
14 Johns Hopkins, uhm, and only by a couple of months to perform gender, uh, reassignment
15 surgery, which it wasn't called that at the time.
16
17 SJ: Right.
18
19 AJ: It was, uh, SRS, sexual reassignment surgery...
20
21 SJ: Yeah.
22
23 AJ: ... but, uhm, have, we must be doing great here in Minnesota.
24
25 SJ: I mean, it's, you know, you mentioned and I think it's important to say like put some numbers
26 on where, how far ahead of the game Minnesota was.
27
28 AJ: Mhm.
29
30 SJ: Wasn't it in the '90s that they started...
31
32 AJ: 1993.
33
34 SJ: '93, right? Statewide protections and perhaps in the '70s there were some protections...
35
36 AJ: 1975.
37
38 SJ: ... in the city of Minneapolis, right?
39
40 AJ: Yes.
41
42 SJ: So, way ahead of the game.
43
44 AJ: Mhm.
45
46 SJ: We're still, we're still having that battle now. So...
47

1 AJ: Oh, I, yeah.
2
3 SJ: So, way, way ahead of the game. But when you looked at what was going on for Minnesota, for
4 people in Minnesota...
5
6 AJ: Mhm.
7
8 SJ: ... Minnesota respondents, I mean, the picture doesn't look much different. So...
9
10 AJ: From Georgia or Washington State?
11
12 SJ: From the sample overall and from, from when you do look at other states.
13
14 AJ: Uhuh.
15
16 SJ: You see the same things. It's easier for me to, uhm, do a comparison to the sample overall
17 numbers.
18
19 AJ: Sure.
20
21 SJ: And, because I've already given you a couple of those.
22
23 AJ: Mhm.
24
25 SJ: So the unemployment rate among people who live in Minnesota was 11%.
26
27 AJ: Wow.
28
29 SJ: 11%.
30
31 AJ: We have the lowest in the, overall, we have the lowest.
32
33 SJ: The, the lowest overall, I, so I looked it up and at the time, the figures that I could find in August
34 2015, Minnesota had a 3.8% unemployment rate.
35
36 AJ: Right.
37
38 SJ: And so I said in the full sample that it was 15% versus 5% overall.
39
40 AJ: Right.
41
42 SJ: We're talking about 11% versus 3.8% in the state of Minnesota.
43
44 AJ: In the state of Minnesota.
45
46 SJ: That's, that's a little troubling.
47

1 AJ: Yes.
2
3 SJ: Uh, when you look at, uh, poverty, poverty level, 34% were living in poverty. And I went and
4 looked this up too. The poverty rate in Minnesota in 2015...
5
6 AJ: Mhm.
7
8 SJ: ... 10.2%.
9
10 AJ: Wow.
11
12 SJ: So three times as high.
13
14 AJ: Mhm.
15
16 SJ: So that's just one measure I gave you. I just talked about the economic thing.
17
18 AJ: Right. Mhm.
19
20 SJ: It's an easy one to look to because it's one that we rely on very heavily. The government relies
21 on it very heavily to make determinations about things.
22
23 AJ: Well if you have some economic stability in your life then a lot of those other challenges are
24 more manageable let's say. [Laughs].
25
26 SJ: Yeah.
27
28 AJ: Right?
29
30 SJ: I would agree with that.
31
32 AJ: Yeah.
33
34 SJ: I would agree with that. It's...
35
36 AJ: You, you can have some housing if you got access to resources.
37
38 SJ: Yeah.
39
40 AJ: Uhm, you can have food security if you have access to resources so, you know, your Maslow's
41 hierarchy of needs...
42
43 SJ: Hierarchy of needs, right?
44
45 AJ: ... is being met and...
46
47 SJ: Absolutely.

1
2 AJ: ... consequently you can make life a little bit...
3
4 SJ: Yeah, there were, there were similarities in the state of Minnesota that might suggest that
5 having those non-discrimination protections alone...
6
7 AJ: Mhm.
8
9 SJ: ... is not enough of a measure of protection.
10
11 AJ: Right.
12
13 SJ: And so we know there's a lot of work to do overall but I think it would be important for folks in
14 Minnesota to take a hard look at that since this is such a progressive state that was way ahead
15 of the curve on having those protections.
16
17 AJ: Right.
18
19 SJ: And let's look at how it's baring out for trans people.
20
21 AJ: Mm, wow. That is something that we are gonna have to look at cause that's unconscionable in
22 my mind, uhm, that, uhm, that there's not equity. So speaking of equity you made this
23 presentation at the Transgender Equity Summit yesterday, the fourth annual Transgender Equity
24 Summit. Uhm, I wanna get some of your reflections on the summit and, uhm, how, how do you
25 think the presentation was received?
26
27 SJ: Uhm, I thought it was, it seemed to be received really well.
28
29 AJ: Mhm.
30
31 SJ: Uhm, uh, people came up to me afterwards and, and expressed as much to me. Uh, I was able to
32 give away some copies of the executive summery.
33
34 AJ: Sure.
35
36 SJ: Uh, let people know where to find it, let people know where to find us and resources...
37
38 AJ: Mhm.
39
40 SJ: ... and really, I think, my whole point of being there and doing these kind of, having these kinds
41 of conversations in, in conferences and speaking events is so that I can make the data more
42 accessible to people.
43
44 AJ: Sure.
45
46 SJ: So that people can know how they can use the data in their own advocacy, in their own lives.
47

1 AJ: Mhm.
2
3 SJ: You know, whether it's just being able to refer to something in a conversation with a peer, right?
4 Or a family member.
5
6 AJ: Right.
7
8 SJ: Or if it's trying to write a grant...
9
10 AJ: Mhm.
11
12 SJ: ... for a certain kind of funding to do, you know, direct services or other types of work. Anything
13 in-between.
14
15 AJ: Yeah.
16
17 SJ: All of that. It's important for people to be empowered and to have this information.
18
19 AJ: I think I could write a poem [laughs] with some of this data.
20
21 SJ: Uh, yeah. It would be nice to see that because I'm sure you would impact some people through
22 that poetry in a way that the report itself might not be able to do.
23
24 AJ: [Laughs]. Yeah.
25
26 SJ: It's, it's making it accessible to more people.
27
28 AJ: Yeah.
29
30 SJ: So it was great. Uhm, it was wonderful to see a place in which you would have support of the
31 major...
32
33 AJ: Mhm.
34
35 SJ: ... the chief of police.
36
37 AJ: Yeah.
38
39 SJ: Uhm...
40
41 AJ: A black man!
42
43 SJ: A black man who has been present at all of the summits...
44
45 AJ: Yes.
46
47 SJ: ... as I understand it.

1
2 AJ: Yes, he has.
3
4 SJ: It, you know, to see both senators...
5
6 AJ: And happily present, right? Like not like, "Oh my god. I gotta go to this thing."
7
8 SJ: Happily present. It was great to see to see them of their own volition. Both senators and, and,
9 uh...
10
11 AJ: Senator Klobuchar and, and Senator Al Franken.
12
13 SJ: And representative Ellison.
14
15 AJ: Yep.
16
17 SJ: All weighing in on the summit in the way that they could.
18
19 AJ: Yeah.
20
21 SJ: You know, appeared on video.
22
23 AJ: On video but, uh, that's... it was a powerful moment.
24
25 SJ: But it's wonderful that they thought it was important to, to spend some time.
26
27 AJ: To take that time out.
28
29 SJ: Yeah, yeah. Uhm, yeah that was really, uh, it was beautiful to see that.
30
31 AJ: Yeah. Well, I'm grateful that you were there and grateful that you were able to, to share and
32 enlighten, uhm, uh, some of the attendees at the summit. You know, I just want to backtrack a
33 little bit. You know, we know you were a superstar soccer player. [Laughs].
34
35 SJ: Oh, I mean, that's strong, that is strong.
36
37 AJ: And you played the drums and you went to law school but what prepared you to be a research,
38 uh, project manager or what's the, what's the title of...
39
40 SJ: So currently I am, I'm Researcher Director because of the scope of my, my position has changed
41 a little but at the time I came in as a survey project manager. And I think what prepared me for
42 that was that I have this, you know, I have this background in the sciences. I was a forensic
43 toxicologist.
44
45 AJ: Oh really?
46
47 SJ: So I, I spent a lot of time, you know, with...

1
2 AJ: For ten years right?
3
4 SJ: For ten years I did that. And so, and it gave... I think it gave me a certain perspective in terms of
5 being able to manage things and, so you know, I, I came over from a professional career.
6
7 AJ: Uhuh.
8
9 SJ: It's not my first, you know, my first gig.
10
11 AJ: Right.
12
13 SJ: But also I went to law school, and I, uh, immersed myself in law school and, and civil rights
14 issues and a particular focus on, uh, LGBTQ and trans issues.
15
16 AJ: Mhm. Okay.
17
18 SJ: And so I, I worked within organizations such as, uh, the National LGBTQ Task Force...
19
20 AJ: Oh wow.
21
22 SJ: ... the Holley Law Fellow and I worked in policy issues and I, uh, immersed myself in that. But I
23 was also doing a JD, PhD, a joint degree.
24
25 AJ: Mhm.
26
27 SJ: So for my PhD, which is in American government, I also focused on LGBTQ issues and, and issues
28 that impacted communities of color. And so as I was looking into doing research around that,
29 uh, from a more academic perspective...
30
31 AJ: Mhm.
32
33 SJ: ... focusing on policies that impacted people with civil rights.
34
35 AJ: Right.
36
37 SJ: Uh, I was very interested in trans issues and so that gave me some additional, uh, background.
38
39 AJ: Mhm.
40
41 SJ: I wish do to this. Uh, I also was able to bring my experience, my personal experience right, lived
42 experience as a trans person, uh, as a black trans person.
43
44 AJ: Mhm.
45
46 SJ: And, uh, bring all of this to bare on, on this particular position. And, uhm, you know, just to see
47 what I could do to guide it through and see how we could get voices involved and, and, you

1 know, move this project along. So it worked really well. I had the full support of my dissertation
2 committee to take some time to be involved in this project.
3
4 AJ: Wow.
5
6 SJ: And, uh, and so they, they all thought it was a phenomenal opportunity and it was.
7
8 AJ: Mhm.
9
10 SJ: Uh, and so I brought all of my professional experience and all of my personal experience, uh, to
11 the position.
12
13 AJ: Wow. Well, we're so fortunate and grateful that you, uhm, decided to spend three years, uh, of
14 your life and your career, uh, bringing this data and this research, uh, to bare and move forward,
15 uhm...
16
17 SJ: Thank you.
18
19 AJ: ... it's really incredible, uhm, as you noted, we, we need to be able to quantify these experiences
20 and not, not to justify our existence but, uhm, but to really, as you say, point out where are the,
21 the inequities, where are the deficiencies so that we can begin to do the work to address those
22 so, so thank you, Sandy.
23
24 SJ: Well, thank, thank you. I mean I have to thank folks like you, you know, uh, what, uh, what our
25 illustrious oral historian won't tell you...
26
27 AJ: [Laughs].
28
29 SJ: ... is that she was part of an advisory committee that we had and without our advisory
30 committee like letting us know how we could get the word out to more people.
31
32 AJ: Mhm.
33
34 SJ: We wouldn't have gotten the, the response that we did.
35
36 AJ: Yeah.
37
38 SJ: So.
39
40 AJ: Well, I'm, I'm happy to have been apart of it. Uhm, we, we have to collaborate and work
41 together. Uhm, to make these things happen. You know, I want to sort of wrap up a little bit
42 with a question that we discussed as panelists yesterday at the Transgender Equity Summit.
43 Uhm, and it was around the, I think we called the panel Transgender History and the Future of
44 Gender.
45
46 SJ: Hm.
47

1 AJ: [Laughs].
2
3 SJ: Yeah.
4
5 AJ: So I'm gonna pose that question to you. Sandy, what is the future of gender?
6
7 SJ: That's, I mean, that's such a hard question because, you know, there's so many angles you can
8 approach. Uhm, it's clear that where we are right now reflects a limited understanding of
9 gender...
10
11 AJ: Right.
12
13 SJ: ... whether it's in the language...
14
15 AJ: Because in your survey you mention that there are a hundred plus identities?
16
17 SJ: So, uhm, like, that, to, to be specific about this...
18
19 AJ: Uhuh.
20
21 SJ: ... when we, when we looked at gender identity to aggregate the data that people were able to
22 chose from, you know, we reported on five different gender identities, we reported on people
23 who were crossdressers...
24
25 AJ: Mhm.
26
27 SJ: ... trans men, trans women, uh, people who were non-binary.
28
29 AJ: Okay.
30
31 SJ: Generally, non-binary people were report on as an aggregate but we knew if they were assigned
32 female at birth or assigned male at birth.
33
34 AJ: Mhm.
35
36 SJ: Those were, for the analytical purposes, those were the categories.
37
38 AJ: Okay.
39
40 SJ: But we had asked a question.
41
42 AJ: So more than two.
43
44 SJ: Yeah. Absolutely. Right, right off the bat...
45
46 AJ: Right from the beginning. Right. [Laughs].
47

1 SJ: ... among trans people, more than two but...
2
3 AJ: Yeah.
4
5 SJ: ... when we asked a question like, you know, well, how do you identify?
6
7 AJ: Mhm.
8
9 SJ: You know, open ended. We, we provided a list. It was not an exclusive list, you know, it was a
10 full and comprehensive list, uh, and we also let people write in "other." We had hundreds.
11 Hundreds of, of identities that people chose for themselves.
12
13 AJ: Hm. Wow.
14
15 SJ: So just looking at that alone, you know, that gives you some information.
16
17 AJ: Mhm.
18
19 SJ: But when I think about the policies we have, the laws we have, regardless of whether it's a
20 policy in a school or a workplace...
21
22 AJ: Mhm.
23
24 SJ: ... or if it's a law in the books, we are currently limited in our understanding of it. And when
25 we're limited in a way that perpetuates discrimination against people.
26
27 AJ: Mhm.
28
29 SJ: Uh, you know, the, we have to get ready to have these conversations about how gender is
30 shifting and how our understanding of gender is shifting cause right now what's going on is we
31 have people who are just, they're digging in, they're digging their heels into their limited
32 understanding of gender...
33
34 AJ: Mhm.
35
36 SJ: ... and outright discriminating against people who are human beings trying to live their lives.
37
38 AJ: Right.
39
40 SJ: So when you get to the point where, you know, people just can't be who they are, and it's
41 always been this way.
42
43 AJ: Mhm.
44
45 SJ: But it's just that the national conversation is such that trans people are right up there on the
46 agenda these days. Uhm, the national conversation is gonna have to shift as we shift our
47 understanding of gender. And it's not gonna happen by just picking a new word.

1
2 AJ: Uhuh.
3
4 SJ: We actually have to discuss what does it mean to be genderfluid?
5
6 AJ: Mhm.
7
8 SJ: What does it mean to identity as trans? What does it mean to, uhm, have grown up socialized in
9 one way...
10
11 AJ: Mhm.
12
13 SJ: ... but to actually identify in another way?
14
15 AJ: Right.
16
17 SJ: Uhm, so it's going to mean, from a cultural perspective, a social perspective, and certainly a
18 legal perspective and a policy perspective.
19
20 AJ: Mhm. Mhm.
21
22 SJ: I mean, there are so many ways this can go but it is, it is shifting, and our understanding has to
23 shift. We gotta be willing to bend and shift our understanding. And it, it all starts with taking the
24 first step and admitting that our understanding is limited.
25
26 AJ: Mhm.
27
28 SJ: And as long as we refuse to accept that we are limited in our thinking right now...
29
30 AJ: Mhm.
31
32 SJ: ... and that we need to be able to expand that... uhm, and until we can do that, we're gonna
33 have a hard time moving forward, but the future is, I think it's wide open.
34
35 AJ: Wow. It's hard to believe our hour is up.
36
37 SJ: May be hard for you. [Laughs].
38
39 AJ: [Laughs]. It seems like it's only been ten minutes. Uhm, but, you know, I want to comment that,
40 you know, I mentioned I interviewed Ignacio Rivera who was one of the, uhm, advisory board
41 coordinators I think.
42
43 SJ: So Ignacio was the Outreach Coordinator, and they were absolutely instrumental in being able
44 to get the word out about the survey.
45
46 AJ: Mhm.
47

- 1 SJ: Uhm, they worked for us a time and, you know, I can't speak highly enough of what they were
2 able to accomplish.
3
- 4 AJ: Absolutely. Uhm, and, and so they talked about it and, about the project and their perspective
5 and I have interviewed Mara, uh, Keisling who is the director of the National Center for
6 Transgender Equality, and she sort of gave her bird's eye view, ten thousand feet, uhm,
7 perspective, which was good and valuable, but it, it's so beautiful to round it out now with the
8 final product as well as the, the project manager's perspective on this process.
9
- 10 SJ: That's great.
11
- 12 AJ: Uhm...
- 13
- 14 SJ: Let's, let's, uh, let's not call it the final product. This is just but one...
- 15
- 16 AJ: Okay.
17
- 18 SJ: ... of many products that we will get out of this.
19
- 20 AJ: Uhuh.
21
- 22 SJ: We're gonna keep using it. We're gonna keep breaking down the data, coming out with
23 additional reports. At some point we're going to make the dataset available so that other people
24 can do secondary research.
25
- 26 AJ: Hm.
27
- 28 SJ: We need more research. There's only so much we can do.
29
- 30 AJ: Mhm.
31
- 32 SJ: Uh, at, at NCTE but we need more research, more numbers out there.
33
- 34 AJ: Wow.
35
- 36 SJ: And I, and if, and if this data that we collected can help that...
37
- 38 AJ: Uhuh.
39
- 40 SJ: ... then it's all worth it.
41
- 42 AJ: Wow. Well, I think on that note [laughs] I am going to not try to extend this conversation any
43 further.
44
- 45 SJ: I appreciate it.
46
- 47 AJ: And just say thank you.

1

2 SJ: Thank you for, for doing this. Thank you for documenting these things.

3

4 AJ: Peace. Until we meet again, my friend.

5

6 SJ: Yeah. Take care.