

Lou Weaver
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

December 9, 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 Lou Weaver -LW
3

4 AJ: So, hello.

5 LW: Hi, how are you, today?

6 AJ: I'm doing very well. My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender
7 Oral History Project at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. Today is December
8 9, 2016, and I am here in Washington, DC, at the International LGBT Leaders Conference, and I
9 am sitting here with a renowned LGBT leader.

10 LW: Thank you.

11 AJ: Particularly in the transgender community, Lou Weaver.

12 LW: That's right, thank you.

13 AJ: How are you today, Lou?

14 LW: I'm doing well, I'm doing great. I'm glad to be here.

15 AJ: Yeah, thank you so much for being here. So, Lou, I'm just going to ask you, I know your name is
16 a pretty common spelling, but if you can state your name, how you spell it, your gender identity
17 as you define it today, your gender identity assigned at birth, and the pronouns that you use.

18 LW: Sure, OK. My name is Lou Weaver, my first name is Lou, L-o-u; my last name is Weaver, W-e-a-
19 v-e-r. I'm the Transgender Programs Coordinator for Equality Texas. I identify myself as a queer
20 trans man and I use queer both as my sexual orientation, but as my gender identity as well.
21 Even though I present pretty much predominantly as a masculine person, I don't really buy into
22 the binary and I don't want to erase my past history. I spent 38 years as an out lesbian . . . well, I
23 lived until I was 38 as an out lesbian, so from the time I was six weeks shy of my 19th birthday
24 coming out as a lesbian, I was assigned female at birth. My parents told me I was a girl, I liked
25 girls, I thought that was my only option - there was no internet. But, I don't want to erase that.
26 All of that put together, and my experiences up until now, make me the man that I am today.

27 AJ: Oh, wow.

28 LW: So, I identify myself as being very queer just so that I don't have to . . . I don't want to erase that
29 and I don't really want to buy into the binary.

30 AJ: Wow. So, what pronouns should I use?

31 LW: Oh, I use he and him. I'm sorry, I knew there was something else I forgot.

32 AJ: OK, all right. Wow, thank you so much, Lou. And, really, for that really well articulated notion
33 around the confluence, I would say, of gender identity and sexuality. And, queer is a word that I
34 think sort of encompasses that without sort of identifying somewhere along some binary
35 spectrum. So, I appreciate that. Just to get our juices flowing, what is your earliest memory in
36 life?

- 1 LW: I remember being a little kid and just following my brother around. I remember I had the
2 chicken pox when I was four years old and . . . well, I have an older brother, he's three years
3 older than I am. They kept making me sit next to my brother so that he would get the chicken
4 pox and we would both have them and then he would have them when he was little. He never
5 got them.
- 6 AJ: Really?
- 7 LW: So, I just had to sit next to him all the time and then they wouldn't let me see my best friend
8 who lived next door, so I kept climbing the fence so I could talk to my best friend - we lived right
9 next to each other.
- 10 AJ: Did they get the chicken pox?
- 11 LW: I actually don't remember whether or not he got the chicken pox, but I remember they wanted
12 me to sit next to my brother but they wouldn't let me see my best friend. So, I did what I had to
13 do.
- 14 AJ: So, your best friend was a guy?
- 15 LW: Yes.
- 16 AJ: I noticed you said he. Wow. At four years old.
- 17 LW: Yeah, all my friends were male. We lived in the middle of the street and there was a little girl
18 that lived on the corner, but we didn't really hang out. I don't remember ever hanging out with
19 her. I know she lived there. We moved from there when I was seven, so I think maybe when I
20 went to kindergarten there was more interactions with her.
- 21 AJ: OK.
- 22 LW: But, up until that time, my brother and I were best friends with the two guys that lived next
23 door. There was one that was my age and one that was close to my brother's age.
- 24 AJ: Where did you grow up?
- 25 LW: I grew up in El Centro, California, so on the border down in California. That's where I was born.
- 26 AJ: El Centro?
- 27 LW: Yeah, El Centro. Way south.
- 28 AJ: E-l C-e-n-t-r-o.
- 29 LW: Yes.
- 30 AJ: Oh, wow. OK. I've never heard of this little town.
- 31 LW: It's a border town, it's a small town. My father was a border patrol agent when I was born, so
32 that's where we lived. Then we moved to Denver, Colorado when I was seven, so I did most of
33 my growing up in and around the Denver area.
- 34 AJ: Oh, wow. So, you kind of fit into my Upper Midwest project.
- The Transgender Oral History Project

- 1 LW: Sure. I'm not a Texan by birth, so don't put me in the south.
- 2 AJ: But, you live there now.
- 3 LW: I do, I live in Houston, Texas.
- 4 AJ: Houston, Texas. What was elementary school like?
- 5 LW: Elementary school was a little awkward. I didn't fit in.
- 6 AJ: How so?
- 7 LW: I was just a really quiet kid, I didn't fit in. I wasn't sure who I was supposed to hang out with.
- 8 I'm pretty sure when I got to Denver I spent most of my time with the boys. I always spent all of
- 9 my time with the boys. It wasn't until 5th or 6th grade that I really started noticing that I was
- 10 actually supposed to hang out with the girls and how that didn't work out for me. I spent all my
- 11 time playing sports with the boys.
- 12 AJ: Wow.
- 13 LW: And then middle school was just . . . middle school was just a mess. I didn't do well in school, I
- 14 didn't play well with others either.
- 15 AJ: Were you bullied at all?
- 16 LW: Oh, I was bullied. I was bullied a lot – middle school and high school. By teachers, somewhat,
- 17 and by my fellow students for sure. I got suspended a lot, I got made fun of. It was not a
- 18 comfortable time. In fact, I didn't finish high school. Six weeks into my senior year, I dropped
- 19 out of high school.
- 20 AJ: Is that right?
- 21 LW: Yes.
- 22 AJ: Do you think that harassment or bullying was a result . . . or somehow around your gender
- 23 identity or your sexual orientation?
- 24 LW: Yeah, I mean I was called a lesbian a lot and, for lack of better terms, I thought I was a lesbian,
- 25 like I said. I was told I was a girl, I thought I was a girl, so I just thought I was . . . I'd always been
- 26 raised as a tomboy and it was socially acceptable to be raised as a tomboy. This was in the mid-
- 27 1980s, I was born in 1970. But, I was called a lesbian and I was just . . . I just couldn't find my
- 28 people in school. And so, I just got tired and was like, "I'm not going here anymore, it's just a
- 29 pain in the ass, it's not fun."
- 30 AJ: Was this in Denver?
- 31 LW: Yeah, it was in Denver. I just decided I was done, I wasn't going to go to school anymore, so I just
- 32 dropped out. I was old enough, I was 17 years old, I thought I knew what I was doing.
- 33 AJ: Wow.
- 34 LW: So, I dropped out of school.

- 1 AJ: Did you ever finish up?
- 2 LW: I actually got my GED, I had my GED before I would have graduated, and I'm about nine credits
3 shy of graduating from college with my bachelors.
- 4 AJ: Awesome.
- 5 LW: We'll see if I ever get that far, but that's where I'm at right now.
- 6 AJ: Yeah, well good luck with that. I hope you work it out.
- 7 LW: Thanks.
- 8 AJ: When did you first realize that you were not necessarily the gender you were assigned at birth?
- 9 LW: I started thinking about it in my late 20s. So, in the late 1990s. But again, still the internet didn't
10 exist. I sort of thought that all butch lesbians felt the way I did, the people that I perceived to be
11 butch lesbians. But then I found out that that wasn't true and they told me in no uncertain
12 terms that that was not the way they felt and I was like, "Hmm, I thought this was common."
13 But, it wasn't, and then the first thing I saw was the movie *Boys Don't Cry* and that was not
14 something I walked out of going, "Wow, this is cool." I kind of walked out of there going, "Holy
15 shit, is this my reality." I was growing up in Denver and the trans community in Denver was not
16 like what it is now. I met two trans guys, they were both on hormones, they had both already
17 had top surgery, and here I am this young . . . I wasn't young, I was 32 years old, and trying to
18 navigate all of these things and figure out where I belonged and realizing that this butch lesbian,
19 even though I wasn't very butch, that I was living my life as was not everything – it wasn't fitting
20 anymore. But, I still couldn't figure out how I could go from here to here because I was asking,
21 "How did you do this?" They're like, "I just did it." I'm like, "I don't understand." So, there was
22 not a community for me so I was still struggling. Then I moved to Houston, Texas, of all places,
23 and I met this young Italian guy and he was a professor, he had just graduated from UNC, he
24 knew about the internet, he had access to the internet, he knew how to use it. I had access to
25 the internet, but it was probably AOL 3.0 or something, it was not something that I used a whole
26 lot the way that I do every day now.
- 27 AJ: Dial up.
- 28 LW: Yeah, and you'd wait for hours. He looked at me and he goes, "Oh, my God, I'm so sorry, but I
29 cannot call you she, I must call you he, that is OK – yes?" I was like, "Oh, my God, yes, thank
30 you. You've validated me, you saw me." I had been doing drag before I left Denver and that's
31 where I started . . .
- 32 AJ: A drag king?
- 33 LW: Yeah, I was a drag king, so I was beginning to let my inner male out more and more and trying to
34 figure out how that fit with my world. My inner male, Tom Foolery . . .
- 35 AJ: That was your drag name?
- 36 LW: That was my drag name, it fit very well. It was . . . he could talk to everybody and I was a
37 complete wallflower. So, when I met the trans community and my friend took me around and I

- 1 met some other people and found a sense of community, it was like, “Oh, my gosh, there’s
2 people like me, they understand it – they get it.” So, I came out in 2007 as a trans man, but it
3 took me until 2008 to actually decide to start hormones. I just wasn’t sure whether or not . . .
4 like I could be called he and him and not have to shoot hormones in my leg. I thought sticking a
5 needle in my leg every week was just kind of a daunting proposition. I did it anyway. It took me
6 a year, but I did it.
- 7 AJ: You bring up a topic that is sort of controversial in trans community, particularly recent more
8 contemporary trans community, and that’s the role of drag. There’s sort of a movement now to
9 distinguish the trans community from the drag community and I do think there’s a distinction,
10 no question about it.
- 11 LW: Of course.
- 12 AJ: But, what are your thoughts or opinions around the role that the drag culture plays in trans life?
- 13 LW: I think they are, like you say, two very distinct things. But, to an extent, they all fall under a
14 transgender umbrella. I firmly believe in a transgender umbrella, but I could also argue that gay
15 and lesbian people fit under the transgender umbrella because trans is Latin for across – we’re
16 moving across something, whether it’s transportation, Trans-Atlantic, we’re going from one
17 place to another.
- 18 AJ: Sure.
- 19 LW: So, with transgender, we’re moving across the constraint that gender is presenting us and the
20 culture of where we live and the time in which we live there. The reason that there’s so much
21 homophobia . . . homophobia is also transphobia.
- 22 AJ: Yes.
- 23 LW: We don’t like gay men because they’re sleeping with other men or because they act effeminate
24 because they’re doing something that men don’t do.
- 25 AJ: Right.
- 26 LW: We don’t like lesbians because they’re butch, they’re dating other women, they’re not following
27 the constraints of staying at home and being a good mommy or whatever the hell we think,
28 right.
- 29 AJ: Sure.
- 30 LW: Because we don’t like them because they don’t fit into these boxes that we have prescribed for
31 men and for women. So, in that phase I could argue that trans men . . . or, excuse me, that gay
32 men and lesbians are, in fact, themselves transgender – they’re crossing over the gender
33 binaries that our culture has given them. Drag folks, people who are performing drag, and it’s a
34 performance for most people that do drag.
- 35 AJ: Sure.

- 1 LW: That is what drag came from, a lot of people do drag and they're crossing over a gender binary.
2 They might do it for an hour, they might do it for a show, they might do it for a week, but that is
3 their way of showing their artistic side, an expression of who they are, right. Some people it is a
4 stepping stone, because they try that on and they're like, "Yes, this makes sense, it fits
5 everything else," and then they go, "OK, I can transition."
- 6 AJ: Right.
- 7 LW: Because there is no right or wrong way to transition. We all know that.
- 8 AJ: Absolutely.
- 9 LW: Whether or not I want all of these surgeries, whether or not I can afford all of these surgeries or
10 hormones or anything else, some of that is a privilege.
- 11 AJ: Yes, absolutely.
- 12 LW: I'm an educated man, I'm perceived as white, I was raised by white parents. I'm adopted, but I
13 was raised by . . . so, culturally, I'm very white. That's a lot of privilege. Trans masculinity also
14 offers a certain amount of privilege and testosterone is a powerful drug.
- 15 AJ: Yes, it is.
- 16 LW: But, that's not me to say to somebody else, "Your experience of being who you are is not valid."
17 It gets conflated when people like RuPaul say, "I'm not transgender," because we don't have
18 language that says everybody who . . . this is the word transgender and this is what it means.
19 We don't even have the same language around what being Hispanic means, we don't have the
20 same . . . and I'm not Black, and this is something I struggle with as a white person to refer to, or
21 as a perceived white person, to talk about my friends that are Black or African American. Some
22 refer to themselves as African American, some refer to themselves as Black because they're
23 Jamaican and they'll say, "I'm not from Africa."
- 24 AJ: Sure.
- 25 LW: Not for me to decide, not for me to care. I will honor the identity that you choose, that you are
26 owning – not that you choose, but how you choose to describe yourself. You asked me how to
27 describe myself, I'm a queer transgender man – those are my terms and that's OK for me.
- 28 AJ: Sure.
- 29 LW: Drag being an art piece is something that I don't think anybody can or should be turning their
30 back on or thumbing their nose at. But, I understand where trans women are like, "They're
31 making a mockery of me." They're making a mockery of femininity, some of them with their
32 over-stacked make-up and their 6-foot high hair, but that's what art is about.
- 33 AJ: Exaggerated eyelashes and . . .
- 34 LW: Right. I live in Texas – the higher the hair, the closer to God we are. We have these things and
35 drag can be hyper-feminine, hyper-masculine, whatever we want it to be. To an extent, some of
36 us are in drag a lot of times. I had a friend, a gay male friend, who, when we first met him, he

1 started working at the gay bar I worked at in Denver. He came in and he always wore this John
2 Deere tractor baseball cap that was old and ratty before old and ratty baseball caps were the
3 style, or a t-shirt.

4 AJ: He made it the style, right.

5 LW: He probably did. People would look at him and go, "Is he gay? Why is he here?" So, finally I
6 asked him one day. We were just sitting around having some drinks and I'm like, "So, what's
7 up? You kinda sort of act like this burly guy." He was like, "It's my drag." It was like, "Oh, my
8 gosh." He was like, "This is who I am, but this is how I want to look. To me, this is fun and
9 entertaining." It kind of wraps everything in. Who are we to judge how somebody else wants to
10 be perceived, especially as trans folks.

11 AJ: Sure.

12 LW: Jacob Tobia, I love Jacob Tobia, and I use Jacob a lot when I talk to people about gender
13 expression, gender identity, or even what gender means in a certain time or a certain place,
14 especially when I'm talking about gender queer and gender fluid folks, Jacob is an amazing
15 example. Just saying, "My body looks like this and I'm OK with body hair, I'm OK with a full
16 beard, but wearing a skirt, silk blouse and pearls and bright red lipstick makes me feel
17 beautiful." Why not? We all want to feel beautiful. Right?

18 AJ: Absolutely.

19 LW: So, drag is not something, in my opinion and my opinion only, that we should be ashamed of.
20 Every once in a while, I feel like I have to be in drag because I have to go to a black-tie dinner so
21 I'm having to put on a fancy tie, my penguin suit, and I go out about the world. Right?
22 Sometimes to me that feels like drag. I'd rather be in short pants and a polo shirt every day.

23 AJ: Wow, that's a great response. I really appreciate you sort of digging into that a little bit. So, I
24 guess to the extent that you feel comfortable, and you've already shared a little bit around this,
25 but what have been some of the steps that you've taken medically towards transition?

26 LW: So, shortly after Ike, which is a big thing in Houston, we had Hurricane Ike in 2008, that's how I
27 always remember, I started taking hormones so I take my testosterone on a weekly basis to help
28 me medically transition. I've had top surgery which, in my world, is top surgery and in other
29 people's world it's a double mastectomy, so I have scars that go from here to here to have a
30 more masculinized chest. I've had a full hysterectomy which was medically . . . I mean, all trans-
31 related surgeries are medically necessary, but mine was due to complications that were going
32 on with my interior reproductive organs.

33 AJ: So, you were able to get your insurance to cover it?

34 LW: My insurance covered my hysterectomy, yes. I was still labeled female by my insurance
35 company and the doctor said that I needed it for . . . I had polycystic ovarian syndrome, and so
36 they came out about two and a half years into my physical transition. And so, I was, in some
37 ways, fortunate to have that done. I don't ever have to worry about that again.

38 AJ: Wow, thanks for your honesty.

- 1 LW: Sure.
- 2 AJ: So, you mentioned your family. What's your relationship like with your family?
- 3 LW: My mom . . . I see my mom every once in . . . frequently. She lives in Houston with me, so by
4 other people's terms . . . not with me, with me, but in the same town. So, we see each other
5 about once a month. It took her awhile but she finally got on board, calling me her son and
6 using he/him pronouns, so that's really cool. She does not like the name Lou so she won't call
7 me Lou, she calls me Walker, which is my middle name. Whatever, mom – whatever makes you
8 happy. It confuses me.
- 9 AJ: That's sort of masculine.
- 10 LW: It's my middle name so that's fine if that's what you want to call me. Just, when we go out to
11 the grocery store or something and she'll be like, "Walker," and I won't pay any . . . nobody else
12 calls me Walker and she'll be like, "Walker." I'm like, "Oh, wait, that is me." So, I'll have a
13 delayed response until I'm used to being with her and hearing that. But, in the beginning, it's a
14 little difficult. My father has passed away and I didn't have a relationship with him prior to, so
15 nothing going there. And then my older brother has his own set of issues, so he tries to
16 understand but he's just . . . we don't talk, so it's not a thing. My cousins though, my cousins
17 and I are fairly close and they're all very supportive, using the right names, the right pronouns. I
18 don't see them on a frequent basis, we communicate through Facebook and I saw one of them
19 recently when I was in Denver. After I saw her, we just had a cup of coffee and after I saw her,
20 she sent me a text as I was driving to the airport and was like, "Oh, my God, I love you so much,
21 I'm so proud of you and the person you've become." And I was just like, "This is everything."
22 You never know what's going to happen, but I've been really lucky, for the most part.
- 23 AJ: How did you come out to your family?
- 24 LW: Well, I came out to my mom. Being a trans man . . . I've gone by Lou since I was 17, so my name
25 was not part of the transition. So, I mostly was going from she to he and then from my mom's
26 daughter to my mom's son. Some of them knew it, especially the younger generation – like the
27 kids that are 20 now. They kind of always thought I was a boy or knew I was a boy, no matter
28 what we kept telling them or what I falsely believed. My friends just figured . . . they knew I was
29 always masculine, they knew I was a lesbian - that wasn't a big secret. I think it was kind of, for
30 them, kind of a natural progression of, "Oh, yeah, this totally makes sense."
- 31 AJ: Right, right.
- 32 LW: So, they just saw it on Facebook. It is what it is.
- 33 AJ: OK. Since you've come out, have you experienced any challenges with institutions like the
34 medical institution or law enforcement or the courts – or TSA even?
- 35 LW: I'm actually privileged . . . I went to court in 2015, no 2011 . . . that can't be right. Yes, 2011, I
36 went to court and had my name and my gender marker changed in Harris County. So, by the
37 great state of Texas, I am legally recognized as Lou Weaver, male.
- 38 AJ: Nice.

- 1 LW: And, I didn't travel a lot before then just because, so since I started traveling and since I travel
2 for work, my documents line up. I have TSA pre-check. Nobody cares, nobody looks at me.
3 That's a lot of privilege, I will own that – that's a lot of privilege. But, every time I fly somewhere
4 . . . for example, the other day, Wednesday, when I left home in Houston to come up here, I
5 have a t-shirt from *FTM Magazine* that says, "This is what trans looks like." Every time I leave
6 my house to go get on a plane, I wear that shirt.
- 7 AJ: Really?
- 8 LW: Yeah.
- 9 AJ: So, you just kind of . . .
- 10 LW: I just don't care. What are they going to do?
- 11 AJ: . . . throwing up the middle finger to them?
- 12 LW: Yeah, well I work for Equality Texas, I volunteer for the Human Rights Campaign, I'm friends with
13 most people that work at the National Center for Transgender Equality. I think I'm OK.
- 14 AJ: Right.
- 15 LW: And so, some people are scared for me, I'm not scared for myself. I'm willing to take those risks.
16 Also, being a man in our society comes with a lot of privilege and so I can do that. I can totally
17 do that. As far as the medical stuff goes, sometimes I've had to fight and crawl and scream and
18 do all these other things to get what I needed, but I wasn't afraid of doing it.
- 19 AJ: Sure.
- 20 LW: And I've made my way . . . I've heard other things that are bad. Actually, because of what I do in
21 my city, and not just my job now and I got my job kind of because I was doing these things, I was
22 educating people. We have a lot of medical schools in Houston and we have the world's largest
23 medical center in the world, so there's a lot of medical schools there and a lot of times I get to
24 go in and talk to these nursing schools, the second-year students. Unfortunately . . . I mean, I
25 love doing it, but unfortunately sometimes I'm their only introduction, I'm their only education
26 on transgender folks there. But I do that. So, hopefully making it better for the next person. I
27 have had bad experiences in the past and then as far as law enforcement goes, I used to train
28 law enforcement officers – my dad was a cop. I actually like cops, I'm one of the weird ones, but
29 I grew up respecting the badge and the badge was a lot different 35 or 40 years ago when I was
30 a kid.
- 31 AJ: Yeah.
- 32 LW: And the internet didn't exist so we also all lived in a bubble, to an extent. But, I like cops. So, I
33 always tell this story when I'm training officers because they're like, "We treat everybody the
34 same." "Let me tell you a story . . ." Early on in my transition, before my documents said Lou
35 Weaver, male, I was driving home from Austin and it was the middle of the night because . . .
- 36 AJ: From Austin, you said.

- 1 LW: From Austin, Texas, I was headed back to Houston. I get pulled over by a state trooper and he
2 perceives me to be a masculine woman or probably a lesbian and he's like, "Hey, can I search
3 your car?" I'm like, "Of course you can search my car." My dad's a cop, I was taught to say yes
4 to cops.
- 5 AJ: OK.
- 6 LW: So, I'm like, "Yeah, you can search my car." "Hey, are we going to find anything in your car?"
7 I'm like, "I don't know what's in my car." "Ahh, we find all sorts of stuff, ha-ha." I'm like . . .
8 yeah, he thinks he's going to find some sex toy or whatever. I'm just like, "I don't know what's
9 in my car, dude." I'm being really respectful. And, he looks at me . . . and I sit there and I go . . .
10 before this happened, he had asked me to stand off the side of the road so that I would be safe
11 and I wouldn't be standing right behind. That was fine, I understand. And, I'm out there and I'm
12 like, "Holy shit, sir, sir. . . fire ants." Fire ants are these things in Texas, I don't know if you have
13 them where you grew up . . .
- 14 AJ: I've experienced them. I don't have them where I grew up.
- 15 LW: They're horrible. I knew not to jump up and down because I was trying not to make him scared.
16 He goes, "Holy crap, I'm sorry," and he grabs me, pulls me into the street and helps me wipe off
17 these fire ants. "Are you OK?" I go, "Yes, thank you." He goes, "OK, just stand right there and
18 I'm going to finish searching your car." I'm like, "Great, he's helping me out. This is cool, I'm
19 safe." So, I'm standing there and I look at him and all of a sudden, I go, "Sir, you might find my
20 testosterone." "Your what?" "My testosterone." "What is that? Why do you have it?" "Well,
21 I'm a transgender man but I don't know if it's going to say Lou Weaver." I was trying to think in
22 my head what it would say and he goes, "Where did you get that? Is it legal?" "Yes, sir." Oh, he
23 had my ID that didn't say Lou Weaver and I'm like, "But, it says Lou Weaver." "Do you know
24 that's illegal?" "No, sir." "Where did you get this?" "Walgreens, I go to the pharmacy and I get
25 my medicine."
- 26 AJ: Right.
- 27 LW: "But, Walgreens calls me Lou Weaver because I asked them to because I've been going by Lou
28 since I was 17." And he was furious, he was flat out just so pissed off at me when he realized
29 that I was not a lesbian, I was not who he thought I was, that in fact I was a transgender man
30 taking medicine. But, in that instance, he changed so much from who I had perceived him to be
31 and who he showed me who he was, to somebody that I was totally afraid of.
- 32 AJ: Oh, my goodness.
- 33 LW: I had never, ever in my life been so afraid of a cop in my life. And I grew up around cops. I
34 thought for an instance, I'm like, "Holy shit, I'm going to have one black eye, if not two, by the
35 time somebody comes and gets me out of this guy's jail. Because I know for sure right here,
36 right now, I'm going to jail." But, that didn't happen. I'm very lucky. I have friends in amazing
37 places.
- 38 AJ: Because in some places, testosterone is considered a . . .

- 1 LW: If I was carrying a prescription, if it had been in my name . . . it is a controlled substance.
- 2 AJ: Yeah.
- 3 LW: But, it says Lou Weaver instead of the name that's on my driver's license at that point in time,
4 which does not go together.
- 5 AJ: Didn't match, yeah.
- 6 LW: So, I was committing a Class B or Class C . . . you know, real minor felony. But it was a felony
7 that he could have locked me up for. I thought if he takes me somewhere else, if I get in that
8 car, I might not be OK.
- 9 AJ: Wow.
- 10 LW: Like I said, I had made a phone call as I was getting pulled over and because of who I know and a
11 lot of different things lined up that I did not get in that man's cop car. I did not . . . or, I got in his
12 cop car but he knew somebody was coming to get me.
- 13 AJ: How do officers respond when you tell this story?
- 14 LW: They're shocked. They are literally . . . and this is a state trooper on the side of a road, Highway
15 71, in the middle of nowhere in the middle of the night. I say, "So, please, even though you're a
16 nice guy or you're a nice officer, you're a nice woman, you are not the first officer that they have
17 encountered and if I can be afraid of somebody . . ." Usually when I'm giving them this story, I'm
18 standing in a room full of 25 cops, if not more. I was training them and I said, "If I can be afraid
19 of somebody, imagine what else has happened." This is my own horror story, that's not even
20 me relating to you what I've seen happen to other folks.
- 21 AJ: Sure.
- 22 LW: So, it helps it hit home. So, every time I finish a training, I finish with that story – for law
23 enforcement officers, because I think it helps them see beyond themselves and like, "I'm a
24 decent guy, all cops are decent." Or, "I would never do that, who would do that?" It happens.
25 Even if you yourself are a nice person, you're not the first person I've encountered with a badge
26 and I have a bad taste in my mouth and I'm terrified. I also know that if I look terrified and this
27 cop thinks I'm nervous, that starts a cycle of things like, "Well, why are you nervous?" And I'm
28 like, "Oh, my gosh, is he reaching for his gun?" And it could be something as simple as, "If I go
29 to jail where are they going to put me? Now I'm nervous." "Why is he nervous?" It starts this
30 thing that escalates. And so, people . . . trans folks can get arrested for simply being nervous
31 because somebody is like, "OK, I'm going to take you in because you look like you're up to
32 something." "I'm just terrified of you, I'm just terrified of what's the next step between here
33 and there."
- 34 AJ: Wow, that's a great story. You work for Equality Texas.
- 35 LW: Yes.
- 36 AJ: You volunteer with HRC, the Human Rights Campaign.

- 1 LW: I do.
- 2 AJ: What do you think the relationship is between the L, the G, the B and the T? Should that
3 coalition stay together or are the issues that impact trans people so different that maybe we
4 should just go off and fight our own . . . what's your opinion?
- 5 LW: I don't think we should split up. The trans community is not big enough to gain traction on its
6 own. And like I said, I feel that gay and lesbian folks are facing some . . . we call it homophobia,
7 but it's still pretty much the same stuff – it's transphobia.
- 8 AJ: And, I agree with you, it's just that most gay and lesbian people don't.
- 9 LW: And, to be honest, sometimes the hardest time I have explaining gender identity or transgender
10 policies and why we should have them is to gay white men because they don't understand.
- 11 AJ: Yeah.
- 12 LW: And so, I said gay and lesbian and not bisexuals because I think bisexuals are so
13 underrepresented, they are so invisible . . . bisexual folks are even more invisible than trans folks
14 in this day and age right here, right now.
- 15 AJ: That's a true . . . that's a fair statement.
- 16 LW: And we talk about trans folks, we have a meeting downstairs at the LGBT Leaders Conference
17 talking about how to get trans folks elected. Do they have something that talks about how to
18 get bi folks elected? Bi visibility? Very little of that. And then there's so much bi erasure. I
19 have a friend who is bisexual and she's married to a man so everybody is like, "Oh, you're
20 straight now?" "Nope, still bisexual, just happen to be married to a man." And so, our problems
21 are the same. Trans folks still want to get married.
- 22 AJ: Yeah, absolutely.
- 23 LW: Same-sex marriage might or might not have solved that for some folks, but our documents have
24 to line up. And so, it's a very complicated thing. Gays and lesbians thought we were done and
25 thought the fight was over. They thought, not all them but a vast majority of them thought,
26 "Hey, Obergefell went through, same-sex ruling . . . the ruling has come down from the Supreme
27 Court, we have same-sex marriage, we're done." Really? Are we? Because let's talk about
28 health insurance, whether it's for me as a trans man, whether it's invitro fertilization for gay and
29 lesbian couples, whether it's paid time off for families that don't look like a "nuclear family."
30 These things we still have to fight for. I'm not the only one fighting for my health care. There
31 was just a law passed in, was it Michigan, that said that after six weeks an abortion is now
32 illegal. Most people that can get pregnant don't even know that they're pregnant for eight
33 weeks.
- 34 AJ: Right.
- 35 LW: We are taking away the autonomy of somebody to make their decision about their bodies –
36 women and trans folks. Men can make the decision because now vasectomies are reversible.
37 This should matter to all of us. Intersectionality, we have to . . . I've been saying this since the

- 1 election went the other way, we have to stop talking about being intersectional and actually be
2 intersectional. LGBTQ folks are in all walks of life, be they white folks, brown folks, Black folks,
3 Muslim, Jewish, pick a religion, pick a color, pick an ethnic background, pick a social-racial
4 culture – we exist there. And we have to care about all of that and we have to make sure that
5 they care about us, but that’s not going to happen until we actually show up for them, whoever
6 them is, whatever marginalized community, and not make it transactional.
- 7 AJ: Disabled communities.
- 8 LW: Disabled communities, veteran community, pregnant folks. You tell me somebody who gets
9 discriminated against and we’re a part of that. Pregnant folks, trans men can get pregnant,
10 lesbians get pregnant, gay men are still getting babies somewhere whether it’s through a
11 surrogate . . . who knows. We have to care and we don’t. That is why we are where we are
12 now. We’ve lived in our silos . . . I’ve got mine, I don’t care if you’ve got yours, whether it’s
13 because somebody is gay and not trans, because somebody is white and not Black, somebody is
14 Christian and not Jewish – these are all differences in our society. Here in the United States of
15 America, these are all differences in the way we view them. But, I don’t care whether
16 somebody is black, purple, gray – and not to make a mockery of somebody’s color, but does it
17 really matter? You’re still a human being, we still have to get from Point A to Point B together,
18 and I will never be free and I will never have the same equality as everybody else until my non-
19 conforming African American sisters, non-conforming siblings, have the exact same rights,
20 because right now, I feel like our African American sisters and my gender non-conforming
21 siblings are the ones that are scared to be on the bottom of the barrel of society. And not a
22 single one of us will be on top and be human, completely human with the same equality, until
23 we all have the same equity. But we don’t get that.
- 24 AJ: Wow. OK, I’m going to lighten this up a little bit.
- 25 LW: Sorry, I got a little excited.
- 26 AJ: You’re very passionate and I lo-o-o-ve it. Talk to me about relationships. Are you in a
27 relationship? Who do you date? Who do you love? I know you use the label queer, but . . .?
- 28 LW: So, to be honest, my last long-term relationship was with a trans woman.
- 29 AJ: OK.
- 30 LW: And, I bring that up, not that it matters, but that taught me so much about who I was, my
31 internalized transphobia, and the fact that . . .
- 32 AJ: Yeah, wow. Not many people talk about this on these tapes, but everybody experiences it.
- 33 LW: Yeah. This woman . . . I found her incredibly beautiful. I’m a sucker for blue eyes and she had
34 the most amazing blue eyes. She was early on in her transition, she was still going to work as her
35 boy self and after hours she was her true self. I wanted to go out with her and I was like, “Oh,
36 my gosh, this woman has a penis.” I asked my friend, because I knew he really had a crush on a
37 trans woman and I was like, “What do you do?” He goes, “You get over it – you just need to get
38 over it.” I was like, “Dude, how do you . . . you’re saying that like it’s so easy.” He goes, “you

- 1 need to get over it.” So, for three days this is all that’s going over in my head. “What am I
2 doing? What am I doing? I can’t do this.” And finally, I looked in the mirror and I was like,
3 “You’re an asshole, Lou, you’re really, really an asshole. You expect the whole world to see you
4 as a man even though you don’t have a penis, and yet you’re holding it against this woman
5 because she has one.”
- 6 AJ: Wow.
- 7 LW: “Get over yourself.” And therein realized how homophobic I was, how much I was putting an
8 emphasis on parts that shouldn’t matter, and I got over myself and asked that woman out for a
9 date. We dated for four and a half years and I came to the conclusion that parts are parts and
10 that’s not what matters. If somebody likes me and I like them and they can make me laugh and
11 we have a good time, then I’m going to consider dating them – if they want to consider dating
12 me. And, that was a very freeing kind of thought. I don’t like the term pansexual for myself, it’s
13 just weird, so I use the term queer. It’s all encompassing. If I can get along with somebody, if
14 they can make me laugh, if they can put up with my really bizarre sense of humor and my bad
15 ADD and the fact that I’m a hot mess on most days, then hey, let’s try this, let’s see if it will
16 work.
- 17 AJ: That’s hilarious – but beautiful.
- 18 LW: That’s my reality.
- 19 AJ: I’m so glad you brought up . . . define internalized transphobia.
- 20 LW: I didn’t realize . . . I thought, “Oh, I’m a trans man, I like trans people.” I love trans people,
21 they’re great. But, when it came down to it, I was like, “Oh, I can’t do that, she’s trans.” Even
22 though those words didn’t come out of my brain, I’m like, “I can’t date her, she has a penis.”
23 Really? Really. That’s transphobia. I don’t see her as a woman because she has a penis, but the
24 whole world sees me as a man because I don’t have one . . . totally . . . those two ideas cannot
25 simultaneously, or should not simultaneously, be existing in somebody’s brain.
- 26 AJ: What are some other ways that internalized transphobia shows up?
- 27 LW: I think in the way that some . . . I see a lot of trans folks do this in the beginning of their
28 transition where trans men come out and they’re like hyper-masculine and they’re like, “I’m a
29 man because this is how men act. Hi, nice to meet you.” Wow, what is that? And trans women
30 who are overly feminine and overly over the top, in my opinion. Be who you want to be and, in
31 fact, I am more effeminate now than I’ve ever been in my entire life because I just don’t care.
32 Once I came out as being trans, I became more of a feminist because then I actually saw what
33 the male hierarchy and male privilege was because now I was getting that and I was like, “Oh,
34 holy shit, this is so bad.”
- 35 AJ: Right.
- 36 LW: But, people laugh at me and they’re like, “Over the past year, you have become . . .” I talk with
37 my hands more. I used to talk with my hands, but the way I dress, the way I sit, the way I . . . I’m
38 like, “Oh, honey, no, huh-uh.” And people are like, “Really?” I’m like, “My inner gay boy.”

- 1 They're like, "That ain't your inner gay boy anymore, Lou." Because I'm so comfortable and I
2 just don't care. I'm a man, no matter what because I know I'm a man.
- 3 AJ: I was thinking about early on in my transition, I know a lot of "passable" or beautiful trans
4 women . . . like they wouldn't want to hang out with me, right.
- 5 LW: Right, guilty by association.
- 6 AJ: Yeah, exactly, because they felt as if I would out them and then as I became more "passable" or
7 accepted or whatever, I noticed myself sort of shying away from other less-passable trans
8 women and yeah, that's certainly internalized transphobia.
- 9 LW: Yeah. My ex had a lot of internalized transphobia. She moved and I said, "Hey, can I come up
10 there and see you?" And she goes, "Hmm, no, I'm afraid somebody will recognize you."
11 "What?" "And when you talk." "Yeah, because I talk about job, I talk about my work, I talk
12 about what I do." "Yeah." She didn't want anybody to know because she thought that if
13 everybody knew I was trans, they would assume she was trans.
- 14 AJ: So, she's stealth now?
- 15 LW: Her girlfriend knows but nobody else knows. I think she's out as being bisexual.
- 16 AJ: Wow.
- 17 LW: And she also wanted me to do some research for her as far as to lie because everybody knew
18 that she had had a former wife, her ex-wife, and that she had children and the children were
19 hers – they just didn't know that she was the dad, or at least the sperm donor of the children.
20 And she's like, "Yeah, can you find out how so-and-so did their invitro fertilization?" I'm like,
21 "I'm not going to help you lie. If you care about that, you go do it." That was when I realized
22 how deep seeded somebody's internalized transphobia can be. And, it's not mine – no. I mean,
23 Google Lou Weaver and trans man is going to be the first thing that pops up because I am not
24 ashamed, I will not walk in the shadows and when I was growing up, there were no role models.
25 I refuse to not be a possibility model for somebody else to look at and go, "I can do this."
- 26 AJ: What do you think the . . . I mean, just because there has been an explosion of visibility around
27 trans identity now. My good friend, Janet Mock, Laverne Cox . . . so many other trans people,
28 and then the grand momma of trans visibility is Caitlyn Jenner.
- 29 LW: You can call her that if you like.
- 30 AJ: Well, you know, love it or hate it, she is the absolute most recognizable transgender person in
31 the world now. What do you think about Caitlyn and what do you think about this whole notion
32 of visibility?
- 33 LW: I think visibility is incredibly important. I think without visibility we're not going to be able to
34 change the hearts and minds of other folks. And, I would rather it be Caitlyn Jenner than when
35 people hearing transgender and they think RuPaul. Not that I think RuPaul is a bad person, not
36 that I think there's anything wrong with RuPaul – RuPaul is a certain subset of our community. I

- 1 put on a dress every day because it makes me feel good. I'm not a woman, I'm a man who likes
2 to wear a dress – perfectly fine and acceptable but that's what conflates bathroom talk.
- 3 AJ: Sure. And actually, RuPaul doesn't put on a dress every day. Every time I see them in a public
4 interview, they have on a very nice suit.
- 5 LW: Right, but that's the concept that they get – that RuPaul puts on a dress and goes home and
6 puts on a pantsuit. That's how people think of RuPaul, the mainstream media. Whether or not
7 Caitlyn Jenner is the best face for us, she is a face for us and I will say the same things about
8 Caitlyn Jenner that I would about Laverne Cox and Janet Mock, is that they offer us a lot of
9 visibility, all three of them do. But, they're all three out here – they're LA, they're New York,
10 they're whatever the case may be.
- 11 AJ: Beverly Hills – or Malibu, I don't know.
- 12 LW: I don't know where Caitlyn lives, but they're not your next-door neighbor. But, every time Janet
13 Mock speaks, every time Laverne Cox speaks, and every time Caitlyn Jenner says something,
14 that's an opportunity for another transgender person who is your next-door neighbor, who is
15 your co-worker, who is your family member, to have that conversation with you, with somebody
16 else in your circle, with somebody else in their circle that is going to open doors and plant seeds.
17 So, whether or not . . . I don't know Caitlyn Jenner personally so I can't say whether or not I like
18 her, she comes with a lot of privilege. Sure. Right? Do I fault her for it? No, that's her life.
- 19 AJ: Absolutely.
- 20 LW: She's living her life as she is and I don't want anybody to judge me for living my life as I am. But,
21 every time she does something, then somebody in Houston, when it's a big deal, calls and says,
22 "We need to have a story, what do you think of this?" "Great, let's talk about what it looks like
23 in Texas."
- 24 AJ: Sure.
- 25 LW: And, I hope that those opportunities pop up for other trans folks across the country because I've
26 seen them happen and that's what matters. That's what her visibility means to me in my
27 community and what it should mean to other folks. There is more than one way to transition,
28 we all know that, and we need to keep that in mind. If we use these and utilize them elevating
29 their voices, whoever they may be, then it's good for us. One of the first times I got on TV in an
30 interview, was because Dancing with the Stars and Chaz Bono was on Dancing with the Stars.
- 31 AJ: OK.
- 32 LW: And people were complaining to the local ABC affiliate, "Oh, my God, you can't have this trans
33 person on there." And so, a friend of mine who I knew who was a TV reporter, said, "OK, great,
34 Lou Weaver, I need you to do an interview as a trans man, that you are going to school, that
35 you're doing these things, you're a Houstonian."
- 36 AJ: Sure.

- 1 LW: I don't know Chaz Bono. I know his mother was born in the same small town as I was, but
2 nothing else is similar other than the fact that we're both trans men. But, it got me an interview
3 on TV to be able to say, "I'm a transgender guy and I live here in Houston. I go to the University
4 of Houston, I care about my dog." That helps us always be able to elevate our own stories.
- 5 AJ: Yeah. This is a great interview, Lou. Thank you so much. What do you think the agenda is for
6 the trans community going forward? And, you know, when I wrote these questions out there
7 was no idea that Donald Trump was going to be the President of the United States, but . . .
- 8 LW: He is.
- 9 AJ: He is. What's our agenda look like, in your mind?
- 10 LW: I live in Texas. We are going to have a shit storm of a 2017 legislative session. We're in session
11 every other year for 140 days, we've already seen what's coming down the hill. I lived through
12 the Houston Equal Ordinance fight when all they told us over and over again was no men and
13 women's restrooms. I saw what happened in North Carolina, Texas is bringing in a North
14 Carolina-style bill. So, regardless of what happens with Donald Trump, people are scared –
15 people are scared all over. I think we need to do anything and everything we can to elevate our
16 voices and to show people we are your friends, we are your family, we are your co-workers,
17 we're your neighbors. And that is what's going to change hearts and minds, we need to plant
18 these seeds over and over again. And not to take anything away from the gay and lesbian
19 activists that were doing the work through Act Up, through the AIDS crisis, to where we are now
20 where same-sex marriage is legal and the law of the land. But, when people came out, and the
21 big difference from when I was a kid and people would come up, "He's gay," "She lives with
22 their sister," and those types of conversations and not being able to say gay and lesbian, to
23 where we are now, in part due to visibility. Ellen coming out on TV and having a show, even
24 though she was blacklisted for a little while she didn't give up. Neil Patrick Harris coming out
25 and talking about his husband and his twins. Those types of things help shift and change while
26 people in the background . . .
- 27 AJ: You didn't say *Will and Grace*.
- 28 LW: Think about the difference between my world growing up, I'm a lot older than I look, and seeing
29 *Soap*, where they had the stereotypical gay character - Billy Crystal playing the gay character.
- 30 AJ: I remember *Soap* very well.
- 31 LW: And *Bosom Buddies* to kids that are under the age of 35 that got to grow up with *Will and Grace*,
32 got to grow up with Ellen being out, and now they have *Glee*. They don't care. They don't care
33 – they're still wondering why we are having these conversations. And then there's us and we're
34 like eh, ah, uh . . . and my generation, definitely the older generations, that helps shift the
35 narrative and as soon as we can have more positive trans characters out there in every
36 character in every show. I love *How to Get Away with Murder* and *Scandal* and all of these
37 things.
- 38 AJ: Which, they did a story line on one of my very close friends, CeCe McDonald.

- 1 LW: Yeah, Alexandria, right . . . oh, that story line.
- 2 AJ: Yeah, Alexandria too.
- 3 LW: Yeah, Miss Billings has been on *Scandal*, but still she's . . . and nothing against her, at all, it's the
4 writers who were saying, "I was terrified that if my past came out, my husband would beat me
5 so I had to kill him." That's still giving people that notion of, "Her husband didn't know she was
6 hiding something."
- 7 AJ: Yeah, she fooled him, she tricked him.
- 8 LW: Right. So, that's where our community is. It's unfortunately easy to see how so many people
9 think trans folks are tricksters when we look at things like *Tootsie*, *Victor Victoria*, *Mrs.*
10 *Doubtfire*. Those aren't trans folks, those are people that were crossdressing for whatever
11 purpose, they're not transgender folks that are transsexuals.
- 12 AJ: *Bosom Buddies* even.
- 13 LW: *Bosom Buddies*, exactly . . . I'm going to use that more often, thank you. Right, people doing
14 something so they could get away with something. And so, we have that notion . . . people in
15 mainstream America have that notion that that's who trans folks are when that's not our reality.
16 I'm not doing this to get away with anything, most trans folks are like, "I did not go through this
17 pain in my ass just to have male privilege." Didn't happen. It's not easy, you lose so much. I
18 have no idea what you asked me . . . oh, so talking about how are we going to do this. When we
19 come out, when our parents come out, when our siblings come out, when our neighbors come
20 out and have these conversations and stop saying, "Don't say that "T" word." Kind of like we
21 don't say the "N" word, we don't say the "F" word or the "D" word. When we get to a place
22 where other folks are saying, "Don't say that, I know somebody who is, that's wrong, that's not
23 acceptable," we're going to keep moving forward.
- 24 AJ: Fifty years from now . . . last question, where is the transgender community in your mind, Lou?
- 25 LW: Fifty years from now? Hopefully along with every other community . . . and I saw that with a
26 little bit of hesitation because 50 years ago we were in the middle of a different civil rights
27 battle, before my time – I'm 46 years old now. And, living in my bubble of being perceived
28 white and growing up in white neighborhoods and everything else like that, I thought we were
29 done with racism. That was my bubble. We had three Black kids in school and we didn't think
30 of them any differently, but I didn't really realize there was only three Black kids in school when
31 I went to high school. But, we've found in the past four or five years that racism is alive and well
32 in our country, and we've found in the last year that it's really, really out there in certain places.
- 33 AJ: I knew it, much longer before five years ago, Lou – I'm just saying.
- 34 LW: Right, well that's what I'm saying – my bubble of how I perceived the United States to look
35 versus how somebody else perceives it, right.
- 36 AJ: I get it, yeah.

- 1 LW: And so, with the internet being what it is and with us having access to other folks, and people
2 moving and all these types of things, that we realize that we are really not that far removed
3 from where we were in the 1960s. And, I bring that up because I hope that in my mind what we
4 look like in 50 years from now is not just for trans folks, but for Black and brown folks, for
5 Muslim folks, for every folk, to be able to move through the world where it doesn't really
6 matter, the way that other communities are – not people who live in the United States. I say
7 that because I don't know what the future will hold and in some ways, it seems like we get more
8 integrated and more immersed and meshed and this whole melting pot of people, but in other
9 ways it seems as though we're going backwards. So, I really hope that we start seeing people
10 for being people and not the us versus them or the haves versus the have nots.
- 11 AJ: Wow. This has been so wonderful, so amazing. Is there anything, Lou, that I didn't have the
12 foresight to ask you that you think is really important for folks to know?
- 13 LW: No, I think you let me talk for an hour, that's pretty . . . most people would have shut me off a
14 long time ago. I just think that if you don't know a transgender person, don't make
15 assumptions. Take us out for a cup of coffee and just honestly sit and talk to them. My life . . . if
16 this fight wasn't going on right now, if it was 50 years from now and people didn't care about
17 trans folks as much as they don't care about other folks, I wouldn't have the job that I have and
18 it wouldn't matter to me. I'm a very privileged guy when I leave DC. I'm in DC, that's a lot of
19 privilege, for one, right. I have a roof over my head, I have food in the refrigerator, and I have a
20 dog that loves me. And, that's what matters to me – going home, hanging out with my dog,
21 letting my cat yell at me and laying on me while I watch whatever it is on TV. My life isn't that
22 much different than anybody else's.
- 23 AJ: Yeah, absolutely.
- 24 LW: I think those are the important things.
- 25 AJ: Thank you so much, Lou.
- 26 LW: Well, thank you. I appreciate it.
- 27 AJ: All right. Until we meet again.
- 28 LW: Yes.
- 29 AJ: Peace.