

Chad Pitts
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

October 15, 2016



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 Chad Pitts -CP
3
4 AJ: Hey, my name is Andrea Jenkins. Today is October 16th . . .
5 CP: 15th.
6 AJ: Today is October 15, 2016. I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project at
7 the University of Minnesota. I am at the GPACC Dismantling Walls Conference in Fargo, North
8 Dakota, at North Dakota State University.
9 CP: You got it.
10 AJ: I'm talking with . . . let me see here. I'm talking with Chad – Chad Pitts.
11 CP: Yes, ma'am.
12 AJ: How are you, Chad?
13 CP: I'm good.
14 AJ: Hey, Chad, state your name and your gender identity today and your gender assigned at birth.
15 CP: OK, my name is Chad Pitts. I identify as a transgender man; my identity at birth was female or as
16 our society would like to tell us, woman.
17 AJ: Wow. Where were you born, Chad?
18 CP: I was born in Phoenix, Arizona.
19 AJ: Is that right?
20 CP: Yes.
21 AJ: How long have you lived in this community?
22 CP: I've lived in Fargo for about four years now.
23 AJ: As a student?
24 CP: Yes, my wife drug me up here to go to school up here. I attend NDSU and then I also work
25 NDSCS. I started working here first though.
26 AJ: Wow, so you mentioned your wife.
27 CP: Yes.
28 AJ: You're married?
29 CP: I am married.
30 AJ: What's your sexual orientation?
31 CP: I identify as straight.

- 1 AJ: As heterosexual?
- 2 CP: Yes.
- 3 AJ: So, you're a transgender man . . . or, do you just go by man?
- 4 CP: I just go by man. I'm pretty open about my identity, so if someone asks me, I'm more than
5 happy to discuss it with them and tell my story. But, I don't walk around saying, "Oh, I'm
6 transgender," especially in this community – it's not really as well accepted.
- 7 AJ: And, you don't have to. I would imagine you're not getting, as we say in the community, clocked
8 very often.
- 9 CP: No. I'm very fortunate.
- 10 AJ: Wow, well I don't know how long you've been married, but congratulations. I know that love in
11 the transgender community can sometimes be a challenge, but I am always thrilled when it
12 happens – so, congratulations.
- 13 CP: Thank you.
- 14 AJ: When did you come out?
- 15 CP: When I was 18, I believe. A while ago now; so, about seven years ago.
- 16 AJ: Is that right?
- 17 CP: I originally came out as lesbian to my parents because I didn't have a word for how I was feeling.
18 I didn't identify with my body and I knew that, but I also knew that I was attracted to women.
19 That's all I knew at the time, so that's what I came out as. Then, my wife, actually, was my
20 girlfriend at the time, so she went through the entire transition process with me, she was taking
21 a human sexuality class and she said, "Hey, you know what? You should come to this class with
22 me because we're discussing something and I think it might explain some of your feelings."
23 They were discussing gender identity and that's where I first learned about the word. I came
24 out later that night.
- 25 AJ: Wow.
- 26 CP: Yeah.
- 27 AJ: So, you hadn't even met a transgender person prior to that.
- 28 CP: No, no. I'd seen some YouTube videos . . . YouTube and the internet has been a great thing for
29 the trans community.
- 30 AJ: Yes, it has. What do you think the biggest issue, or the number one issue, is facing the trans
31 community right now today?
- 32 CP: That's a good question. I could say a lot of different things. If I was thinking policy, I would think
33 the bathroom bills; otherwise, I would say just general acceptance and the misunderstanding
34 between what trans actually is and what the general population thinks being transgender is
35 because there seems to be a disconnect.

- 1 AJ: Wow. What do you think of the Dismantling Walls Conference?
- 2 CP: It's awesome. I was one of the co-coordinators for it, so I was on the board that helped put it
3 together. I think it's going great. I'm super excited that this many people showed up to it and
4 that we're actually able to create awareness, not only within this community but that we were
5 able to reach out to communities miles away that also attended the conference.
- 6 AJ: Is this the first time it's happened?
- 7 CP: This is, this is the first conference.
- 8 AJ: Do you think you guys are going to do it again?
- 9 CP: For sure.
- 10 AJ: Wow, that's awesome. Well, I really want to thank you for taking a minute out of your busy
11 schedule, congratulate you on this amazing conference, and just ask is there anything that I
12 didn't ask that you want to share with the broader community around, let's say, being
13 transgender in what some people may call a rural community even though I know Fargo is very
14 much a vibrant city?
- 15 CP: Fargo definitely . . .
- 16 AJ: Small-town America, let's put it that way.
- 17 CP: It is, Fargo is definitely very vibrant compared to some of the other towns. I actually work out in
18 Wahpeton, North Dakota, which is very small and being trans there, it's a really interesting
19 experience. I am very out at work and very open at work about it, my job kind of requires that
20 in that aspect because I teach equity and diversity.
- 21 AJ: Oh, yeah, so you kind of need to be . . .
- 22 CP: Yeah, a lot of times . . .
- 23 AJ: . . . authentic about who you are, right?
- 24 CP: Exactly. So, a lot of times I out myself almost on accident but I feel like it needs to happen so I
25 can carry a point across. So, there's some faculty and staff and just community members that
26 have found out that I'm trans and it makes me a little uncomfortable sometimes. I always have,
27 in the back of head, is there a student that found out that I'm trans and I'm going to come out to
28 my car being graffitied or just something – am I safe walking out to my car at night if I stay late
29 at work. Those types of things are always in the back of my head because it's a small town that
30 is very conservative and not very accepting of anyone who is different. That's not just the trans
31 community that's struggling, it's also our African-American community, it's our Native American
32 community – even women. It's just such a very rigid definition of what the norm is out in these
33 rural areas and that's your white, farming men.
- 34 AJ: Wow. Well, thank you again for sharing, Chad. I really appreciate it and again, congratulations
35 on this amazing conference.
- 36 CP: Thank you.

- 1 AJ: All right, bye-bye.
- 2 CP: Bye.