

Micah King  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

December 23, 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  
[jenki120@umn.edu](mailto:jenki120@umn.edu)  
(612) 625-4379

- 1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ  
2 Micah King -MK  
3
- 4 AJ: So, hello.  
5 MK: Hello.
- 6 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project  
7 at the University of Minnesota. Today is December 23, 2015, just two days before Christmas.  
8 I'm here with Micah King. And so Micah, I'm going to just ask you if you can introduce yourself,  
9 state your preferred pronouns, your gender identity as it is today, and then your gender  
10 assigned at birth.
- 11 MK: All right. So, you might have to repeat some of those questions, but name is Micah King and I  
12 am a trans man. My pronouns are him, he, his and my gender at birth is female. Did I get . . . ?
- 13 AJ: You got them all. How old are you, Micah?
- 14 MK: I am 22.
- 15 AJ: Twenty-two years old, wow. Let me start out with a question that I ask everybody. Tell me  
16 about your earliest memory in life. What's the earliest thing you remember? And keep in mind  
17 it doesn't have to be related to your gender identity but if it is, that's cool.
- 18 MK: My earliest memory in life . . . I think one of them . . . one of my earliest memories in life is like, I  
19 had to be about nine years old and just starting to get breasts and things. My family, for some  
20 odd reason – I don't know, they're like . . . I remember my step-mom having me show my nana  
21 my chest as one of my earliest memories.
- 22 AJ: Wow.
- 23 MK: And feeling really out of place, do you know what I mean? I feel like that was one of my . . . I  
24 don't remember a lot of my childhood but that was . . . well, I do but just not a lot of good  
25 things. And then . . .
- 26 AJ: So did that make you feel awkward? Uncomfortable?
- 27 MK: Well just kind of like why are they interested in this kind of thing?
- 28 AJ: Well you were kind of young. Nine is a little young to start budding breasts.
- 29 MK: True.
- 30 AJ: But it happens, I think – you know.
- 31 MK: But just in the sense of feeling so entitled to my body, that's what made me feel uncomfortable.  
32 I get why that happens or why that's a thing. But just not really being asked or feeling like . . .
- 33 AJ: So you felt like your body was maybe being controlled.
- 34 MK: Right. Or I don't . . . yeah.

- 1 AJ: You don't have privacy in your own physicalness. Interesting. Where did you go to elementary  
2 school?
- 3 MK: I went to two elementary schools. I went to one in Plymouth and it was Oakwood, and then I  
4 went to one in Eagan and it was Pinewood.
- 5 AJ: Two woods, huh?
- 6 MK: Yeah.
- 7 AJ: What was that experience like for you?
- 8 MK: Elementary school was OK. I have a twin sister so we're the same everything together, until  
9 about . . . I want to say 7<sup>th</sup> grade actually. We were in the same classes and had the same  
10 teachers.
- 11 AJ: What was that experience like?
- 12 MK: I don't really know. She feels the same as my other siblings, I feel closer to some of my other  
13 siblings that aren't even my twin.
- 14 AJ: Really?
- 15 MK: But I didn't know anything different so I don't really know, it's just like having a brother or sister  
16 in class . . . I feel like it was nice just because I'm a big person on comfort and having her in there  
17 was very comforting.
- 18 AJ: So it was a good thing.
- 19 MK: Maybe not for her. I felt like . . . for me it was but I've always been more needy out of the both  
20 of us.
- 21 AJ: OK. Did you guys experience any sort of bullying or anything like that in school? Or you  
22 particularly?
- 23 MK: No, I would say not until I got into middle school or high school but not in elementary school.
- 24 AJ: What was that like in high school? Where did you go to high school?
- 25 MK: I went to Blaine High School.
- 26 AJ: Blaine?
- 27 MK: Yeah.
- 28 AJ: OK.
- 29 MK: And I only went there for about a year and a half just because I have a lot of mental health stuff  
30 so I went to get different treatments for that and such. But that was OK, I was just really  
31 depressed at that time in my life and that was just kind of being teased about being emo. I  
32 don't know, I feel like still other people were never really that big of worries in my head,  
33 especially people I didn't know. But, I don't know. At the same time, things also were kind of

- 1 taken in and just buried and so I feel like in that sense, of course it didn't help anything. I don'tk  
2 now.
- 3 AJ: So did you . . . what was your household like? Did you grow up with both your parents?
- 4 MK: I grew up with my grandmother. She was my legal guardian and I went home from the hospital  
5 with her. It was chaotic. My parents were around but they were in and out. My dad was  
6 around a lot more and he would take us to play sports and do after school activities and things  
7 like that. But mom would come and go and there was just a lot of chaos growing up with drugs  
8 and alcohol and too many people in one house. When I was living with my grandmother I  
9 shared a room with my two sisters and two of my cousins and then my two brothers that lived  
10 there had their room that they shared.
- 11 AJ: So it was a little hectic, huh?
- 12 MK: Yeah.
- 13 AJ: When did you first start realizing that you were not quite the gender you were assigned at birth?
- 14 MK: So, I would say when I moved to St. Paul and I lived at the Booth Brown House, there was a  
15 couple of trans guys that worked there. So I was about 18 and they're the first trans people I've  
16 ever met. My mind just was like something is hitting harder than it should right now and I feel  
17 like . . . so then I just kind of . . . I don't know, I feel like I gave myself a lot of leeway and not  
18 really jumping into it. It felt important to me to kind of explore it first and things like that. But  
19 yeah, I knew just because . . . I don't know, it just hit a heartstring way too hard. I've always  
20 known there was something off . . . I don't know, something off and I've always been the weird  
21 ones out of my siblings, which is fine. I embrace weirdness to the fullest now because of it. So I  
22 just started getting new clothes and just kind of really evaluating who I am as a person and what  
23 I want in life. I had just started getting out of a deep depression, so in my mind it was just like I  
24 wasn't even conscious of so many things . . . not even connected to gender but just even mental  
25 health stuff. I knew it was happening but I wasn't really able to connect with it, I wasn't really  
26 awake – I was very asleep in the sense of like . . . not in the sense of actually sleeping a lot but  
27 just not really having my own voice or not really deciding things for myself, so just kind of going  
28 with the flow. I have a twin sister so it was easy to . . . we would go to school and we'd pick out  
29 school outfits, I'd follow her around and be like, "Well, you always know what to get." She used  
30 to hate it, she'd be like, "Why are you following me around? Go pick out your own stuff."
- 31 AJ: Did you guys dress exactly alike?
- 32 MK: No, I mean I would always try to dress like her and never got it right. So it would be like . . . I  
33 would get similar things to her. One year she got a blue tank top and a blue . . . not a dress thing  
34 but something you would wear jeans under or something and then I got a pink shirt and a pink  
35 and orange thing, same thing that she got. One year she got a black and gray striped shirt and I  
36 got one, but it wasn't the same as hers. It was all these things that didn't quite work out for me.
- 37 AJ: Right, right. So when you were 18, that was the first time you started kind of realizing, "Hey, I  
38 have my own identity."

- 1 MK: Yes, that's the first time I had actually lived by myself so not only was I figuring out who I was  
2 but how to navigate life as a pedult. That's still in the process, just saying.
- 3 AJ: As it will continue to be, trust me.
- 4 MK: But it was the first time just realizing I have a voice and . . . I don't know, I didn't know who I was  
5 for a long time. It didn't bother me that I didn't know, but then it did.
- 6 AJ: So you're pretty open about mental health concerns. Talk to me a little bit about that. Why do  
7 you feel it's important to be sort of out and vocal and do you do any sort of advocacy around  
8 mental health issues? Any work in the mental health community?
- 9 MK: No. I mean, I volunteer at Reclaim in their . . . they provide therapy for trans youth of color, well  
10 all youth.
- 11 AJ: But they have a strong emphasis on trans youth of color.
- 12 MK: Yeah. I don't know, I think just personally I've struggled with it a lot. There is a span of at least .  
13 . . most of my life from 11-20 or 21, so just really this last year I feel like I've been able to come  
14 out of my shell and not be afraid to tell people not only who I am but what I've been through.  
15 But I think it's really big because there's a lot of mental health issues in my family and there's a  
16 lot of stigma around mental health and not getting help and just . . . I don't know, I think what  
17 really kind of makes me be more vocal about is when I was younger I just . . . I don't know, I  
18 don't know if it's because there was so much chaos with my family. When I went to get mental  
19 health help from hospitals and day treatments and stuff, I didn't want to talk to a person of  
20 color even a little bit – even a little bit. And I don't know if it's because they reminded me of my  
21 family or if they . . . I felt like maybe that's where most of my hurt came from, but I don't know.  
22 I don't know. And now at Reclaim there's quite a few people of color and there's a therapist  
23 there . . . I don't know, I haven't talked to her, I'm not her client or anything, but I'm just . . . I'm  
24 really glad to just see her there and know that . . . I don't know, now it feels good to make peace  
25 with that. And just within the queer community, just different communities – queer, spiritual  
26 community, it's important to me to have people of color that are in them now in the sense that .  
27 . . I don't know, people of color aren't the only people that, you know what I mean, do wrong. I  
28 didn't think that but I was scared that maybe . . . I don't know. I didn't know, because I had  
29 never gotten help before then.
- 30 AJ: You know, I think there's some truth to these notions or concepts about internalized racism,  
31 internalized homophobia, internalized transphobia.
- 32 MK: And things you don't even notice and then you're like, "What have I been doing? Why has this  
33 been like this in my mind?"
- 34 AJ: Well I appreciate your openness and being willing to sort of amplify that particular issue because  
35 I think it's real that trans-identified people, we all deal with the same sorts of challenges that all  
36 other communities face and deal with, particularly around mental health, as you noted. The  
37 stigma around it is big and so people try to hide it or . . .
- 38 MK: Cover it up.

- 1 AJ: Don't cover it up, don't seek care, self-medicate. So I just want to acknowledge that and say  
2 good for you to take steps to try to understand what's happening and take steps to try and deal  
3 with those issues as they arise. That's very brave and it's very smart.
- 4 MK: I feel like my depression was so, so deep. I used to self-harm as well for a long time. So it was  
5 just a lot and I just . . . once I got out of it, I was just like I have to get every skeleton out of the  
6 closet now, I have to try to work through everything, because when I get to be my parent's age I  
7 don't want to . . . I don't know, I just don't want anything to come up later in my life that was  
8 there and came out. If other things come up as expected – OK, we'll deal with that. But I don't  
9 want anything coming out of any types of closets, I want all the doors to be open, all of them to  
10 be . . . you know. I don't know, I'm just tired of feeling unrest – that I need to hide myself,  
11 because I've always . . . I don't know, I consider myself an eccentric person and I feel like I've  
12 always failed too much for people sometimes, in my head – maybe I'm not but I feel like it.
- 13 AJ: People can handle a lot. Let me ask you this, so what terms do you use to describe yourself  
14 today and how has that changed over time?
- 15 MK: I feel like one of my big words now is just queer because I feel like just my . . . I identify as a  
16 trans man but my personality and who I am is very just queer. There's not . . . I feel like people  
17 have these boxes, that once you are a trans guy you have to be all this. I'm not going to fit in  
18 anyone's box and so I feel like . . . I don't know, just like . . .
- 19 AJ: Queer creates that space for you to just be.
- 20 MK: Right, to just be. Whether it's . . .
- 21 AJ: How do you define queer?
- 22 MK: How do I define queer? Queer to me seems like just very open – you know what I mean? And  
23 very . . . because there's a lot of things that I can say I'm like but then you can bring in  
24 something else and I'll be like, "Oh, I kind of like that too." So it's like it kind of helps me think  
25 that oh, I'm queer and it's like I'm just kind of open to everything.
- 26 AJ: That's awesome. And has that changed over time? Did you ever identify as a lesbian or a  
27 heterosexual? Did you ever use that language to describe yourself?
- 28 MK: No, it definitely has changed. Before I transitioned I was just like . . . I've always known I like  
29 women but I was just never sure about the man part.
- 30 AJ: Yeah.
- 31 MK: So for a lot of the time I was just like, "Oh, I'm bi-sexual." And then I was like, "Well, this whole  
32 men thing feels weird. What do you mean boyfriend?" Now it's just different in the sense of . . .  
33 I don't know, I think maybe in my mind it was harder to wrap around. But now I don't feel the  
34 same, I just like who I like, I like people, and . . . I don't know. I feel like before then I was just  
35 kind of feeling like I needed to be stuck on one type of person but now I'm just looking for a soul  
36 that I can kind of connect with and whatever body they come with is the body they come with.
- 37 AJ: Yeah, that's cool. What challenges have you faced since you began to express your true gender  
38 identity, if any – maybe you haven't?

- 1 MK: Like personal challenges or public challenges?
- 2 AJ: Either.
- 3 MK: Public, I'm going to start with that one. Ignorance, of course, but just . . . I feel like publically I  
4 had the hardest time with people . . . I feel like I'm a good person, I do good things, but people  
5 try to make me feel like I'm this monster, this weird person that I'm not. And when they have  
6 things that they . . . that aren't them that they can't change that are way worse than being who I  
7 am. I think I'm fantastic who I am.
- 8 AJ: Sure.
- 9 MK: So just really trying to figure out how people put this in their head and the ways people think  
10 about it is entertaining nonetheless. But, yeah. I just . . . I've been surprised by people though  
11 too, in a good way. So even though there are the ignorant people and you're just like, "Oh my  
12 goodness, where did you come from?" There are people that are like, "You know . . ."
- 13 AJ: I get you.
- 14 MK: Right. Personally, it's probably been the hardest part about transitioning is the internalized  
15 stuff. Just kind of . . . I know that I'm very feminine in just who I am, and now I've become,  
16 slowly but surely, more comfortable with that. At first there was a lot of like, "Oh, I can't do this  
17 with my hands." Just a lot of internalized homophobia of just kind of being like, "Oh, they're  
18 probably going to think I'm gay or . . ." And now I'm like, "Gay people are fantastic, so what if  
19 you think I'm part of . . ." I just don't even care anymore. That and just realizing my worth and  
20 just realizing that I have a space at the same platform as everyone else. I feel like, just not even  
21 through my transition but growing up, that's been a hard thing for me is knowing that I'm worth  
22 something and that I have a place in the world. I've always put everyone else on this pedestal  
23 and I'm still down here, and now I'm finally up on the same pedestal as everyone else. That  
24 took a long while to get there. It feels good to not only feel like I'm valued in the same way by  
25 other people but be valued in the same way by myself. So that probably was one of the biggest  
26 things of just kind of . . .
- 27 AJ: That's a great lead-in to my next question which is what have been some of the positive aspects  
28 that you've experienced since expressing your true gender identity?
- 29 MK: I have this new-found confidence to just be unapologetically me. I'm still awkward as heck but  
30 that's OK, I own that too as just part of who I am. I don't know, it's just let me embrace a lot of  
31 things that I felt were broken about me or not right or weird. I've been able to . . . especially  
32 meet other people like me and just kind of be like . . . I think it's easier to deny things when it's  
33 just me but when I see other trans people and how beautiful they are and how just . . . there's  
34 no denying it for me and then it's like, "Well, they're like me." I can't be all these people except  
35 one, I feel like, in that aspect in my mind. So it kind of helps me see how beautiful I am when I  
36 reflect on other people.
- 37 AJ: What's your relationship like with your birth family now? You mentioned to me earlier that  
38 you're going to go home and hang out with the family for Christmas tomorrow.



- 1 MK: Yeah, Christmas. My family . . . we're all hard headed, we're all lovable but we're all hard  
2 headed. But we usually have a good time, we're usually able to just be together and set aside  
3 things and have fun. We like to sing and dance together. You can definitely feel the force of  
4 love with my family when we get together – everyone's hugging or just kind of . . .
- 5 AJ: Laughing and sharing good stories.
- 6 MK: Right, or how you've been and things like that.
- 7 AJ: So you would classify your relationship as pretty close then – to your family?
- 8 MK: I wouldn't say pretty close because they don't really know what I go through, they don't know a  
9 lot of my struggles. Some of my siblings do that I'm closer to – there's probably two or three of  
10 them that I just . . .
- 11 AJ: How many siblings do you have again?
- 12 MK: I have eight.
- 13 AJ: Eight – wow.
- 14 MK: Eight siblings.
- 15 AJ: That's a big family.
- 16 MK: My parents, like my cousins . . . I have a couple close cousins as well but they just know the, "Oh,  
17 how are you?" "I'm good."
- 18 AJ: The surface.
- 19 MK: Right. That's just kind of how my family is though so it doesn't necessarily feel bad, it's just how  
20 it is.
- 21 AJ: So it's not about you, per se, it's kind of how everybody is towards everybody.
- 22 MK: Yeah, so in my family there isn't really deep talks. Like when I was younger I always felt like I  
23 had to constantly be figuring stuff out, no one was going, "Oh, this is what's going on." There  
24 wasn't really a lot of talking and openness.
- 25 AJ: And that still persists today?
- 26 MK: Yeah.
- 27 AJ: Well good. Do you have a chosen family that you sort of . . .?
- 28 MK: For sure. Just like my friends and Reclaim would go in there as well.
- 29 AJ: That's part of that.
- 30 MK: Yeah. I've been a part of Reclaim for three years, so probably the same time I've been out. So I  
31 started going to see Janet . . .
- 32 AJ: Janet?

- 1 MK: Janet Bystrom, she's my therapist. I started seeing her probably the same time I started coming  
2 out – starting my transition.
- 3 AJ: To the extent that you feel comfortable, Micah, tell me about any medical interventions that  
4 you have undergone to date.
- 5 MK: All right.
- 6 AJ: As part of your transition, you don't have to tell me about cancer treatments or . . .
- 7 MK: You don't want to know when I got my tonsils out.
- 8 AJ: Right . . . I mean if that's a part of it.
- 9 MK: No. So, I've been on testosterone, so hormone replacement therapy, for about a year and a half  
10 now. Last May, I got top surgery.
- 11 AJ: Wow.
- 12 MK: So it's been a little bit over a half of year since I got my top surgery. That feels good – it feels  
13 really good to just . . . I don't know, there's a lot you have to deal to feel like you, to feel like  
14 you're comfortable and to not have to do those things feels really free and really . . . just kind of  
15 light. You feel so heavy about certain things and I guess I never really felt how my physical body  
16 felt heavy and it wasn't just weight, it wasn't my weight – it was just . . . I don't know, the  
17 constant worry of, "Oh, is this thing showing?" or, "Is this in the right place?"
- 18 AJ: Did you ever bind as a part of your process?
- 19 MK: No, I tried to bind but I just . . . I had a really big chest so it was . . . it was easier once I started  
20 my hormones to wear more sports bras and things like that. But before then there was . . . it  
21 didn't make a big enough difference for me where I felt the benefit was worth the effort.
- 22 AJ: The pain and . . .
- 23 MK: Yeah.
- 24 AJ: Not being able to breathe and all that.
- 25 MK: Yeah, it didn't . . . I don't know, it just didn't look how I wanted it to look. So I just did what I  
26 could until then.
- 27 AJ: Do you have any thoughts about any other medical stuff?
- 28 MK: No, those are all the things that have been done medically within my transition.
- 29 AJ: I mean do you have other thoughts about future . . . ?
- 30 MK: Other things?
- 31 AJ: Yeah.
- 32 MK: Yeah, I don't know how I feel about other things yet. I don't know. I know I want to have kids  
33 someday, I don't know how that's going to look for me though.

- 1 AJ: Sure.
- 2 MK: I'm not . . . I don't know, I'm not really set on anything or against anything either.
- 3 AJ: Sure, OK. So you talked a lot so far about Reclaim. Let's did into that a little bit. What is  
4 Reclaim? What's the impact it's had on your life?
- 5 MK: Reclaim is a beautiful place. It is a resource for trans youth and they have therapy. I'm also part  
6 of a group therapy, I also volunteer there. They're just . . . everybody there is just so open and  
7 affirming and they're doing work that not a lot of people are doing in the sense of . . . you know,  
8 you go to see a therapist and you're like, "Well, how was your weekend?" and they don't want  
9 to talk about it – like, I'm too messed up to possibly know about your weekend. What? Why  
10 would I ask such a thing? My mind can't handle it. And now it's very just open and they have a  
11 strong . . . everyone there has really strong integrity in the sense of letting people be who they  
12 are and being true to themselves. I don't think I've been at a place like that that has helped me  
13 work through problems as that they are things that have happened to me and not that I'm a  
14 problem. You know what I mean? I feel like I've gone through a lot of therapy places where it's  
15 felt that you're a problem and you have to be fixed, or you're broken. I think they're a big part  
16 of me feeling like I'm not broken and I don't have to be a certain type of way, I can be who I am  
17 and express myself any type of way and not have to be ashamed about anything and . . . I don't  
18 know, trying hard to . . . I want to say kind of revolutionize the therapy in the sense of it's not  
19 the normal daily place. I don't know, you would see where you go in, it's comfortable, you feel  
20 free and . . . I don't know, you just feel like you matter more so, you're not someone's paycheck  
21 but that people are genuinely interested in hearing what you have to say. I've had several  
22 therapists and I'm definitely grateful for Reclaim.
- 23 AJ: Well it sounds like they do more than just therapy too. I think they do advocacy and policy  
24 work.
- 25 MK: Sure, and there's someone there who does trainings for just . . .
- 26 AJ: Understanding transgender community.
- 27 MK: Yeah.
- 28 AJ: Do you ever do that?
- 29 MK: I haven't, no. The type of volunteering I've done for Reclaim is just kind of . . . they have a  
30 Celebrate the Love event every February and the last couple of years I've written a poem or  
31 something like that.
- 32 AJ: Oh, have you? You're a poet?
- 33 MK: Yeah, I like to do poetry and creative things.
- 34 AJ: Yeah, what other creative things beyond poetry?
- 35 MK: I like to doodle. I don't really . . . I do art in the way of . . . I don't really know what I'm drawing  
36 until I'm done and I kind of doodle until it turns out to be this thing and it's kind of what it is at  
37 the end. But my main thing is poetry.

- 1 AJ: Do you see your poetry and art as a way to process your gender identity or to create awareness  
2 around gender identity? Is there a social sort of mission to your poetry at all?
- 3 MK: It depends. When I've written for certain things, like the Reclaim thing, then it's been more  
4 directed towards the subject of what they're talking about. My poetry has been a thing that's  
5 helped me a lot through my mental health, so I don't really do a lot of Spoken Word or a lot of  
6 poetry in places but . . . I mean eventually I'd like to get there but it's just kind of a personal tool  
7 that I use to kind of . . . I don't know, work things out through my mind.
- 8 AJ: So art as hearing artist, therapy artist.
- 9 MK: And I love music. I love singing.
- 10 AJ: Oh wow.
- 11 MK: I don't like being angry because then I feel like I have to lash out and that conflicts with who I  
12 am.
- 13 AJ: It's hard to be angry when you sing, right? I have to remind myself of that sometimes.
- 14 MK: And I just sing so loud then it's like yelling so you kind of get that energy out without screeching  
15 . . . I don't know, without yelling.
- 16 AJ: Wow, that's awesome. Talk to me about romance and relationships and love. How do you deal  
17 with that as a trans person? Are you in a relationship? When do you tell people you're trans?
- 18 MK: I am currently in a relationship and my partner and I, we've been together for only two months.  
19 But I've known them for about five years so they've known me before my transition and  
20 throughout my transition and up until now.
- 21 AJ: So you didn't have to tell them anything.
- 22 MK: Right, so they just knew. It was kind of just rough at first. I feel like with trying to figure out  
23 who is . . . who I'm interested in, who is going to take it well and who is not. And so, I feel like I  
24 just kind of closed that off for a while and I feel like I wasn't really interested in pursuing a  
25 relationship besides within the last six months. So it wasn't really . . . I don't know, I just was  
26 like I can't even put my brain there. I don't know, it was easy to feel kind of really unlovable in  
27 the sense of . . . I don't know, people think I'm so weird or different. I don't know, it's like  
28 there's some secret they don't know. I felt like I had a hard time just with regular interactions  
29 with people that I just didn't want to go there. I didn't necessarily . . . I don't know, I started  
30 putting my feelers out and it was . . . I think the biggest challenge still was being put in a box. Do  
31 you know what I mean? For me, like some people don't mind being in certain gender roles or  
32 doing this, but I didn't want to be in a relationship where I felt like I had to do everything that  
33 men do. Do you know what I mean?
- 34 AJ: Right, right.
- 35 MK: In this box, like I still wanted to be who I am in this relationship and I'm able to be who I am in  
36 my relationship currently and that feels really good.
- 37 AJ: So are you dating a woman or a man? Or a gender queer person or a trans person?

- 1 MK: I'm dating a gender queer person. Even just starting out on this thing, it was kind of . . . you  
2 have so much of those internalized things, do you know what I mean? You think things are  
3 going to be way scarier than they are and it's worked out really well and I'm really thankful for  
4 them. I used to feel really self-conscious at first, when we first started dating, about doing  
5 different . . . not doing different things but just kind of how I am, like more aware of what I do  
6 with my personal body or things that I think I'm supposed to do. But that didn't last very long,  
7 which I'm thankful for. I don't know, we were friends for so long that I think that really helped  
8 with not having to figure out people, you know – when you're starting to see somebody and  
9 you're trying to figure them out or what they're about. We kind of already knew and . . .
- 10 AJ: That helps.
- 11 MK: A lot.
- 12 AJ: Wow, that's great. I'm thrilled. Do you feel like your gender identity creates more  
13 opportunities for relationships with more possibilities or less possibilities?
- 14 MK: Hmmm . . . I feel like less, just because I feel like before you're normal, whatever that means,  
15 and then you're just like . . . you learn about these things and you learn what to do in these  
16 situations and I've never had someone be like, "Oh, in this situation, this is how you handle that  
17 in a trans relationship," or anything like that. I don't know. Or, in the sense of still . . . like  
18 people not truly getting who I am and so it's . . . maybe there may be the same opportunities  
19 but then you have to deal with stuff of someone wanting you to be someone you're not and just  
20 that circumstance of either . . . I don't know, whether it's being intimate with them or just  
21 talking, just . . . I don't know. I feel like a lot of people are just assuming what's inside a box  
22 instead of kind of like, "Let's see, I don't know what's in here – let's take out what's in here."  
23 Not a lot of people are willing to take out what's in there, they just kind of want what the box  
24 looks like.
- 25 AJ: Wow, that's a fascinating way to look at it.
- 26 MK: So that was hard for me. I don't want someone to tell me how my box is and what's inside of it.  
27 I feel like, to me, bodies are bodies and a lot of people just don't have the same mind frame  
28 around being in a relationship with a trans person – a body is a body. You know, you meet some  
29 people and they're like, "Oh, I'm not gay." And it's like . . .
- 30 AJ: Neither am I.
- 31 MK: Right. What made you . . .? Or just . . . I don't know. You just really have to be prepared for a  
32 lot of situations you aren't prepared for. Questions . . . all these things. The world just gives me  
33 enough anxiety already. So it took me a long time, I feel like, to make me want to put myself in  
34 that situation.
- 35 AJ: Have there been times where someone has been really helpful or really insensitive in the  
36 medical industry or in the criminal justice system or educational institutions?
- 37 MK: Yeah. I mean not in the sense of my identity, my trans identity, but to my sexuality. I went to a  
38 residential treatment center and the psychiatrist, at this time I was like, "Oh, I'm into girls," and I  
39 kind of identified as bi-sexual and the psychiatrist asked me, "Oh, so have ever been intimate

- 1 with a woman? Did you like it?" But it was like, "What does this have to do with the medication  
2 I'm on? What?" And they just . . . so that's probably the oddest question I've had from medical  
3 personnel. Usually they're pretty good around it, like talking with me, but maybe because my  
4 name isn't legally changed yet so if I don't go up to them and ask them to, "Hey, will you come  
5 and call Micah when it's time for me to go in then we'll both be looking for the person they  
6 called." And then I'll go up there and be like, "Yeah, you know that's me," but I wasn't about to .  
7 . .
- 8 AJ: Out myself.
- 9 MK: It's not even that . . . not out myself, it just feels uncomfortable. You know, when you're in a  
10 waiting room everyone is like, "Oh, who is this person?" I know I do that just because you're  
11 there and you're waiting.
- 12 AJ: We're humans, right?
- 13 MK: So yeah.
- 14 AJ: Do doctors get weird about providing you general health care?
- 15 MK: I don't think so. I don't think I've had any awkward things like that. The pharmacy I go to, they  
16 still "she" me. I'm just like whatever, I'm in there for two minutes.
- 17 AJ: Where you go to get your hormones?
- 18 MK: Yeah.
- 19 AJ: Wow.
- 20 MK: And it's the only place I've been to get my hormones the whole year and a half, so it's not like  
21 they see me come in every month and, you know, "Something's changed." But that's just kind  
22 of like, "Really?" Like, "Really?"
- 23 AJ: What about race? How does race play into your gender identity? As you begin to present more  
24 and more masculine, have you experienced any sort of societal or police sort of discrimination  
25 because of being perceived as a Black man?
- 26 MK: Yeah, I was coming home from work one morning, like at 6 a.m. because I work overnights at  
27 Super America, and I was getting off the light rail and this lady was . . . probably a middle-aged  
28 white lady was standing at the crosswalk to cross the street and I said . . . you know, she had this  
29 ring that connected to her bracelet and so I was just trying to be funny, because I think I'm  
30 pretty funny, and I said, "So, is that technically a ring or a bracelet?" And she literally just stood  
31 – took big steps away from me. I was just like, "OK, have a good morning," and just kind of kept  
32 going on my way but I was like, "What did I do?"
- 33 AJ: So she read you as a Black man and . . .
- 34 MK: Or something . . .
- 35 AJ: . . . was nervous.

- 1 MK: And I was just like . . . that was probably one of the first times that I knew, there was no other  
2 explanation. It was just like her face . . . she just got uncomfortable and moved away all fast. So  
3 I got uncomfortable and moved away all fast too.
- 4 AJ: No interactions with police?
- 5 MK: No. I stay in the house a lot.
- 6 AJ: That's good.
- 7 MK: I love little kids and so I feel like I have to be extra careful about looking at people's children or  
8 like, "Oh, you're baby is super cute," or, "They're super adorable." It's like, "I'm not a creep,  
9 they're just super adorable."
- 10 AJ: Right. How do kids respond to you?
- 11 MK: Oh my goodness. I get a lot of confused child stares.
- 12 AJ: Yeah.
- 13 MK: Which doesn't really bother me that much because they're children.
- 14 AJ: So when you get the question, how do you respond? "Are you a boy or a girl?"
- 15 MK: I'm just like, "I'm a boy." And then they're like, "OK." I had a customer at Super America and  
16 she has two 11-year-old daughters and they came in and they were like, "Is that a boy or a girl?"  
17 And she was one of my regular customers and she was like, "Well why don't you go ask them?"  
18 I was just able to tell them who I am and they're like, "OK." But I haven't really had that  
19 question from a lot of just stray children I don't know, just because . . . well I try not to . . . I just  
20 have my headphones on and I'm in the world with my headphones on basically when I'm by  
21 myself just because . . . I don't know, I have a lot of anxiety. It kind of eases my anxiety to listen  
22 to music.
- 23 AJ: So you kind of tune the world out basically.
- 24 MK: Yeah.
- 25 AJ: So you talked about when you were 18 and you're living at the . . .
- 26 MK: Booth Brown House.
- 27 AJ: Booth Brown House. And that was the first time you ever met a trans person. Are you still in  
28 contact with those people today?
- 29 MK: No. There was a . . .
- 30 AJ: Did you come out to them? Or did you just recognize them and then recognize within yourself?
- 31 MK: Yeah, I came out to them and they were able to kind of . . . I don't know. I asked them like  
32 where can I get a binder? Because I did get a few binders but just decided they weren't for me  
33 after a while.
- 34 AJ: Yeah, right – you've got to try things out.

- 1 MK: Right. So they knew and . . . I don't know. Where I worked it was like a housing place for people  
2 16-24 and it was like a . . . but then upstairs they had like a youth homeless shelter. The people  
3 that I met they mostly worked in the shelter so I didn't get to talk to them a lot and so I would  
4 just kind of see them in passing. And then I think I actually talked to a different staff that was  
5 there, at Booth Brown, and they were like, "Oh, well maybe you should talk to them." And then  
6 it was just like . . . mind blown. In all good ways though. I definitely wouldn't change anything  
7 now.
- 8 AJ: Are there any trans people that you see as role models, that you kind of look to to get strength  
9 and inspiration?
- 10 MK: For sure. I have two people who I consider my big brothers that have really . . . we just have so  
11 much in common and we've lived a lot of the same things in life. One, he's going to school for  
12 therapy – to be a mental health provider, so he sits in on my therapy every week. And then the  
13 other one is a pastor.
- 14 AJ: Do you mind naming?
- 15 MK: Well I don't mind but I don't know if they would mind.
- 16 AJ: Sure, that's fine.
- 17 MK: I'll just say their first names, that can't hurt much. So Pastor Lawrence, and he . . . we've just, I  
18 don't know – I feel like if he had a child it would be me.
- 19 AJ: Wow.
- 20 MK: I don't know, he just gets a lot of my life.
- 21 AJ: Do you call him dad?
- 22 MK: No, they're both just big brothers. Just big brothers. And then Kamar, it's great to have  
23 someone who sits in on my therapy and knows things that I don't tell mostly everyone. And  
24 then, at the same time, be able to hang out with him as well and just kind of be free. Do you  
25 know what I mean? I don't know too many of my friends who are like, "Yeah, come listen to  
26 every aspect of my life and then let's go hang out." I don't know, he's just a very amazing  
27 person.
- 28 AJ: Do you have any plans of going to college?
- 29 MK: I do. I want help heal people but not in a therapy way. I want to go to school for psychology  
30 just so I have . . . or social work, just so that I have that kind of background. I think I want to do  
31 more like shaman work or just something with energy, to just kind of . . .
- 32 AJ: Shockra work did you say?
- 33 MK: Shaman.
- 34 AJ: Shaman work – ahhh.
- 35 MK: Yeah, like energy work. Just because I feel like I have a lot of things in me that I've . . . just  
36 wounds that have either been covered up or that you don't know they were there. I'm



1 interested in having those healings done on me and I feel like . . . I don't know, I've just always  
2 been into that kind of stuff. And I don't know a lot about it honestly but it's like I need to find  
3 out so once I get the mojo to go and find out about it . . . I don't know, I love people, I just . . . I  
4 feel like I have a lot of unconditional love that just pours out of me and I know that I can kind of  
5 hold a lot of hurt and being able to . . . I don't know if you can necessarily let go of pain, but I  
6 believe that you can transform it into something different and something better. So, that's kind  
7 of where my art things come out too – being able to transform things.

8 AJ: What was it like when you came out to your family?

9 MK: Not confusing but a lot of them . . . I feel like a lot of them didn't believe me. It felt like between  
10 my family and society, in general, I just felt like a joke. No one really took me seriously. I felt  
11 like I really had to just kind of . . . beat it in their heads. Some of them were like, "OK, are you  
12 sure?" And that's all that they needed to know. Since then I've been in their heads that way but  
13 even now, it's been three years and I'm still correcting pronouns and, "Oh, I didn't mean to . . ."  
14 You can obviously tell when there's people who have been like, "OK, it doesn't bother me," and  
15 they took the steps to call me what I want to be called. But then there's people like, "Oh, I  
16 support you," the fake supporters and you're like, "I hear you but your actions still speak louder  
17 than words." And a lot of people don't . . . I didn't get that as much until I started going through  
18 things in life and people would say, "Oh, I support you in this aspect." And it's like, "Yeah, you  
19 support me in this aspect but not fully." Do you know what I mean? They don't understand the  
20 ways that they say, "Oh, I support you," but then you do this and that's a clear indication that  
21 you don't support me in that way.

22 AJ: How did you come out? What did you say?

23 MK: I just kind of . . . I didn't tell everyone as a whole because that would have been way too  
24 awkward for me, and I just was not . . . still I couldn't do something like that I feel like. So I just,  
25 each by person I just told them. Family is top.

26 AJ: Right, once you tell one person and . . .

27 MK: It's just going to keep going. I feel like at first there were some people who didn't want to  
28 necessarily accept it. Like my mom told me that she felt like she had to grieve and she had to  
29 kind of get to know a whole different person, which is somewhat true, in the sense of I was so  
30 used to trying to be on the guidelines of who I thought I was supposed to be and do that I wasn't  
31 ever really able to . . .

32 AJ: Fully express yourself.

33 MK: Right, and just be fully genuine. Everybody I meet, they can tell that it feels right. And that was  
34 . . . to me I knew it felt right but that was another experience to have people tell me that as well.  
35 Things feel like . . . just my energy felt a lot better. I don't know, my family is still working on it  
36 but there is no doubt in my mind that they won't get it eventually just because . . . I don't know,  
37 even just like the older people in my family, they all call me Micah. They have trouble with my  
38 pronouns but I correct everyone. I'll be at work and they'll be like – you know, some people still,  
39 "Ma'am," me at work and then I'll be like, "I'm a sir but what kind of cigarettes did you want?"  
40 Everyone. That's kind of the hardest part, to have to defend myself and correct people so much.

1 I feel like it's put me on edge where I'm constantly like, "On it, I'm on it." You say something, I  
2 won't give you space to take a breath and correct yourself. And I mean now I'm getting better  
3 at giving people space to . . . I don't know, like my mom. She's a person who normally gets my  
4 pronouns right but she slips up. At first I would get so defensive and it's like . . . I feel like you  
5 fight for something so hard and then people start calling you what you want to be called and  
6 then, "OK, how do I react to this in a way that's good or isn't . . ." Because it is what I want but I  
7 was so used to have to feel like I needed . . . you know, on defense.

8 AJ: Sure.

9 MK: And you never know when you're going to have to be on defense. But, hopefully that can  
10 subside a little.

11 AJ: Yeah, I hope that you're right and that it does continue to get better with your family.

12 MK: No, I mean it will. It will or . . . it will get better or it won't matter to me any longer. In the sense  
13 of . . . I feel like I'm still going to want them to call me what I want to be called but you're just  
14 going to be over there and I'm just going to be over here. It's sad to think but it's like . . . I don't  
15 know. I feel like it's not a hard thing. People have different things you have to accept and get  
16 over all the time, it might not be name and pronouns but there are a lot of things. And so, I feel  
17 like people who call me what I want to be called have truly accepted who I am.

18 AJ: What do you think the relationship is between the LGB and the T?

19 MK: Ahhh.

20 AJ: Or what is it like in your own experience?

21 MK: I thought why would LGB people not understand . . . I don't know, in my mind I thought they  
22 would understand trans issues, I thought before I understood. But it's not the case. It's  
23 definitely . . . you said how do I think it connects to them?

24 AJ: Well, what is the relationship? We talk about it in this sort of one big acronym or one big happy  
25 family but some people think that there is some significant challenges with the T being  
26 associated with LGB. Whatever your thoughts are is fine.

27 MK: So, I just . . . I think they are connected in the sense that they're all considered to be taboo  
28 things or things that are . . . I don't know.

29 AJ: Or sexual minorities, if you will.

30 MK: And so . . . I don't know, I feel like it's in the right category but I feel like it's kind of left out a lot.  
31 I don't feel like it's . . .

32 AJ: The T.

33 MK: I don't feel like it's the T that it should be because, you know, I feel like when I tell people I'm  
34 trans, they'll be like, "Oh, I have a gay cousin." It's like I understand why you would think that  
35 way because the L, the G, and the B are about sexuality so why wouldn't the T. But, I just . . . it  
36 makes me just, "All right, that's cool that your cousin is gay but what I'm talking about is totally  
37 different than what your cousin is." And so I feel like the T needs to be explained as it really is

- 1           and given more attention because you can go and ask anyone, “So what is the L in the LGBT to  
2           you?” Or the B or the G and then once you get to the T, I don’t feel like they’d have as much to  
3           say or they’d know as much.
- 4   AJ:     That’s true.
- 5   MK:     Yeah.
- 6   AJ:     Do you think that there is an agenda for the transgender community? And if so, what is it?
- 7   MK:     You mean the trans agenda?
- 8   AJ:     Yes, the trans agenda – what is it?
- 9   MK:     I just feel like we just . . . we want to be people. I feel like for me I try to . . . it’s kind of  
10          interesting now that I’m further in my transition to kind of be stealth, so to speak. Talk to  
11          people and then it’s like once I do come out to them it’s like not necessarily different but it’s like  
12          all of a sudden you’re this thing and . . . I don’t know, I feel like there needs to be more people-  
13          izing in the T as well. We’re all people, I’m a person. I don’t know. I hope that more people see  
14          that there isn’t a normal – that this whole normal thing just needs to be chunked out the  
15          window, or what is right and what is wrong. I just want to be what I am, what is, and . . . I don’t  
16          know, just to be . . . I don’t know, made aware. I feel like at my jobs that . . . the people at my  
17          jobs have been like . . . I had a shift lead who actually told one of my overnight people that, “You  
18          know, we have this girl who works here and she likes to be called he and him so just call her he  
19          and him.” Do you not hear what you’re saying? You don’t hear what you’re saying right now, it  
20          doesn’t comprehend in any other way and that’s fine, but I just . . . I have a wish that people  
21          wouldn’t be also as entitled to say, “This is what trans is,” and put everybody in that same box.  
22          There isn’t even a normal trans. Do you know what I mean?
- 23   AJ:     Right. The trans experience is different – which is why we’re doing this project and I’m so glad  
24          that you’re a part of it. So, last question, Micah. What do you think the world will be like  
25          related to transgender people in the next 50 years?
- 26   MK:     In the next 50 years?
- 27   AJ:     Yeah.
- 28   MK:     If we’re not just . . . you know, shining fabulously in the world in 50 years, I don’t know what I’m  
29          going to do. I don’t know, I have pretty high hopes for . . . just the world. I don’t know if it’s  
30          because I’m just really optimistic but I hope that it’s a thing, that our T is incorporated more in  
31          the world and that . . . I don’t know, that it won’t be so taboo. Do you know what I mean? It  
32          will be a thing that’s taught and things won’t . . . it will be part of the norm, so to speak. I don’t  
33          know, where we can just be as free as we want to be and express ourselves without having to  
34          come with a disclaimer or an explanation. I feel like often people want to know, “Why are you  
35          doing this? Why are you doing this?” And I find myself in a hard place answering that question  
36          because I couldn’t imagine not doing it. Do you know what I mean?
- 37   AJ:     It’s like, “Why are you eating?”
- 38   MK:     Right, you’re hungry.

- 1 AJ: Because I'm a human being and I have to eat.
- 2 MK: Yeah. And I'm a human being so I have to live my own life and be true to who I am.
- 3 AJ: Absolutely.
- 4 MK: So I think . . . I don't know, I just think about how . . . I think about my grandpa a lot in these  
5 situations where he used to be a shoe shine boy in Chicago and now he is living with a Black  
6 president and just how, in his lifetime, he's been able to see something like that . . .
- 7 AJ: So much has changed.
- 8 MK: So much with color. I have good hopes in the rainbow world for that too.
- 9 AJ: Optimism. I love it. Thank you so much, Micah.
- 10 MK: Yes.
- 11 AJ: I appreciate your time today. Have a great holiday.
- 12 MK: I will.