

Quinn Villagomez
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

September 17, 2015



The Transgender Oral History Project of the Upper Midwest will empower individuals to tell their story, while providing students, historians, and the public with a more rich foundation of primary source material about the transgender community. The project is part of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. The archive provides a record of GLBT thought, knowledge and culture for current and future generations and is available to students, researchers and members of the public.

The Transgender Oral History Project will collect up to 400 hours of oral histories involving 200 to 300 individuals over the next three years. Major efforts will be the recruitment of individuals of all ages and experiences, and documenting the work of The Program in Human Sexuality. This project will be led by

Andrea Jenkins, poet, writer, and trans-activist. Andrea brings years of experience working in government, non-profits and LGBT organizations. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting project, please contact Andrea.

Andrea Jenkins

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1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 Quinn Villagomez -QV
3
4 AJ: Hello. My name is Andrea Jenkins, and I am the oral historian with The Transgender Oral History
5 Project at the University of Minnesota Tretter Collection, and I am here today with Quinn. Today
6 is September 17th, 2015, and we are at the Spirit of the Lake... Spirit on the Lake apartment,
7 uhm, how you doing Quinn?
8
9 QV: I'm doing good. How are you?
10
11 AJ: I'm doing great.
12
13 QV: Thank you for having me.
14
15 AJ: No, you're welcome. Thank you for being a part of this. I really appreciate it.
16
17 QV: Absolutely.
18
19 AJ: Uhm, please tell me, uhm, your preferred, uhm, gender pronouns, uh, your gender identity,
20 your gender assigned at birth. And before you do all of that can you just state your name, your
21 full name.
22
23 QV: Yeah. My full name is Quinn Villagomez, and my pronouns are she and her. And my gender
24 identity is a female, and I was assigned male at birth.
25
26 AJ: Okay. Alright. Great. Uhm, tell me, what is your earliest memory that you have?
27
28 QV: My earliest memory, uhm, recent or just from growing up?
29
30 AJ: Yeah, just your earliest, the thing that you remember most from just as a baby to three, eight, I
31 don't know.
32
33 QV: My earliest memory was I remember when I was five years old, and I experienced for the first
34 time nail polish.
35
36 AJ: Oh wow.
37
38 QV: Red, red glittery nail polish.
39
40 AJ: Uhuh.
41
42 QV: And I was so intrigued by the color. I was so intrigued by the sparkles.
43
44 AJ: [Laughs]. Oh wow.
45
46 QV: I was so intrigued by just the little bottle that it was encapsulated in.
47

1 AJ: Okay.
2
3 QV: And that was my earliest memory of growing up was the fact that there's a little bottle of nail
4 polish.
5
6 AJ: Wow, that's fascinating. Did you, did you put it on? Did you want to put it on? Who did it belong
7 to? Was it your mother's, your sister's? Like...
8
9 QV: It was my mother's, and, actually, yes, I did want to put it on, and so I did put it on.
10
11 AJ: You did? Okay.
12
13 QV: Yes, mhm. Uhm, and...
14
15 AJ: Were there any consequences?
16
17 QV: Uhm, you know, uh, there were a few consequences. Not really at home, but there were
18 consequences at school.
19
20 AJ: At school, yeah.
21
22 QV: Yes.
23
24 AJ: [Laughs].
25
26 QV: Uhm, you know, uhm, being born male that was not a good thing because when I went to
27 school, I got bullied and talked about and called all kinds of names. Because I was so young, I
28 had no idea how nail polish came off.
29
30 AJ: Okay, so you had to wear it for a while. [Laughs].
31
32 QV: Right, yes. And I was like, "Oh, my goodness. How do you get this off?"
33
34 AJ: Oh wow. Okay. Uhm, now guys wear nail polish.
35
36 QV: They do. All kinds of colors and everything. [Laughs].
37
38 AJ: It's kind of funny. Uhm, so you mentioned school. Tell me about where you went to elementary
39 school.
40
41 QV: I went to elementary school at Loring, uhm, over in north Minneapolis, and, uh, then I went to
42 Putnam Elementary.
43
44 AJ: Mhm.
45
46 QV: Which is over northeast, uhm, Minneapolis. And then I went to Sunnyside Elementary, which is
47 located in New Brighton, Minnesota. So I went to a couple.

1
2 AJ: Cool. Interesting. So you grew up in Minnesota. You're from Minnesota?
3
4 QV: Yes, born and raised here.
5
6 AJ: Your family, your parents, were they born here too?
7
8 QV: Yep. Mhm.
9
10 AJ: Okay. Uhm, what was school like? Was it...
11
12 QV: School was not really fun for me. Uhm, you know, I was never the popular one.
13
14 AJ: Mhm.
15
16 QV: Uhm, I was never really the one that was the best dressed. I never was really athletic. I was
17 never really the in-crowd type of person. I was kind of shy, very reserved. I was the goodie-
18 goodie. Uhm, you know, school was important to me. Uhm, I never skipped class. I was always
19 on time. I took my studies really important. Uhm, but I was bullied a lot. I was called all kinds of
20 names growing up in school, especially by males, by boys.
21
22 AJ: Oh boy. Wow.
23
24 QV: Mhm.
25
26 AJ: So you had a lot of female friends or did the girls bully you too?
27
28 QV: Uhm, some of them did. You know, there were a couple girls that were kind of rude and
29 probably said things behind my back but I did get along more with females and girls than I did,
30 uhm, males or boys.
31
32 AJ: So like, do you feel like the bullying was related to your gender identity?
33
34 QV: I do. Mhm. I, I think that is where a lot of my bullying came from. Uhm, you know, uhm, I was
35 called all kinds of names in school from faggot, queer, sissy, gay, uhm, he/she, she/he, tranny.
36 So I grew up with all kinds of names like that in school a lot predominately by males. Some
37 females, but it was mostly males.
38
39 AJ: What was the racial makeup of your school?
40
41 QV: Uhm, the racial makeup of my school was when I was really young in Kindergarten it was very,
42 uhm, different backgrounds. But my parents got divorced when I was five years old. So that
43 really was a big factor for me and probably bullying because when I was living in New Brighton,
44 Minnesota predominately the ethnicity was Caucasian.
45
46 AJ: Mhm.
47

- 1 QV: I was like a minority in my school. Like there was hardly, there was barely any African American
2 kids, no Asians, there was no Native Americans so with me being biracial, uhm, I was the, the
3 dark-skinned kid in my class. I was the one with the black hair. So I was a minority in my class.
4
- 5 AJ: Mm. Yeah. Uhm, I'm sorry to hear about these experiences. Uhm, you know, you seem really
6 resilient. You have gone through quite a bit.
7
- 8 QV: I have. A long way.
9
- 10 AJ: Still smiling and shimmering and shining.
11
- 12 QV: Yes, thank you.
13
- 14 AJ: Uhm, in fact, I know that your nickname is shimmer.
15
- 16 QV: Mhm.
17
- 18 AJ: How did you come to that?
19
- 20 QV: Well, when I was growing up, and, uhm, knowing deep down that, that I was a girl and wanted
21 to be this beautiful woman I, my best friend used to do drag and so, you know, lives his life as a,
22 as a transsexual.
23
- 24 AJ: Oh really?
25
- 26 QV: And, uhm, he really got into the lifestyle of performing and so, and that lifestyle of drag queens
27 they always come up with those names Candy and Chardonnay and Star and Princess. And I'm
28 not a drag queen because most people think that I probably am a drag queen cause I'm not. But
29 I wanted to have a name that just really resonated with me so we came up with this, you know,
30 idea, pick a name for yourself. And so Shimmer really stuck. Uhm, at one point we were gonna,
31 we were gonna come up with Sequin because my name is Quinn so Sequin but...
32
- 33 AJ: Okay.
34
- 35 QV: ... I thought that was kind of corny and I thought it was very cheesy.
36
- 37 AJ: [Laughs].
38
- 39 QV: I was sick of Sparkle because Sparkle was kind of that name that was kind of the in thing back
40 then.
41
- 42 AJ: Or the movie.
43
- 44 QV: Right. And Glitter. And I was like but then Shimmer just, it just resonated with me, and it just
45 stuck. Ever since then I've just been Shimmer.
46
- 47 AJ: I love it.

1
2 QV: Thank you.
3
4 AJ: And it fits.
5
6 QV: Yes.
7
8 AJ: Very, very shimmery.
9
10 QV: I am. [Laughs].
11
12 AJ: So I just want to talk a little bit more. Like how, well how old were you when you first realized
13 that you were not the gender you were assigned at birth? Even if you didn't have the name for
14 it.
15
16 QV: When I was five.
17
18 AJ: Yeah?
19
20 QV: Mhm.
21
22 AJ: Before the nail polish or after?
23
24 QV: Right around the time that I discovered the nail polish I knew that something was different
25 about me. I knew that I was in the wrong body. I always knew that I was more feminine, and I
26 knew that I want, that I want, that I was secretly a girl living inside a boy's body.
27
28 AJ: Mhm. And you kept it a secret?
29
30 QV: Mhm.
31
32 AJ: Did you tell people?
33
34 QV: Not really growing up, uhm, until I started getting into my later teens. That's when I started
35 more slowly gravitating into the lifestyle living as a woman but when I first realized that I was a
36 girl, I knew, I kept it a secret. Mhm.
37
38 AJ: Did not want to jeopardize the love of your parents, yeah.
39
40 QV: Right. Right. The parents and, and, you know, cousins and all that other stuff.
41
42 AJ: Wow. Uhm, so you were five. Uhm, what terms do you use to sort of identify yourself and has
43 that changed over time?
44
45 QV: Uhm, no. I, terms for me I use like, you know, she, her, Miss, uhm, ma'am, Quinn, you know,
46 people still refer to me as Quinn. Uhm, a lot of my close friends and friends that I'm starting to
47 meet or starting to call me Shimmer.

1
2 AJ: Okay.
3
4 QV: But those are the terms that are used currently.
5
6 AJ: Yeah. So, I mean, but when you think about identity, do you identify as lesbian or a trans
7 woman?
8
9 QV: I identify as a trans woman.
10
11 AJ: Okay.
12
13 QV: Mhm.
14
15 AJ: So if someone asks you, you that's the phrase you use to sort of identify yourself?
16
17 QV: Yes. Exactly.
18
19 AJ: Or that's how you feel inside.
20
21 QV: Yes.
22
23 AJ: A trans woman.
24
25 QV: Mhm.
26
27 AJ: Wow. Uhm, what challenges have you faced since you have began to express your true gender
28 identity?
29
30 QV: Challenges I face have been, uhm, self-confidence.
31
32 AJ: Yeah.
33
34 QV: Uhm, I'm very, uh, reserved in certain aspects of my life like public settings, public places, being
35 around big crowds of people. I still have fear of what people think about me. You know, uhm, is
36 that a he? Is that a she? Is that a transsexual? Is that a drag queen, a cross dresser? I get a lot of
37 that. So it's just a lot of, you know, people that are still like confused in their mind. Uhm, I've
38 had people still classify me as masculine. They think that I have masculine traits about myself. I
39 don't think they really understand how I feel, you know, living my life as a woman because I
40 know in my heart and my mind I know that I am a woman.
41
42 AJ: Yeah.
43
44 QV: And I think sometimes people classify me in certain categories. And it just hurts when they do
45 that. Uhm, some of the other things that I am facing is I feel that, uhm, employment is a big
46 thing. I think, uhm, I know that I am a very good worker. I have a great work ethic. I'm very
47 strong willed in my jobs. I have great attendance. But I feel like a lot of employers, a lot of

1 people won't hire me simply based on the fact that I am transgender. I think that's a big road
2 block in my life that has been going on for such a long time. Also, uhm, just having, uhm, friends
3 that want to be around me because I am transgender, being comfortable around me. I've had a
4 lot of people in my life who say that they're my friend but I don't know if they really are my
5 friend because I get this perception in my mind that they are not or maybe that they are, that
6 they have a fear to be around me...

7
8 AJ: Mm.

9
10 QV: ... because I'm transgender.

11
12 AJ: That they're ashamed to go out with you?

13
14 QV: Exactly. Yep. Also depression, uhm, I've suffered from a lot of depression in my life. Uhm, I get
15 really down about a lot of things. I'm very self-doubtful. I can be very negative about things.
16 Uhm, but I, you know, I get my really sad days. You know, I get my days where something great
17 has come my way, and I get really sad about it. I think, uhm, being unsupportive, uh, I think
18 there's a lot of people in my life who I think are very unsupportive of me at times, and they
19 don't support me as a person and as a woman. Uhm, and so that really hurts me a lot, and, and
20 there was a time in my life, Andrea, where I at one point almost tried to commit suicide. So that
21 was something in my life that was a big, big... it was a big, traumatic experience for me.

22
23 AJ: Mhm.

24
25 QV: But I think that's, there was just a, a saying in my mind. I think God just came into my mind or
26 just a fear that came in my mind and said, "Quinn, what are you doing?"

27
28 AJ: Mhm.

29
30 QV: You know? By killing yourself and just getting rid of all the pain is not gonna solve anything so I
31 think that's really what ended my experience of wanting to commit suicide.

32
33 AJ: Wow. Well, I'm happy that ended.

34
35 QV: Yes.

36
37 AJ: Uhm, but we do know that suicide is a really big challenge...

38
39 QV: Mhm.

40
41 AJ: ... for so many people in the trans community.

42
43 QV: Mhm.

44
45 AJ: And, uhm, it's, it's sad and it's awful. Uhm, and a lot of the issues that you've brought up are
46 some of the same issues that other people talk about. Uhm, you know, not feeling supported,

1 not feeling, uhm, worthy, not feeling loved. And so I'm really glad you were able to come
2 through that. Do you have siblings? Brothers? Sisters?
3
4 QV: I have one sister who is older than me. Mhm.
5
6 AJ: What's your relationship like?
7
8 QV: Uhm, my relationship is good. Uhm, my sister, uhm, she was born with, uh, she was born with,
9 uhm, she's not disabled. But she is, uhm, you know, with like learning disabilities.
10
11 AJ: Learning, okay.
12
13 QV: Uhm, so like for her growing up, uhm, you know, like she was always in special education.
14
15 AJ: Mhm.
16
17 QV: Uhm, and, you know, she always got picked on too.
18
19 AJ: Yeah.
20
21 QV: So, and, you know, like, uh, she's in a place in her life where, uhm, it's hard for her to like...
22 cause we're both the type of people where when people explain things to us or, uhm, people try
23 to tell us, critiquing or criticism, we're really bad at that. We're both are the type of people we
24 take criticism offensively or we take it to heart. Uhm, I'm coming a long way with that. I'm
25 learning that sometimes constructive criticism isn't bad but I still take it to heart. I still take it,
26 you know, I take it personally because I feel like maybe I'm always doing something wrong.
27
28 AJ: Mhm.
29
30 QV: Or I feel like I'm not good enough at what I did. And I think that people kind of look at that
31 negative as, they look at the negative...
32
33 AJ: Mhm.
34
35 QV: ... of what I did rather than the positive of what I did. Uhm, but my sister is a lot worse than I in
36 that sense where she still takes things a lot harder and a lot more offensively than I do because
37 of her learning disability.
38
39 AJ: So do you have any nieces and nephews at all?
40
41 QV: Uhm, you know, I, there are technically like my cousins but I do refer to them as my nieces...
42
43 AJ: Okay. [Laughs].
44
45 QV: ... and my nephews, yes.
46
47 AJ: So your sister doesn't have any children.

1
2 QV: No, no, no children so.
3
4 AJ: Wow, uhm, do you have a chosen family?
5
6 QV: uhm, chosen family as in, uh, what do you mean by that?
7
8 AJ: So, I mean have you, you know, have you sort of, you talked about your friend who was a drag
9 queen performer. Uhm, and I think you said they live fulltime as a woman too but they were a
10 drag performer but, I mean, that sounds like a really a close relationship. Do you have close
11 relationships with other friends who you guys spend holidays and vacations and all of those kind
12 of those kinds of things together?
13
14 QV: Uhm, I don't really have like a chosen family but I was living with my cousins at one point. Uhm,
15 in high school I grew up with my two cousins, uhm, Melissa and Amanda. And, uhm, we always
16 got along when we were little kids and so I always loved going over to their house. And so, uhm,
17 when I was in high school I, I kind of ended up living with them towards the end of my high
18 school years into college I lived with them. So I did go on a lot of vacations with them. Every
19 summer we would always go on vacations.
20
21 AJ: Oh wow.
22
23 QV: Mhm.
24
25 AJ: And you guys still get along now? Do you...?
26
27 QV: Uhm, we do get along. I'm not currently living there anymore but, you know, uhm, we still get
28 along.
29
30 AJ: Okay.
31
32 QV: Mhm.
33
34 AJ: Where did you go to college?
35
36 QV: I went to college. I went to the University of Minnesota for one year. I wanted to be, believe it
37 or not, a teacher.
38
39 AJ: Uhuh.
40
41 QV: An educator.
42
43 AJ: An educator.
44
45 QV: I wanted to be an English teacher because I loved spelling.
46
47 AJ: Mhm.

1
2 QV: Uhm, I love grammar. I'm really big on how words are spoken and, and stuff like that so that was
3 what I wanted to do. And then it kind of as I was going into U of M I was like, "I don't know if I
4 can do this." And so then I ended up not finishing...

5
6 AJ: Mhm.

7
8 QV: ... my years as wanting to be an educator. So I ended up finishing out my year at the U of M. And
9 I took some time off, and then I went to Brown College in Mendota Heights, Minnesota, and I
10 went for radio broadcasting. And I always had this dream growing up that I wanted to do
11 something with music, something with celebrities and being on the radio was such a dream of
12 mine. And so I got my Associates degree in Radio Broadcasting.

13
14 AJ: Congratulations.

15
16 QV: Thank you.

17
18 AJ: And you are on the radio now.

19
20 QV: I am.

21
22 AJ: Wow.

23
24 QV: Yeah.

25
26 AJ: Talk about that a little bit.

27
28 QV: That has been a journey. It's been a long time coming. I graduated from Brown in 2003.

29
30 AJ: Mhm.

31
32 QV: And my mind was so set on getting that job in radio. I was so gun hoe. I was so into it. I was so
33 ready. And my expectations were so high. When I got out of that school I said, "I wanna work
34 Kiss FM. I wanna work at the top radio stations in the country." And I was sending out resumes
35 to radio stations to California, Florida, Chicago, the big places, the big cities. And my career
36 advisor said, "Quinn, what are you doing? Stop doing that." And I kind of looked at her, and I
37 said, "Why?" And she said, "Because you're still new. You're still an amateur." And that kind of
38 really offended me a little bit because I, I had a dream and a goal. And I knew that I could make
39 it because I've seen a lot of radio talent come out of that school that have gotten jobs at big
40 stations. But, of course, being me, being the negative Nancy that I was then...

41
42 AJ: [Laughs].

43
44 QV: ... I, I stopped doing that, and so I started sending stuff out to small market radio stations and
45 nothing was coming in. I couldn't find anything. Uhm, so I wanted to throw the towel at that
46 point.

- 1 AJ: Mhm.
2
- 3 QV: But I ended up getting an internship at one of my favorite radio stations here in the Twin Cities
4 at 101.3 KDWB, and I was in promotions. That was so much fun. I had the best time there and
5 working with Dave Ryan was such an experience. Hey Dave!
6
- 7 AJ: Hey Dave!
8
- 9 QV: Uhm, but—
10
- 11 AJ: So you would go in the van and you guys would go out to different events?
12
- 13 QV: Yeah, we would, we would drive in the big KDWB van, and we would do concerts and, you know,
14 uhm, we would do, uh, appearances at local businesses.
15
- 16 AJ: And were you live?
17
- 18 QV: We were live. Mhm. We hand out fliers, concert tickets, free merchandise. And I got to work a
19 couple of amazing, excuse me, shamazing events.
20
- 21 AJ: [Laughs].
22
- 23 QV: So that was always a good thing but promotions was not what I wanted to do in radio though.
24 On air was what I wanted to do. And nothing came so after a while I, I gave up, Andrea. I
25 couldn't find anything. And so finally this past year in 2014, I ended up cohosting on a radio
26 program with the shamazing, Roxanne Anderson...
27
- 28 AJ: Okay.
29
- 30 QV: ... on KFAI Radio, Fresh Fruit. So that has been such a dream of mine. And that came about
31 because this past summer I joined a, a, uh, transgender group, and we go to this group every
32 Wednesday. It's located at 3405 Chicago Ave. at Café Southside, the Exchange. And every
33 Wednesday, uhm, transgender women and men, uhm, transgender people of color can go, and
34 we can talk about what's on our mind, how are we feeling, uhm, you know, living your life as a
35 transgender person. And that's how I met Roxanne. And Roxanne had noticed that I had
36 mentioned something about radio. And Roxanne said, "Why don't you come sit in with me for
37 about a show or two?" And I did that, and I was, I was so nervous but I was super excited. And
38 ever since then I've been cohosting with Roxanne...
39
- 40 AJ: Oh wow.
41
- 42 QV: ... on their show. And I'm just, I'm loving every minute of it. Like, it's just, it's such a dream come
43 true to know that something that I've always wanted to do my entire life is now a reality.
44
- 45 AJ: And know you've been hosting fundraisers and other sort of art and community events...
46
- 47 QV: Mhm.

1
2 AJ: ... which is what radio personalities do.
3
4 QV: Right. Right.
5
6 AJ: So, uhm, I only know you as a radio personality. That's, that's how we came to get to know each
7 other.
8
9 QV: Yes. Though I'm, I'm doing a lot of events in the community. Uhm, I'm starting to host some,
10 some like concerts and events for some local Twin Cities artists. And I'm really, really grateful
11 for, you know, being given that opportunity to do that and to really just be this voice in the
12 transgender community. Also being a transgender woman of color to be able to get out there in
13 front of hundreds of people from twenty-five to fifty to however many people come to those
14 events to really showcase who I am as a person living as a transgender woman.
15
16 AJ: Wow, that's amazing. Thank you for doing that.
17
18 QV: Thank you. Of course.
19
20 AJ: Let me ask you this, Quinn, and let me just say. Uhm, feel free to answer to this question or not.
21 Uhm, have, have you, to the extent that you feel comfortable, tell me about any medical
22 interventions you've had related to your gender identity.
23
24 QV: Medical interventions, uhm, I really haven't had any medical interventions...
25
26 AJ: Mhm.
27
28 QV: ... uhm, since, you know, being a trans woman currently.
29
30 AJ: No hormones.
31
32 QV: No hormones. I want to be on hormones to be honest with you but I think that there's been
33 roadblocks with financial means, being able to be on hormones.
34
35 AJ: It's an expensive thing.
36
37 QV: It's an expensive things, yes. And also I just feel like whenever I get the opportunity to get on
38 hormones I feel like there's always a roadblock that comes in with things like bills and, you
39 know, car payments and things that kind of take over that aspect of my life. And so I feel like I
40 put those first rather than the hormones that I want so.
41
42 AJ: Yeah, do you, do you have health insurance that you're...
43
44 QV: I do.
45
46 AJ: ... current job. Does it, it doesn't cover gender related...
47

1 QV: Nope.
2
3 AJ: ... uh, medical?
4
5 QV: So for me if I wanted to be on hormones through my insurance, I would have to pay out of
6 pocket for it.
7
8 AJ: Wow. Hm, that's not right. [Laughs]. Uhm, so uhm, looking back over your decision to express
9 your true gender identity, uhm, what were some pivotal movements that have defined your,
10 your life today? Would you do anything different?
11
12 QV: Uhm, pivotal moments would be just finally being able to live my life freely and openly.
13
14 AJ: Mhm.
15
16 QV: Uhm, because when I started...
17
18 AJ: When did that happen?
19
20 QV: That happened probably I'd say when I was probably about eighteen years old.
21
22 AJ: Okay.
23
24 QV: I was freely...
25
26 AJ: You've been out since you were eighteen?
27
28 QV: Right. Mhm. I was able to express myself because I started wearing more feminine clothing,
29 makeup, jewelry. Now I'm not super great with makeup and hair. I don't have that talent
30 because everyone always has that premonition, "Well, if you're going to live as a woman, you
31 gotta learn how to do makeup and hair." And, you know, I understand where those people are
32 coming from. Not every, not every transgender woman is good at that stuff.
33
34 AJ: Yeah.
35
36 QV: You know? Some of them are just not that talented in, in those aspects of those artforms per se.
37
38 AJ: [Laughs]. Yes.
39
40 QV: However, I feel that when I was, when I was eighteen that's when I started to slowly express
41 myself.
42
43 AJ: Mhm.
44
45 QV: I would still not dress up openly in public settings around a lot of people because of the fear but
46 as I got older and older and older I started to just blossom into this woman and starting to live

- 1 this way confidently. And now just recently within a couple of years with social media,
2 Facebook, and Twitter and Instagram posting pictures about who I am openly...
3
- 4 AJ: Yeah.
- 5
- 6 QV: ... cause I have a lot of family like on both my mom's side and my father's side that have never
7 seen me...
8
- 9 AJ: Okay.
- 10
- 11 QV: ... live as a woman. You know? Cause I would go to like family outings and get together and
12 reunions dressed up as Quinn but I would really tone down...
13
- 14 AJ: Sure.
- 15
- 16 QV: ... all the makeup. Exactly, the jewelry, everything.
- 17
- 18 AJ: Androgynous.
- 19
- 20 QV: Mhm, right. But I think that my family, I think that they secretly know. They're not stupid.
21 They're not dumb.
22
- 23 AJ: Yeah, yeah.
- 24
- 25 QV: But I was never comfortable sharing who I was with them. But now with the pictures and things
26 that I'm posting on Facebook and Instagram and Twitter. Now a days in social media that now
27 they're starting to be, "Okay. This is Quinn. This is who she is."
28
- 29 AJ: And do like, do you guys talk about it? Do you talk to your mother and your father?
- 30
- 31 QV: Uhm, I talk to my mom and dad about this a little bit, but I think that they kind of already know
32 because like, you know, I have cousins and aunts and family and friends who I am friends with
33 on Facebook and so they say things to my mom and to my dad. And so of course my parents ask
34 me these questions and say this and that. So I think they, I think they know deep down inside.
35 Uhm, but just recently about a few months ago I actually got on Facebook, and I grouped a
36 message to all of my cousins...
37
- 38 AJ: Okay.
- 39
- 40 QV: ... on my father's side. And I gave them this really adorable, cute, heartfelt message, and I
41 wanted to let them know that I love them no matter what. But I really felt that they're still
42 young in their lives that I really wanted them to know who I am as a person. And that this is who
43 I am and that I'm really hoping that they can be accepting and love me for who I am. And by the
44 grace of god all of them have embraced me as their cousin and as Shimmer, as Quinn, as she
45 which is so shamazingly lovingly beautiful to me so.
46
- 47 AJ: So social media has it's, uh, positive aspects.

1
2 QV: Yes. And to answer your other question. Would I regret, uhm, would I regret it? Absolutely not
3 because I feel that I am so much more happier today than I have ever been growing up. You
4 know, when I was born at birth as a male I was never really happy. I was always sort of like I'm
5 just stuck in this gender but now that I am able to live my life openly as a woman and as Quinn,
6 as Shimmer, I love it. I love it so much.

7
8 AJ: Awesome. Uhm, so, you talked about . Has there been like a specific moment or person or an
9 organization that has had a significant impact, uh, on you related to your gender identity?

10
11 QV: My, my best friend Johnathan, bad boy Gibson, has had an amazing impact on my life. I've
12 known Johnathan since we were little children. Uhm, and when he was in the life of drag or in
13 the, the lifestyle of living as a transsexual I was so gravitated towards his beauty, towards his
14 artistry, towards that realm of, "Wow, he's gorgeous and beautiful and glamorous." And I was
15 like, "I want to live like that. I want to do that." And that was so intriguing to me. And Johnathan
16 is the most important person in my life. He's been there for me through everything. Through all
17 my ups and my downs. Through all my sadness. Through all my happiness. Through all my
18 struggles. And I'm just so forever grateful for him. You know, he is just the most beautiful light in
19 my life. And I am so grateful. I'm probably the most luckiest person in the world to have him as
20 my best friend.

21
22 AJ: Wow.

23
24 QV: Cause there are a lot of people in life who have a best friend who leave their life or they don't
25 get along or they leave them or they don't accept them. And Johnathan has been there for me
26 through everything. So I'm just so grateful for him. And I love him with all my heart. And I really
27 want him to know that.

28
29 AJ: So sweet. Uhm, we'll have to show him the video.

30
31 QV: Yes.

32
33 AJ: [Laughs]. Uh, I'm sure he knows. So we're gonna turn the corner a little bit. Tell me about love
34 and relationships and dating.

35
36 QV: Oh goodness. I knew this was coming. Uhm, love. You know, I've never been in a real
37 relationship before. I've never actually had a boyfriend.

38
39 AJ: Yeah.

40
41 QV: Uhm, never. Do I want to be in a relationship? Absolutely. I would love to be in love with a guy. I
42 would love to just have a guy that I can just speak to about. A guy that I could cuddle with. A guy
43 that I could just go home and make dinner for. A guy that I could make love to. I, I want to be in
44 a position in my life. I want to be desired. I want a guy to love me for who I am. To love me for
45 Quinn, to love me as Shimmer. Uhm, dating has been a very complex subject because it can be
46 good but it can also be very dangerous. Uhm, you know, I'm not a very, not good looking girl. I'm
47 a cute girl. I can be beautiful at times. And I think...

1
2 AJ: You're gorgeous.
3
4 QV: I think guys in that realm they see this face. They see the really beautiful face, all the glam, all
5 the makeup. They see the hair, everything, but erase all that makeup, erase all the hair, what
6 about the natural Quinn? You know? I think sometimes they don't see that. You know? And
7 when they kind of flirt or, you know, they hit on me through social media or dating sites or even
8 in person I have to be like, "Okay, here we go." You know, I have to tell them 100% I'm a
9 transgender woman.
10
11 AJ: Mhm.
12
13 QV: And a lot of them say, "What do you mean?" Some of them, because they don't get it or they're
14 just men...
15
16 AJ: [Laughs].
17
18 QV: They don't really understand what a transgender woman is...
19
20 AJ: Uhuh.
21
22 QV: ... and I think sometimes they always get transgender confused with a cross-dresser or a drag
23 queen or a cross-dresser, uhm, and they always have things on their mind. It's just, you know,
24 sometimes what's on their mind is sexual pleasure.
25
26 AJ: Mhm.
27
28 QV: And so they kind of want to...
29
30 AJ: They're guys.
31
32 QV: Yes, they're men. They have sex on their mind and so they have questions on their mind.
33 They're curious. Do you have breasts? Do you have a vagina? You know, of course, they're,
34 things are running through their mind.
35
36 AJ: Mhm.
37
38 QV: And then, you know, there's times where I have to be completely honest with them. I don't have
39 those things that, that a real, natural woman has. So those are those roadblocks. And so there's,
40 in my mind, like, "Okay, well now that I've told them, are they going to change their mind? Are
41 they not going to want to get together or what?" And sometimes, you know, when I do meet
42 with a man, you know, uhm, I get fears in my mind like, "I'm putting myself out there. I'm
43 putting myself at risk."
44
45 AJ: Mhm.
46

1 QV: You know, could I be the next victim? Could I be murdered? Cause I don't know, you know, if
2 they have enough, they could have enough sense in their mind where they could have a gun.
3 They could have a knife. They could poison my drink or something like that. They could beat me.
4 And there's, there's those fears running in my mind, and sometimes I get a little guy crazy that I
5 just want to be with a guy that I don't think about the dangerous parts of a relationship.
6
7 AJ: Yeah. I'm thinking that it's not all relationships end in violence.
8
9 QV: Right, right, right.
10
11 AJ: Uhm, but unfortunately for so many trans women of color it does.
12
13 QV: Mhm.
14
15 AJ: So, being very, very rightfully, uhm, concerned.
16
17 QV: Mhm.
18
19 AJ: But, uhm, but I hope you have open yourself up to love.
20
21 QV: I do. I'm, I'm hoping. I'm hoping that there is the perfect guy that will just come my way. And I, I
22 envision what my perfect guy is so.
23
24 AJ: [Laughs]. What's that? What's the vision?
25
26 QV: My, my vision is this six foot tall beautiful football built guy with beautiful facial hair, a nice
27 beard, tattoos, you know, I like the, the bad boy type of guy. And that's the kind of guy that I
28 like.
29
30 AJ: You want a solider.
31
32 QV: I do. I want a, I want a solider.
33
34 AJ: [Laughs].
35
36 QV: Yes. Where he at? Where he at?
37
38 AJ: Okay.
39
40 QV: Yes. Mhm.
41
42 AJ: Uhm, so, uhm, we talked a little bit about coming out to your family and friends. I love the story
43 how you came out to your cousins. Uhm, what do you think about this whole sort of relationship
44 the L, lesbian, G, gay, B, bisexual, and then the T, transgender? Do you think there's a
45 connection, uhm, if so what is it like, how do you relate to gay, uh, and lesbian people and how
46 they relate to you?
47

- 1 QV: Uhm, well, do I think there is a connection with the L, the lesbian, the G, the gay, the B, the
2 bisexual, and, of course, last as always, the transgender for T. I feel in my mind personally that
3 there is no connection because I feel that as a lesbian, bisexual gay person, I feel that they get,
4 there's a lot of negativity and hatred towards them but I feel that there is a little bit of self-
5 acceptance for that people are starting to come into respect them. But when it comes to
6 someone who is transgender, it's, "Oh my god." You know, it's like, "Oh, why, why do you want
7 to live that way? Why do you want to be transgender? Or why do you want to be this way?" So I
8 feel there is this big disconnection, especially for the transgender community. Uhm, I do have a
9 lot of, uhm, lesbian friends, bisexual friends, gay friends. I get along with them find, uhm, but I
10 think sometimes I think that they don't really understand me as a transgender person. I think
11 that they, they feel differently about certain things than I do. And I think that they kind of get
12 misconceptions about transgender people honestly.
13
- 14 AJ: Hm. Uhm, so you, uhm, do you think there's an agenda for the transgender community?
15
- 16 QV: I think that there is an agenda. I think as a transgender community, my hope is that we stick
17 together.
18
- 19 AJ: Yeah.
20
- 21 QV: I hope that we can really come together and really show support for the transgender
22 community, transgender men and women, especially the transgender men and women of color.
23
- 24 AJ: Mhm.
25
- 26 QV: I think that we need that in this community. I think that there is of that right now honestly. I
27 think that we're not getting a lot of visibility to transgender people of color. I think that is
28 something that needs a lot of attention. I think that we're starting to hear a lot of hope and
29 recognition for transgender people, both men and women who are Caucasian but we're not
30 getting that right now in the transgender community for transgender men and women of color...
31
- 32 AJ: Yeah.
33
- 34 QV: ... which is big, big void.
35
- 36 AJ: Caitlyn Jenner.
37
- 38 QV: Exactly. Caitlyn Jenner.
39
- 40 AJ: Tell me what you...
41
- 42 QV: Caitlyn Jenner. Okay, here's the thing about Caitlyn Jenner. I think that Caitlyn Jenner, yes, is
43 inspirational. I think that what she has done is amazing.
44
- 45 AJ: Uhuh.
46

1 QV: I think that, you know, she is starting to really get out there and really be a voice. But I feel, for
2 me personally, that there has been people who are transgender both men and women who
3 have been living this way years before Caitlyn. Chaz Bono, Carmen Carrera, Laverne Cox, Janet
4 Mock, Divine who were like, "Okay, yeah, we've heard of, you know, Laverne Cox. She's an
5 actress. You know, Janet Mock, she's a motivational speaker. Carmen Carrera, she's an actress.
6 And they don't get the recognition that Caitlyn Jenner is now getting.

7
8 AJ: Yeah.
9

10 QV: And to me that hurts me because these are men and women, mostly of color, who have lived
11 this way but they didn't get a cover in Vanity Fair.
12

13 AJ: Sure.
14

15 QV: They didn't get their own reality show.
16

17 AJ: Mhm.
18

19 QV: You know, and all of a sudden now Caitlyn is getting all of these endorsements and getting all of
20 these deals and it, it hurts me because I'm not trying to knock Caitlyn Jenner. That's not what I
21 want to do because, yes, more power to her. I love Caitlyn, but I think that there are men and
22 women who have lived as a transgender person that really have been in those shoes before
23 her...
24

25 AJ: Mhm.
26

27 QV: ... that are not getting the recognition that they deserve. And that's how I honestly feel. Also
28 what I feel about Caitlyn Jenner is, is that I think that people are, you know, giving her
29 recognition because she came out as this knockout gorgeous, hot woman.
30

31 AJ: [Laughs]. Yeah.
32

33 QV: And in reality with me living as a transgender woman I think that people need to know that I'm
34 not rich. I'm not famous. I don't have a means to go out and get, you know, Vera Wang clothes
35 or Oscar rented gowns. You know, and can get fabulous hair and look like that from the time I
36 wake up to the time I go to bed. And, you know, and coming out with that big, amazing
37 gorgeous face that people have this conception that this is how a woman has to look.
38

39 AJ: Right.
40

41 QV: And we have our struggles, Andrea, as a transgender person. You know, where we have to wake
42 up every day and we still have facial hair or we still have, you know, the looks as a transgender
43 male is not wanting. And we don't have the financial means to live the way that Caitlyn can. And
44 I think that people are holding transgender people at a level because now that Caitlyn has come
45 out and she's got that misconception that people expect us to look like that 100% every single
46 day and that's not fair.
47

- 1 AJ: So what are the ways that we can combat that or shift that narrative if you will?
2
- 3 QV: I think, I think that people should really just kind of not always look at your appearance as, as, as
4 a factor or, you know, having that conception as, "Well, okay, now that you live as a woman or
5 that you live as a man, you have to look like this." I think that people really need to look at us as
6 a person.
7
- 8 AJ: Mhm.
9
- 10 QV: Because beauty is skin deep. It's, you know, we have our natural looks and we don't go to bed
11 like that everyday. And I think that people really need to understand that there is so much more
12 than appearance and fashion and hair and glamour that we're real human beings, and this is
13 who we are. And I think that people really need to look at that and not always classify the whole
14 cover girl glamour Caitlyn Jenner type aspect.
15
- 16 AJ: Yeah, no that's, that's beautiful.
17
- 18 QV: And I think that's something that is lacking in, in the transgender community. I think people
19 have this misconception that we have to look a certain way and be on a pedestal every single
20 day.
21
- 22 AJ: Mhm. Yeah. It's, and that's a hard, uh...
23
- 24 QV: It is.
25
- 26 AJ: ... standard to live up to.
27
- 28 QV: Yep.
29
- 30 AJ: Have you been involved in any sort of counternarratives to that, uh, perception?
31
- 32 QV: Counternarratives as you mean like comparisons to Caitlyn Jenner?
33
- 34 AJ: Well, less about comparisons but more about saying, "Hey, this is, this is the real face of
35 transgender people. These are the real issues that transgender people face or this is how
36 transgender people really look when they wake up in the morning." Have you been apart of any
37 of those kinds of projects or activities?
38
- 39 QV: No, I haven't been a part of those projects but I would love to. Uhm, but I've been faced with
40 perceptions of more, of how my appearance. You know, I've been compared to you need to look
41 like this every single day and now that you, okay, well now that you're a woman your hair
42 should look like this and your makeup should always be on point and you should always have
43 the nails and, you know, I'm just in a place in my life where sometimes financial means is more
44 important to me than those materialistic things.
45
- 46 AJ: Yeah.
47

- 1 QV: And I just don't like when people compare me to Caitlyn Jenner because I'm not Caitlyn Jenner,
2 and I'm never gonna be Caitlyn Jenner. I'm Quinn Villagomez, and I think that people should
3 really embrace me for who I am as a person because I would love people to love me and to look
4 at me more than my appearance and more than my looks because there's so much more to me
5 as a human being than my looks and my appearance.
6
- 7 AJ: Absolutely. Uhm, have you ever worked for or volunteered with any, uhm, trans or LGBT
8 organizations before?
9
- 10 QV: I have not. I have always wanted to do this. One thing, Andrea, that I will tell you that is still on
11 my plate of things I would love to do is I would love to be a motivational speaker. I would love to
12 walk into a room full of people, of straight people, a lot of haters, a lot of just big thuggish boys,
13 I really would.
14
- 15 AJ: [Laughs]. Right.
16
- 17 QV: I would love to share my story. I would love to share my story of, of who I am as a person and
18 where I've come. You know, from my roadblocks to my depression to everything. That's
19 something that I've always wanted to do. I've always wanted to get into a big arena...
20
- 21 AJ: Mhm.
22
- 23 QV: ... and just share my story with over five hundred people.
24
- 25 AJ: Oh wow.
26
- 27 QV: So that's something I've always wanted to do. But, yes, I've always wanted to, to work with the
28 LGBT community, especially trans youth.
29
- 30 AJ: Mhm.
31
- 32 QV: I think that's something that I would love to do so much. And I would love to just work with
33 them and, and, and be like an inspiration to that young trans youth today.
34
- 35 AJ: Can you move just a little bit? A little more in the light. Don't go too far. [Laughs].
36
- 37 QV: Sorry. Uhm, is there more light here?
38
- 39 AJ: No, that's fine, just sit.
40
- 41 QV: Right here?
42
- 43 AJ: Yeah.
44
- 45 QV: Okay.
46

- 1 AJ: Perfect. Perfect. And, you know, we're just about, uh, done here. Uhm, so what do you, what do
2 you think the transgender community is going to be like in fifty years?
3
- 4 QV: In fifty years I think the transgender community is gonna be so powerful. I think that we're going
5 to be so shamazingly accepted. I think people are gonna start just, they're gonna love us
6 because it's starting to get noticed and, and we're starting to be accepted slowly.
7
- 8 AJ: Mhm.
9
- 10 QV: It's a work in progress because like I said in the LGBT community in my personal opinion I think
11 lesbian, gay, bisexual people, yes, they have their own struggles and I'm not saying that they
12 don't. But I think that there're more accepted in today's society than a transgender person. But I
13 think fifty years from now I think that transgender people, we're gonna have our voice. We're
14 gonna make, we're gonna get our shamazing stamp on the world.
15
- 16 AJ: Uhuh. [Laughs].
17
- 18 QV: And it's gonna happen. I know it is. I think that it's slowly coming about. We have a lot of work
19 to do, but I think it's about sticking together and, and being in community of, of support and not
20 so much about hatred. Uhm, but, you know, and, and I would love to see local communities like
21 especially here in the Twin Cities come together. Transgender women and men of color really
22 just showing who we are and, and, you know, speaking our mind, our voices, sharing our stories
23 and not just, you know, I, I don't want Caitlyn Jenner to just be the role model for our
24 community because there are hundreds and thousands of transgender women and men of color
25 and transgender people all across this country today that are making their own mark in some
26 way. Not just because they were a former Olympian or a reality television star.
27
- 28 AJ: Mhm.
29
- 30 QV: You know, like for me, like I'm an ordinary human being. And, you know, I work, I work a
31 fulltime job, paycheck to paycheck, and, you know, I'm not rich and famous but I feel that in
32 some way I'm making a mark in some way. And I really hope that like my story or that my voice
33 is inspiring. If not, one person many people across the Twin Cities or across the world but I think
34 definitely that the transgender community is gonna make a shamazing mark across the world
35 fifty years from now. Watch out everyone. We're coming.
36
- 37 AJ: I love, love, love that word. I love, love, love you Shimmer.
38
- 39 QV: Thank you.
40
- 41 AJ: And I'm so thrilled that you were a part of this project. Thank you so much.
42
- 43 QV: I appreciate it. From the bottom of my shamazing heart to be a part of this experience.
44
- 45 AJ: Alright. Well thank you.
46
- 47 QV: Thank you. Bye.