

Ashley Finch
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

April 5, 2017



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

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

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

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1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 Ashley Finch -AF
3
4 AJ: So, hello. My name is Andrea Jenkins. I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History
5 Project at the University of Minnesota Libraries. We are filming in the studios of 3940 Park
6 Avenue.
7 AF: Yup.
8 AJ: Right here in lovely Minneapolis. Today is April 5.
9 AF: Fifth, mmhmm.
10 AJ: 2017. And - yeah - I probably should've said the Tretter Collection Oral History Project at the
11 University of Minnesota libraries.
12 AF: There we go.
13 AJ: Get the whole title in there.
14 AF: Yup.
15 AJ: But I'm here today with Ashley Finch! Ashley, how are you doing?
16 AF: Woo! Overall, pretty well.
17 AJ: Yeah?
18 AF: Yeah.
19 AJ: Wow. Ashley. State your name. Spell it, so we make sure we got the spelling correct. And I know
20 it's pretty basic spelling, but also - yeah, some people go with the I in the Ashley - yeah - you
21 know. There are all kinds of ways. So, name. Gender identity, today. And your gender
22 assignment at birth, and your pronouns.
23 AF: Okay. I'm - well, my name's Ashley Finch, and you spell that A-S-H-L-E-Y, and then the last name
24 is F-I-N-C-H. My preferred pronouns are she/her. I don't mind gender neutral pronouns at all, so
25 if those - it doesn't really - I've had people, like, refer to me with gender neutral pronouns
26 before and it doesn't bother me at all, so.
27 AJ: Oh, cool. That's awesome.
28 AF: And then - let's see - today's date - no - the date -
29 AJ: No - Assigned at birth...
30 AF: Oh my god. I was assigned, I was assigned male - yes - I was assigned male at birth.
31 AJ: Is that right?
32 AF: Yup.

- 1 AJ: Wow.
- 2 AF: Mmhmm.
- 3 AJ: Wow, I'm so glad to have you here today, Ashley.
- 4 AF: Yup! Thank you.
- 5 AJ: I know this is a really big, big big day for you.
- 6 AF: Yeah.
- 7 AJ: But I want to just - before we actually move into all that's happening in your life and in your
8 world, tell me what your earliest memory is.
- 9 AF: My earliest memory...
- 10 AJ: In life.
- 11 AF: Oh my god.
- 12 AJ: It doesn't have to have anything to do with your gender identity, although if it does, that's
13 perfectly fine.
- 14 AF: Mmhmm. I'm trying to think back, and...I think my earliest memories are probably playing with
15 my brother. And then...yeah, I don't...Playing with my brother, and then feeling like - just,
16 something was never, like, right. I don't know if that - you know, it doesn't - I don't think that
17 has - I don't think that just has to do with, like, my gender identity, but there was...I remember
18 being like, really really really, like, from a really really young age, like, I have a - I have a four year
19 old, so I like look at him and I go "Oh, he's this age. I remember having, like, memories of things
20 when I was that age." And so it was - definitely just like - playing with my brother, he was just a
21 little bit younger than I am. And then just this pervasive feeling that something just wasn't okay
22 with what was going on in the world.
- 23 AJ: Hmm. I love that you used the term pervasive.
- 24 AF: Yeah.
- 25 AJ: Like it just was - you just knew at a very early age that you were not quite the same as other
26 kids, or other boys?
- 27 AF: Yeah. It was other - other - other kids. But it was kind of - it was, it was, like, just really like - it
28 was really like, just a general - like, at that point. Like. But. Um, I don't know. It's - but it's like,
29 the, my, like - I don't know, gender identity, too, was something that was really, like - kind of, I
30 think, mixed into that.
- 31 AJ: Really?
- 32 AF: Too, yeah. I - I, I have memories of like, knowing that I was really a girl when I was, like -
33 probably about my son's age, or around there.
- 34 AJ: Oh, so around four years old.

- 1 AF: Yeah. And that - it just like, that like, seemed totally right, but like, at the same time, like, kind of
2 - I don't - it's, it's, it's kind of - it's interesting to like, see from his perspective, like, how like,
3 gender gets like, indoctrinated in to kids.
- 4 AJ: Yeah?
- 5 AF: At such - at this tiny age, and then to be able to, like -
- 6 AJ: I mean, at five, they already know.
- 7 AF: Yeah.
- 8 AJ: That's a girl's thing, and I'm not going to play with it.
- 9 AF: Yeah.
- 10 AJ: Or sometimes, much earlier than that, but.
- 11 AF: Mmhmm.
- 12 AJ: Yeah.
- 13 AF: Yeah.
- 14 AJ: Very deeply ingrained. You mentioned siblings?
- 15 AF: Mhm.
- 16 AJ: How many?
- 17 AF: I have a younger brother. He's sixteen months younger than I am.
- 18 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 19 AF: And then my sister is eight years younger than I am.
- 20 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 21 AF: And then - not, I don't, the and then I have another brother. He's not a biological brother but
22 kind of an unofficially adopted one. I made really good friends with this kid, like, before the
23 summer before sixth grade, and we met through a - this summer program, because we were
24 going to the same middle school. But we - we each came from different schools, so.
- 25 AJ: Wow. In the summer - in - so this was a summer school?
- 26 AF: It was, it was a - it was a - it was a summer program.
- 27 AJ: Program, yeah.
- 28 AF: To, like, acclimate middle school kids -
- 29 AJ: Students going to middle school.
- 30 AF: Yeah. To a middle school. And - so - I don't remember, like, what we did day to day, but like,
31 once a week we'd go like kayaking or something like that. So there was a lot of, like, activity

- 1 involved in it.
- 2 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 3 AF: And so he came from a really verbally abusive environment and he used kind of our house as a
4 getaway and we were - we - we were hanging out in school a lot and that just turned into a
5 really really deep, long-lasting friendship.
- 6 AJ: You guys still friends?
- 7 AF: Yup. We - he is - he travels, like, all over, so I don't see him very often, but - yeah, we're still
8 friends. He came over, like, it was like a couple months ago.
- 9 AJ: Wow.
- 10 AF: And I hadn't seen him for like a year or two, like, prior to that. And so he -
- 11 AJ: So, a year - if you hadn't seen him for a year or two, then he didn't know..
- 12 AF: He knew, like, 'cause, like, we were talking - we talked - we would talk online and stuff every so
13 often, and I had told him, and he was just like "Yeah, okay, whatever." Like, over message.
- 14 AJ: Right.
- 15 AF: So there was, like - and that's, like, all he really said about it. But then when we, like, met up, we
16 was just like. Yeah. This is is so you.
- 17 AJ: Really?
- 18 AF: Yeah.
- 19 AJ: Okay.
- 20 AF: Mmhmm.
- 21 AJ: Okay. And so you anticipate that the friendship will continue?
- 22 AF: Yeah. Absolutely.
- 23 AJ: That's awesome.
- 24 AF: Mmhmm.
- 25 AJ: So what was it like growing up in your home? You had this kind of kid that was - that you met in
26 summer camp, or summer school -
- 27 AF: My heart - my home was...kind of tricky. I - my parents are both, like, reborn again Christians.
- 28 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 29 AF: But they sent us to Catholic school.
- 30 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 31 AF: And...my mom is Jewish, but I didn't find that out until later.

- 1 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 2 AF: It was just sort of, like, kept, like, kind of, like, kept under the table.
- 3 AJ: So she converted, or was she never, like...
- 4 AF: She was - her father was Jewish, and she was raised - she wasn't raised - she was raised
5 secularly, so she wasn't - so she wasn't practicing. But then, it was, she knew about it, and she
6 would, like, she wouldn't collect, like, religious texts, but she would collect, like, historic, like,
7 cultural texts - like, books and stuff about Judaism, and she had them, like, all over the house, so
8 it was a - like, it was a really, like, prominent presence on the bookshelf.
- 9 AJ: Huh.
- 10 AF: And if you were able to reach out and take something off of the bookshelf and read it -
- 11 AJ: It was always...a Jewish -
- 12 AF: Yeah. It was always there.
- 13 AJ: - something, history, geography, something.
- 14 AF: Yeah. Yeah.
- 15 AJ: Wow.
- 16 AF: My dad grew up in a really abusive household and he - his father was an alcoholic. And he was,
17 like, he tried really hard to not, like, be his father when it came to his own children.
- 18 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 19 AF: But...the alcoholism didn't - he didn't quite get away from that, and - the - and because of, like,
20 his own religious beliefs and, like, all of that - and then my mom's the same way. Like, she
21 started - after she had been - she went back to school after we were born, and after she had
22 been in school for a while, she started drinking, and then my father helped, like, enable her.
- 23 AJ: Mmm.
- 24 AF: So she just kept...kept drinking. And when I started getting a little older, around, like, eight-ish, it
25 started becoming a really big problem, and it was a really big...for, like, for like, for other
26 reasons, but like one of the - one of the main problems for me was...I was starting to find out
27 what, like, like being homosexual was, and that you could - and that, like, the bound - like, the
28 definitions of boy and girl, and like the - the gender binaries I had been taught, I was starting to
29 figure out that that didn't quite work.
- 30 AJ: Right.
- 31 AF: And then that's kind of where things got - started getting really complicated.
- 32 AJ: Were you expressing different gender identity at all, or...?
- 33 AF: No. I...I was...I had been, like, pretending, like, when I was, like -

- 1 AJ: You were trying to inform...
- 2 AF: Yeah. Basically.
- 3 AJ: Yeah.
- 4 AF: My - my, like, I don't know. I, I think of, like, my - my out self and my pre-out self as like, two
5 different people.
- 6 AJ: Wow.
- 7 AF: And like, my first, like, like pre-out, was like - it just, kind of just like, a reactionary personality
8 that was sort of made up on the fly to deal with...
- 9 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 10 AF: Various, like, situations where I was expected to be, like, be, like, a cis male. But - I don't know -
11 one of, one of, like, one of the biggest, like, one of, like, like - one memory that I, that I have that
12 has stuck with me, like - my whole, like, since it happened, that - that I think was sort of, like,
13 kind of like a symbolic moment of when my relationship with my parents started to go
14 downwards, and sort of how we interacted with one another.
- 15 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 16 AF: I had seen on television - I think I was about, like, eight or nine or something. I don't remember
17 what show it was. But the - the topic was, was LGBT culture. And for the life of me I can't
18 remember what show it was, but I - it was, it was presenting a really positive message, so this
19 was like, this would have been in the, like, the late nineties.
- 20 AJ: Okay.
- 21 AF: So, you know, still not, like, a great, you know -
- 22 AJ: Yeah, it wasn't where we are now, but it was...it had moved from the late seventies, let's say,
23 where - yeah. Things have shifted and changed.
- 24 AF: Still had - yeah. But - yeah. Mmhmm. Yeah. Absolutely. So the - the message that I got from the
25 show was that it's okay to be gay.
- 26 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 27 AF: And I didn't, like, like - homosexuality, like, for me at that point, wasn't, like, being gay. It was,
28 like, a doorway into this whole realm of different gender expression and different sexual
29 preferences and things like that.
- 30 AJ: Okay.
- 31 AF: And...
- 32 AJ: So did you ever use the label homosexual for yourself?
- 33 AF: No. I...I was, I was really afraid to like, explore feel - explore, like, any homosexual feelings that I
34 had that had - you know, I didn't have a problem with it, but it was my parents that...that had

1 the issues.

2 AJ: Right, that were really...

3 AF: So I - now, I remember having, like...oh my god...I remember when I was like, really young, I was
4 probably, like, six or seven.

5 AJ: Mmhmm.

6 AF: I had a neighbor who I was really good friends with up until I came out to him.

7 AJ: Okay. So you lost a friend?

8 AF: Yup. A friend that I had known my - my whole life.

9 AJ: Oh, wow.

10 AF: He was five years - five years older than I am, and he hung out with my brother and I, and, you
11 know, we were just kind of like...I don't know why he hung out with us.

12 AJ: Friends. Yeah, 'cause he was older than you guys, yeah.

13 AF: Like, we weren't like - yeah. Yeah. And it's like - you know, when it's that age, like five years is
14 really - is a really significant age difference.

15 AJ: Yeah, that's pretty significant. Yeah. He was way bigger than you guys and everything.

16 AF: Oh yeah. So, I mean, like, his reasons behind that I'm sure, like, that's a whole discussion in and
17 of itself.

18 AJ: Yeah.

19 AF: But...I remember, like, he - I was, like - my parents and his parents used to be friends, and we
20 went over for this, like, party that his mom and dad were having, and he had some of his friends
21 over. And - I mean, they must have been, like, eleven, twelve, thirteen. But he had one of his
22 friends, was - was, like, I had never met before, and I, like, I had - I like fell in love with this kid.

23 AJ: Oh, wow.

24 AF: Like, I adored him, and I wanted to, like, like, be his boyfriend.

25 AJ: Oh, my goodness.

26 AF: And I've never - I've never told anyone this, so...

27 AJ: Oh, my goodness. Wow. So clearly not that kid.

28 AF: Yeah.

29 AJ: Or did you?

30 AF: No. No. It was just - I, I, I - I was, I was a very silent - the silent admirer for...you know, the length
31 of that party and then I never saw him again after that.

- 1 AJ: Okay. Wow.
- 2 AF: But I never told anyone. And...anyway, so - fast forward a few years, back when I had seen this
3 show. When I - you know, when I saw it, I was so happy. Like, being gay is okay. I'm like, "Aww,
4 yes!" But then again, it wasn't just being gay, it was, you know, being gay, being queer,
5 whatever, like, gen - like, change - like, switching up my gender expression.
- 6 AJ: Trans. Uh huh.
- 7 AF: Yeah. And I was so happy. I was just elated. Like, so...I think the next day, my dad was driving me
8 to school.
- 9 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 10 AF: And on the way, I just - I had to tell him about this show that I saw.
- 11 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 12 AF: And like, "Dad, I gotta tell you about this!"
- 13 AJ: Uh huh.
- 14 AF: And so I told him about it, and he didn't say anything through the whole thing. And then after,
15 like, the last thing I said was, like, "And I learned that it's okay to be gay!" And he just flipped.
- 16 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 17 AF: Like he just - he like, yelled. Like, that it's not okay to be gay, it's wrong, and it's bad, because
18 God, and whatever. And from that moment, I just shut down with it.
- 19 AJ: Really.
- 20 AF: Another thing that was happening was -
- 21 AJ: And this was teenager -
- 22 AF: This was like, eight - eight, nine years old?
- 23 AJ: Okay. Mmhmm.
- 24 AF: Another thing that was happening was that - around the same time - was that my anxiety
25 disorder was starting to really, really pick up speed.
- 26 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 27 AF: And kind of depression was settling in, and - I don't remember if I was having, like, bipolar
28 symptoms so young. But I was starting to become this, like, ball of mental illnesses that needed
29 some sorting out -
- 30 AJ: Attention?
- 31 AF: And attention. And I just - I was...I was so afraid to like, talk to my parents about, like, the way I
32 was feeling. And I think with like, the...I think with, with, with that sort of environment that I
33 was in at home where it wasn't safe, it wasn't a safe space in that regard. And then going to

- 1 Catholic school, which I got out of in sixth grade. So that was that summer program that I met
2 Mitch.
- 3 AJ: Okay. Yeah.
- 4 AF: And then moved on to a public middle school. But sometime, like, in all of that time, my - every,
5 I don't know, everything just sort of got, like, packed away. Like, and - I just...like, tried to do my
6 best to be, like, this cis male.
- 7 AJ: Right.
- 8 AF: And I mean - like, at this time, I don't have any, like, framework for any of this.
- 9 AJ: Yeah.
- 10 AF: You know, there was no language for me talk about this, and...I, like. When I became a teenage -
11 when I became a teenager and went into high school, I found out about GSA, and then I had to
12 lie to my parents to go. They wouldn't let me sign up at school. And then there was a district-
13 wide GSA that would meet at a rec center biweekly - it was like, every other Friday night. And it
14 was outside of school. And with the help of a couple of my friends, we got my parents to believe
15 that it was just, like, a youth, generally youth rec program.
- 16 AJ: Oh, really? Okay.
- 17 AF: That, like, you know...
- 18 AJ: Where was this? Where did you grow up?
- 19 AF: This was - I grew up in the north - in the - in the North End neighborhood of St Paul. Which is -
20 it's a couple miles north of downtown, around, like, Rice and Maryland. And at the time that I
21 grew up there, there was the St. Bernard's Church, which was like, the community church - like,
22 Catholic church. And then there was the school, the St. Bernard's. It was a K-12, and preschool.
23 And that started off as like, more of a community school, where, like, tuition rates were really
24 low, because -
- 25 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 26 AF: Even though, like, the few blocks that I lived on was like, it's own little slice of like, white
27 suburbia -
- 28 AJ: Right.
- 29 AF: It was still - I mean like, the families were still fairly low income.
- 30 AJ: Yeah. Yeah.
- 31 AF: And the church - and the school wanted to provide, like, you know, provide, like -
- 32 AJ: Education.
- 33 AF: Yeah. Private education to the white kids in the neighborhood.
- 34 AJ: Yeah.

- 1 AF: And that - yeah. And, I mean, that caught - that, like, you know, like...that was. Yeah. That was
2 kind of a - that was - that was hard. That was...like, that - that - like, looking back on that, that
3 like, really sucked. Like, growing up in that environment. Because I only got - like, I was only
4 exposed to, like, just a couple kids who like, weren't white. And that created, like, this huge, like,
5 racist framework that I grew up in, where it wasn't, like, outwardly, like, you know, "We don't
6 accept people who are not white, we don't accept people of color" or anything like that. My
7 parents would, like, never, like, outwardly say anything like that, but...like, in their comments,
8 like - you know, like, talking about people that they ran into, like, at the grocery store. Or like,
9 the people that, like, drive down the street and play their loud, like, bass music.
- 10 AJ: Music. Yeah.
- 11 AF: So it...
- 12 AJ: Or TV shows, and that kind of stuff?
- 13 AF: Yeah. Yeah, it was just like - so, it...I don't know. I would end up, like, I would end up really, like,
14 struggling with all of this, like, junk later on in life.
- 15 AJ: Hmm.
- 16 AF: It was - it just - it might - it was like, my home was - my parents, like, always professed, like,
17 acceptance and loving everybody, but it was - that was really not the case.
- 18 AJ: Mmm.
- 19 AF: And it - just - it was - I don't know. It was really, like, tricky to navigate all that.
- 20 AJ: Were you bullied in school at all?
- 21 AF: Mmhmm. Yeah. I was - I had - one of the things that I did have was long hair. I wanted long hair.
22 And somehow, like, my parents, like, they, like, let - they like, they - I was - I was a mullet kid.
23 Like, oh my god. 'Cause they were like old bikers, and they were like "We want your hair long
24 and, like, rebellious, but like, short - "
- 25 AJ: Oh wow! So you had that look.
- 26 AF: I had a mullet, yeah.
- 27 AJ: You had a mullet thing going on, huh?
- 28 AF: For like, the first few years of my life.
- 29 AJ: And then you let it grow out?
- 30 AF: Yeah. Then I - I wanted to grow it out. 'Cause my, my neigh - like, my neighbor - my friend, Jesse,
31 who I had grown up with. He had long hair. And I admired that, and I like, admired him, so I'm
32 like, "I want long hair too!" And it was like, girls have long hair. But - because like, I was able to,
33 like, "Well, Jesse has long hair," my parents just sort of begrudgingly went with it, and so - I had
34 long hair for - up until sixth grade. And I started getting bullied really bad in middle school.
- 35 AJ: Mmm.

- 1 AF: So that's when I - I cut my hair.
- 2 AJ: And it was about gender stuff, or hair?
- 3 AF: Yeah. It was about - it was about gender and sexual orientation.
- 4 AJ: Yeah.
- 5 AF: So - which, I mean, I wasn't, like - I -
- 6 AJ: You weren't out, but people thought you were.
- 7 AF: I was - no. Yeah. Yep. So there - I - there was a few kids in middle school that would religiously,
8 like, make fun of me. Every day for being gay.
- 9 AJ: Right.
- 10 AF: And, like, saying - you know, just like accusing me of being, like, you know, effeminate in
11 however many ways.
- 12 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 13 AF: And that was...that was really tricky.
- 14 AJ: Yeah.
- 15 AF: But...I really tried my best to have like a, you know, like "eff you" attitude.
- 16 AJ: Right.
- 17 AF: And -
- 18 AJ: And your siblings were younger, so -
- 19 AF: Yeah. And like, at that point, my -
- 20 AJ: What about your neighbor friend, and Mitch, and - well, Mitch didn't go - you guys didn't go to
21 the same school though, right?
- 22 AF: We didn't go to the same school until middle school. But a lot of this was - was happening, but
23 we had, like, two thousand kids in the middle school, so we had like -
- 24 AJ: Different classes.
- 25 AF: Mmhmm. And we didn't - we would - we would, like, meet up in the morning before school and
26 then we would - if we didn't see each other during the day we would meet up -
- 27 AJ: Later on.
- 28 AF: After.
- 29 AJ: After school.
- 30 AF: So there - he wasn't really around for - to see any of that, like, happen.

- 1 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 2 AF: And my brother - my brother, in sixth grade, was in a different school, and of course my little
3 sister, like -
- 4 AJ: Yeah, wasn't even in school.
- 5 AF: Yeah. So I - I, yeah, I ended up cutting my hair in middle school, but in elementary school, I got
6 made fun of - not as bad, but, you know, just for, like, kind of being, like, the weird kid with long
7 hair.
- 8 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 9 AF: And then, you know, I'd get called, like, a girl and stuff. The kids, like, in my class weren't too
10 bad until we started getting a little bit older.
- 11 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 12 AF: But...once, like, kind of, like, fifth grade hit, like, I started getting made fun of more, and then
13 other classes, like, the older, like, kids, would make fun of me.
- 14 AJ: Make fun of you.
- 15 AF: Because they're more, like, you know, kind of, like, indoctrinated in this gender binary already.
- 16 AJ: Right. Yeah. Wow.
- 17 AF: So...yeah. And I - I don't know, I never really went to my parents about it, because it's like, what
18 am I going to do? My dad's gonna - you know, my dad's going to tell me, like, just -
- 19 AJ: Toughen up.
- 20 AF: Yeah. Toughen up, beat them up, whatever.
- 21 AJ: Yeah.
- 22 AF: But I can't, like, get into this conversation about, you know, "You know, they're making fun of
23 me for, you know, being gay, and, you know, a girl, and, well...they might be right!"
- 24 AJ: So you went to the GSA when you were in high school.
- 25 AF: Mmhmm. I went to the GS -
- 26 AJ: You kind of - you and your friends, you kind of -
- 27 AF: Yup. I went to -
- 28 AJ: Tricked your parents, and -
- 29 AF: Yeah. I...I wanted to -
- 30 AJ: Were you just an ally, or were you gay?
- 31 AF: I...I was maintaining a -

- 1 AJ: Or straight? You...there's three - there's three -
- 2 AF: Yeah. I was maintaining, like, a, a cisheteronormative, lifestyle to the best of my ability.
- 3 AJ: Yeah. Mmhmm.
- 4 AF: So I considered myself an ally. And I had, like - like at that point in my life, like, the LGBT
5 community was so, like, mystical, and like, amazing.
- 6 AJ: Yeah?
- 7 AF: And I, like, had to be a part of it. I just - I had like, this - like this, like, just this urge.
- 8 AJ: Wow.
- 9 AF: To like, I have to do this. I have to be a part of it. There's something here for me.
- 10 AJ: Uh huh.
- 11 AF: And...although I, like, I considered myself an ally, I...didn't, in a way. I felt like I fit more into, like,
12 the LGBT part and not so much the ally part.
- 13 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 14 AF: And I wasn't - but - at that point -
- 15 AJ: Right. You weren't ready to express that verbally.
- 16 AF: Yeah. And I also - like...like, like, after, like, trying to, like, kind of suppress, like, all of it in my,
17 you know, preteen years, and like, into my early adolescence, my understanding of sexuality and
18 gender was so, like, convoluted, and I had, like, still hadn't gotten, like, developed that - that -
19 that framework, and that language, to really talk about a lot of the feelings that I was
20 experiencing. And, I mean, going to GSA helped out a lot with that. But there was always, like,
21 the overprevailing fear that my parents are going to find out. Which they did. Of course.
- 22 AJ: Yeah.
- 23 AF: And...something horribly awful will happen. So I just - I just kind of, like, kept -
- 24 AJ: Hid it. Mmhmm.
- 25 AF: Like, everything, just...together, like, just, in.
- 26 AJ: Right. Right.
- 27 AF: And I was...going - I was suffering from depression at that point, like, really, really really badly. I
28 hadn't been medicated yet. And I didn't want to tell my parents about it because I didn't want
29 them to think that I was, like, imperfect. Because I was - I was a really smart kid.
- 30 AJ: Yeah?
- 31 AF: And I, like, I got...like, I tested out of, like, like having to, like, do assignments in school, and like,
32 you know, they - they, like, that - like, right when I was - was going through school, that's when,
33 like, the school districts - school district started getting, like, super, like, insane about reading,

- 1 wanted all the kids to read, and they didn't know what to do with me because I was, like, in
2 elementary school and testing at, like, college-level reading.
- 3 AJ: Uh huh. Wow.
- 4 AF: And I got sent out into the hallway most of the time to do work that was like one or two grades
5 ahead of me.
- 6 AJ: Wow.
- 7 AF: The - 'cause the - I mean, the - St. Bernard's, they just didn't have a program to handle kids.
- 8 AJ: For - yeah.
- 9 AF: Like - if, like -
- 10 AJ: Gifted kids.
- 11 AF: Yeah. Gifted kids. So - I mean, the teachers just - they did the best they could, and I had - you
12 know, my anxiety was really, like - in elementary school, really taking hold, so like - I really
13 enjoyed, like, getting out of the classroom and being able to, like, sit in the hall and, like, quiet,
14 and -
- 15 AJ: Right.
- 16 AF: Do work.
- 17 AJ: Uh huh.
- 18 AF: And -
- 19 AJ: So you don't want that - you don't want to ruin that image for your parents?
- 20 AF: Yeah. Of, like, I'm this perfect kid that -
- 21 AJ: When did you start going to therapy, and...?
- 22 AF: I...started going to therapy - I started - I was fifteen and I finally was just like, eff it, I can't take
23 this anymore.
- 24 AJ: Mmkay.
- 25 AF: I was like - you know, I was self-harming. Lot of suicidal ideation.
- 26 AJ: Mmm. Oh, boy.
- 27 AF: Just thing - just whole, like, kit and caboodle.
- 28 AJ: I'm sorry. Was this around gender, or just life, just...?
- 29 AF: This - it was around -
- 30 AJ: I mean, clearly, you know, you mentioned bipolar, right? There's some chemical things.
- 31 AF: Yeah. Yeah, I was getting in - I was in the process of, like, having it officially diagnosed. But I kind

- 1 - I - the antidepressants that I was being given weren't working, and I was so, like, miserably
2 depressed and didn't care anyway that I wouldn't take them, and my parents' response to that
3 was to get drunk and berate me for it rather than trying to, like, enforce, like, positive
4 medication practices, 'cause I really needed to be medicated.
- 5 AJ: Yeah. Yeah.
- 6 AF: So I was on a slew of different things for a - for a couple years, and then I went to therapy and I
7 ended up quitting all of it - I quit taking my meds, like, altogether while doing therapy, and -
8 'cause I felt like the therapy was - was helping. But we didn't really, like, get to, like -
- 9 AJ: Did you ever talk about your gender identity in therapy?
- 10 AF: No. No, we didn't get - like, it was, like, a lot of it was, like, addressing, like, social anxieties.
- 11 AJ: Uh huh.
- 12 AF: And, like, my mood swings and things like that. And I just didn't bring - bring up gender.
- 13 AJ: So part of it - I mean, clearly, was gender.
- 14 AF: Yeah. Yeah. And at that - again - you know, again, at that point it's like -
- 15 AJ: But your parents, and society, and culture -
- 16 AF: Yeah, everything was so convoluted, and, like, in high school -
- 17 AJ: It's hard! Nobody wants to make that call.
- 18 AF: Yeah. No.
- 19 AJ: When did you decide to come out?
- 20 AF: I came out...about a year and a half ago.
- 21 AJ: Uh huh.
- 22 AF: I - the first time that I really decided that there was something there - like, actually, like started
23 to, like...listen to what I was feeling and not try to, like, push it back anymore was - I...when I
24 turned - after I graduated high school.
- 25 AJ: Yeah?
- 26 AF: I...after I graduated high school, I went to Colorado for...college - I was going to go to college out
27 there, at this place called Naropa University.
- 28 AJ: Naropa?
- 29 AF: Yup. You - do you know what it -
- 30 AJ: Yeah!
- 31 AF: Oh! Okay, cool, yeah. So I -

- 1 AJ: It's a great art school.
- 2 AF: Yeah. I went there for a year. I wasn't very impressed with their visual arts program, but their
3 writing program was just incredible.
- 4 AJ: Super strong, yeah.
- 5 AF: Yeah. So, I - I took both visual arts and writing courses. And one of the classes that I took was - I
6 mean - like, became my favorite class, which - it was a required course for everybody. It was
7 part of, like, the core curriculum. And it was a diversity seminar.
- 8 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 9 AF: And the - it was - it was a really, really, really intense class, because they structured it to point
10 out, like, white privilege, and, like, like - sexism, and racism, and just, like, we read so much
11 stuff, and just - I, you know, got totally exposed to, like - 'cause you know, I - I was, you know, I
12 was thinking, like, "Oh, I'm diverse, I hang out with a lot of gay people and I have Black friends
13 and stuff."
- 14 AJ: Right. Uh huh.
- 15 AF: "And I go to - " you know, when I went to public school, like, really low percentage of white kids.
- 16 AJ: Right.
- 17 AF: So I'm like "Yeah, I'm - " No.
- 18 AJ: I got this, right?
- 19 AF: Yeah, and that's where I started, like, real - like, started really...oh my gosh. I started really, like,
20 connecting a lot of dots with so many different things in the world. Another huge event that I
21 had - that happened in my life was when I was sixteen I went to Nicaragua.
- 22 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 23 AF: For a couple weeks. And although that didn't have anything to do with, like, my gender directly,
24 it...really, really, like, opened my eyes up to kind of - like, what kind of the way the world really
25 works.
- 26 AJ: Uh huh.
- 27 AF: You know, I was like, the th - like, little, like, shit-nosed punk rock kid.
- 28 AJ: Yeah.
- 29 AF: And I thought I knew - you know, I know, like, oh, the government's bad, and the world's bad,
30 and there's all this bad stuff that happens, and then I got to go to Nicaragua and see exactly
31 what the US government did there and talk to people and it...totally shattered my idea of
32 everything.
- 33 AJ: Wow.
- 34 AF: And it was really - it was a very traumatizing experience.

- 1 AJ: How so? Did you...
- 2 AF: I -
- 3 AJ: I mean, what did you learn?
- 4 AF: I just sort of, like, shut down when I was going - when I was going through - it was based - it was
5 for - I mean, it was an adult - like, it was an adult program that - that was, that like, sent the -
6 sent us down there. It was through the Global Center of Education at Augsburg College and the
7 Loft Literary Center.
- 8 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 9 AF: And they sponsored this trip for - like, my grandmother was going.
- 10 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 11 AF: And she was the reason why I ended up - I ended up getting to go. And she was going to a
12 seminary for some graduate work, I think, at that time.
- 13 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 14 AF: And she had - one of - one of the classes that she was taking actually wanted her to go to a third
15 world country, and then write a paper.
- 16 AJ: Mmhmm. Wow.
- 17 AF: And there was -
- 18 AJ: That's a big assignment.
- 19 AF: Yeah. There's a woman who was studying to be a pastor at her church, and then there were a
20 couple poets that went along. And the whole trip was structured for writers.
- 21 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 22 AF: And I was writing a whole bunch at that point, and totally in to writing and art and stuff.
- 23 AJ: Yeah? Uh huh. Right.
- 24 AF: My grandmother thought it would be a really great experience and my brother got to go to
25 Europe for a school trip, like, the year before, and my parents were feeling kind of, like, bad
26 that, like, my brother got to go and I didn't -
- 27 AJ: You didn't experience that.
- 28 AF: Have that experience. But, you know, instead of getting, like, the tour bus, tour the country type
29 of thing, like, we had a tour bus but it was like, falling apart and -
- 30 AJ: Right.
- 31 AF: We didn't stay in, like, a ritzy place.
- 32 AJ: Uh huh.

- 1 AF: Like, we were, like, you know, in the trenches.
- 2 AJ: Yeah.
- 3 AF: Like, in a - it was...that had a lot of really, really powerful experiences that really effected the
4 rest of my life. We talked to a bunch of, like, politicians, and poets, and we learned, like, all
5 about the Sandinista Revolution, and the literacy campaign, and, you know, all of the, you know
6 - the Reagan administration's drug smuggling -
- 7 AJ: Mmmhmm.
- 8 AF: And all of that junk. And...that really -
- 9 AJ: So that kind of politicized you, then.
- 10 AF: That did. That - that - absolutely. You know, I was, like, speak - like, the...Iraq war was, like,
11 really, really going on - or, I shouldn't say war...the invasion.
- 12 AJ: Yeah. Right.
- 13 AF: Our illegal invasion of that country.
- 14 AJ: Mmkay. That's fair.
- 15 AF: You know, Afghanistan - all of these other things. I was really out - I was really outspoken against
16 those, and I went to - I'd go to protests and stuff. But I didn't have, like, any concept of what I
17 was doing, or what I was, like, fighting for. It was just, like, war is bad. Government's bad.
- 18 AJ: Yeah.
- 19 AF: War is bad. Shouldn't do bad.
- 20 AJ: Right.
- 21 AF: And I got to speak to - we stayed in this small farming community called El Sontule, which...was
22 just - it was just -
- 23 AJ: How do you spell that, do you know?
- 24 AF: E-L S-O-N-T-U-L-E.
- 25 AJ: Okay.
- 26 AF: And we got to spend - we got to spend a couple days with this - with families in this farming
27 community and it was just, sort of like - stretched out over this pretty wide area, so we needed
28 the bus to kind of get around.
- 29 AJ: Get around. Uh huh.
- 30 AF: From, like, little neighborhood to little neighborhood. But it was all one kind of large
31 community.
- 32 AJ: Community.

- 1 AF: And everyone, like, knew each other, and they - they grew all their own food, and they built
2 their homes, and it was just, like, incredible.
- 3 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 4 AF: But one of the things that I - we - we got to do when we first arrived, it was - we met up with a
5 whole - like, most of the community showed up to this, like, central, like, meeting space that
6 they have.
- 7 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 8 AF: And they talked to us about their experiences after the Sandinista Revolution during like the
9 Contra war and the literacy campaign which was happening. And I got to hear about how - when
10 the - when the Contras, who were - they were national guards - like, old national guard
11 members that were still loyal to Somoza, who was the dictator that had been overthrown in -
12 the - like, the Sandinista campaign.
- 13 AJ: Sandinistas, yeah.
- 14 AF: And - so, you know, the US wasn't happy with, you know, getting their installed dictator thrown
15 out, so what they - so they ended up funding - like, getting weapons for the, for the Contras, and
16 the Contras would come in and fight the Commies. As - as, as, you know, we heard up in - up in
17 America.
- 18 AJ: Right.
- 19 AF: But what would really happen is the Contras would come in and - since they were coming in
20 from Honduras and other, like, areas in, like, in the out - outlying areas in the country -
- 21 AJ: Uh huh.
- 22 AF: They couldn't get into large urban centers. So the only places that they could get to were these
23 small farming communities that were far outside of urban centers - urban areas.
- 24 AJ: Right.
- 25 AF: So they're not killing communists, they're killing innocent women and children and elderly that
26 have nothing to do with the Sandinista Revolution. They are just trying to earn a living.
- 27 AJ: Right.
- 28 AF: Like, they all farm. All the men, like, were coffee farmers, and - so I got to hear stories about
29 how - like, this - we spoke to a woman who, on the first - 'cause they - they were attacked a few
30 times. And on the first night - the first time that they were attacked, her four-year-old son heard
31 some - like, some gunshots, and didn't know what they were, and nobody knew what was
32 happening.
- 33 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 34 AF: So he opens up their front door to check outside and he gets machine-gunned down.
- 35 AJ: Oh, my god.

1 AF: And...I got - we - we heard about women - we heard about the - from women who had to carry
2 their babies out into their fields so - to get away from the Contras and they had to - their - they
3 couldn't let their babies cry, otherwise they'd get - all of them would get found out.

4 AJ: Right.

5 AF: So they had to smother their babies.

6 AJ: Oh, my goodness.

7 AF: And...in that way, the trip was - like, hearing about that, the trip was traumatic.

8 AJ: Yeah. That was dramatic. Absolutely.

9 AF: 'Cause I'm - I'm like this - I'm, you know, at the time I'm like this white dude who's - think he's,
10 you know, got everything down, and going to get - hear all this, and it's like..."Oh."

11 AJ: Right.

12 AF: "No, I - I don't know anything."

13 AJ: But - so, the original question - so that was a big, significant event in your life.

14 AF: Yeah. Yes, it was a very significant event in my life that -

15 AJ: So it - it sort of politicized.

16 AF: Mmhmm.

17 AJ: So first there was this TV show that sort of said, being gay is okay.

18 AF: Yeah.

19 AJ: Then you stuck that. Then you went to Nicaragua and got this sort of...political education.

20 AF: Yup.

21 AJ: When - when did you decide to become - to - to begin to express your inner gender identity?

22 AF: Well, I - I, like, I really wanted to - when I was about eighteen, nineteen -

23 AJ: Mmhmm.

24 AF: I was living in Colorado, I was away from my parents.

25 AJ: Right.

26 AF: But I was also, like, I was - I mean, I was going to school, but I was also, like - I was really - I
27 hadn't been taking - I hadn't - I had been off meds, and I had - like, ever - like, I was totally, like,
28 out in my own world.

29 AJ: Uh huh.

30 AF: And I was doing drugs, and other stuff, and one of the assignments for this diversity seminar was
31 to...was to write a paper about one of the topics that had been covered during the course of -

- 1 during the course. But only up until the midterm. And one of the sections that we were going to
2 go over in the class was gender and sexual orientation. And I was like, yes, that's - I want to - I
3 want to learn about that.
- 4 AJ: Right.
- 5 AF: So I ended up reading all of the material for that section on my own time and then I approached
6 the instructor and asked her if I would be able to write my midterm paper on gender, even
7 though we hadn't covered it yet, and she said that that would be fine, so...
- 8 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 9 AF: So I was able to write a very - like - I mean, the - grossly exceeded the assignment -
- 10 AJ: Really?
- 11 AF: The paper - the page requirement for the assignment, and then - I had a lot to say. And that
12 really, like, helped kind of flesh out some of the feelings that I was having. Like, that I
13 wasn't...like - like, it was imp - I mean, it was just really important for me to, like, write that stuff
14 down and go "This is what I feel like I believe right now about who I am in terms of gender
15 expression." And I didn't - I mean, for me, it was still, like - it was still, like, I wasn't quite able to
16 admit that I was, like - that I was a trans woman.
- 17 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 18 AF: So I was really interested in, like - like, genderqueer and nonbinary, because it was kind of like -
19 like, you know, I was - I was - at that time, I was definitely still - I still had, like, my parents kind
20 of, like, over my head.
- 21 AJ: Right.
- 22 AF: So it was, like, I was - I - I feel like I just wasn't quite willing to admit, like, I'm trans. Oooh.
- 23 AJ: Right.
- 24 AF: But I - I just - I didn't end up pursuing it at that point.
- 25 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 26 AF: And when I - I ended up coming back to Minnesota later, and then I went to - I started attending
27 the College of Visual Arts, and I had been going there -
- 28 AJ: St. Paul?
- 29 AF: Yup. I had been going there in - when I was in high school, because I was able to enroll in
30 postsecondary enrollment option, which was a - it's a program for high school students who, if
31 you have a certain GPA and you have the, like, the space requirements, you - they'll - the school
32 -
- 33 AJ: You can go -
- 34 AF: District will send you -

- 1 AJ: Instead of high school, or...
- 2 AF: Yup. And they'll give you college credit and stuff, so. I -
- 3 AJ: And it counts towards your high school too, right?
- 4 AF: Yup. I didn't need - need it to count towards my high school. I didn't - I only needed, like, three
5 credits when I got into my senior year.
- 6 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 7 AF: So I got - I took drawing classes and art history classes at CVA, and they just didn't have a writing
8 program, which I was really upset about. So that's what ultimately -
- 9 AJ: Led you to Naropa?
- 10 AF: Yup. And...but I was really unsatisfied with - with their visual arts program. And at that point,
11 visual arts was just more important to me. And then - I mean, there was a lot of - there was a lot
12 of other reasons going on, but I came - I decided to come back. And I got into school - I got into
13 CVA, and that sort of - kind of put everything on the back burner.
- 14 AJ: Yeah.
- 15 AF: And...I was, you know, just kind of, like, able to sort of -
- 16 AJ: Were you living back with your parents?
- 17 AF: Yeah. I was living with my parents, so that made things really complicated.
- 18 AJ: Sure.
- 19 AF: And my parents...had a, like, talking with my brother, when I was in Colorado, my parents were
20 having a specially bad year, with drinking while I was away.
- 21 AJ: Oh, wow. Mmhmm.
- 22 AF: And they - I mean, they're, like, they took - like...they just got really bad.
- 23 AJ: Wow.
- 24 AF: Like, towards - in, like, about, probably, like, six - when I was about sixteen it was really - it just -
25 it just started, like, ramping up.
- 26 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 27 AF: And we were -
- 28 AJ: Had they gotten any treatment or help with that at all?
- 29 AF: No. Nope. They won't - like, they're just not willing to - to do that.
- 30 AJ: But they work, and they take care of the home, all that?
- 31 AF: They were - they - they're functioning alcoholics in that regard, where, you know, they're able

- 1 still, like, pay bills and stuff, but...
- 2 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 3 AF: I don't know, I don't know - I'm not - I'm not very privy to much of their...you know, financial -
- 4 AJ: So you're not - are you connected with your family at all?
- 5 AF: No, we're not connected right now. They just - they couldn't deal with me being trans.
- 6 AJ: Really.
- 7 AF: Yeah.
- 8 AJ: I'm so sorry.
- 9 AF: I...I'm not...
- 10 AJ: How does that make you feel?
- 11 AF: I've been really struggling with it lately. But I'm - I'm feel - I'm start - I don't - I'm starting to, like,
12 accept - or, I don't know. Well...one of the things that being trans has really helped me do is to
13 repair my sense of self-worth.
- 14 AJ: Mmm.
- 15 AF: And that has - like, I'm not making excuses for their behavior anymore, and like, thinking, like -
16 'cause they were so verbally and emotionally abusive. I mean, they would get drunk and just
17 say, like, awful things to us.
- 18 AJ: Oh, wow. Mmhmm.
- 19 AF: And -
- 20 AJ: To all of you kids?
- 21 AF: Not my sister. 'Cause she was just - she was really young. But she would - you know, she would -
22 she - she would hide from them. She, like...so that's - that's a giant mess right now. But I'm -
23 they're -
- 24 AJ: What about your siblings? Are you...?
- 25 AF: Yeah, I'm talking to both my siblings. They're, like - they're really mad at my parents for the way
26 that they've handled my coming out and -
- 27 AJ: So they accept your...?
- 28 AF: Yup. They accept me for me, and they - yeah. They just like - I mean, my brother is just like - you
29 know, when I came out to him, he was just like "Shut up, I don't want to hear that shit, you're
30 my sister, whatever."
- 31 AJ: Wow.
- 32 AF: And he's just - that's - like -

- 1 AJ: That's awesome.
- 2 AF: And like...I - like, they...after I came out, I was - I wanted to, like, to try to rebuild my relationship
3 with my parents, 'cause it was just - was already starting to fall apart anyway.
- 4 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 5 AF: And - so we - you know, we were still, like, going over to their house, and they were still seeing
6 Owen, and we were doing, like, holiday stuff, but -
- 7 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 8 AF: I don't know, my brother and sister and -
- 9 AJ: And Owen is your son?
- 10 AF: Owen is my son. Yeah.
- 11 AJ: Yeah.
- 12 AF: And my brother's - my sis - my brother and my sister and my brother's wife all would, like, stand
13 up for me and, like, any time my parents would deadname me, or like, misgender me, they
14 would always - they would be the ones that would just, like, speak up. 'Cause I was -
- 15 AJ: Really?
- 16 AF: Yeah. I was -
- 17 AJ: So your brother's married?
- 18 AF: Yup.
- 19 AJ: How old is your brother?
- 20 AF: My brother is...he's going to be twenty six in June.
- 21 AJ: Oh, wow. Cool.
- 22 AF: Mmmhmm. And then -
- 23 AJ: How old are you?
- 24 AF: I'm twenty seven.
- 25 AJ: You're twenty seven.
- 26 AF: Yup.
- 27 AJ: Mokay. So...wow. This is - this is all really, really fascinating. You know - but I want to get just a
28 little more personal about -
- 29 AF: Sure.
- 30 AJ: You. So -

- 1 AF: Okay.
- 2 AJ: If it's too personal, let me know, and we can go on to some other questions. But - what medical
3 steps have you taken related to your gender identity up to this point? And like I said - feel free
4 to answer -
- 5 AF: Yeah.
- 6 AJ: Or not answer this question. However you want to.
- 7 AF: I have...let's see. I would cons - like, as far as just, like, med - medically transitioning, I started
8 anti-androgens last August, so that would've been August of 2017 - sixteen. August of 2016. And
9 I started on - you know, spironolact - or, finasteride was the first one, which - finasteride is a
10 drug that's typically prescribed in low doses to treat male-pattern baldness.
- 11 AJ: Mokay.
- 12 AF: And they also prescribe it in high doses to men with prostate cancer.
- 13 AJ: Mmm.
- 14 AF: And it prevents testosterone from being converted into dihydrotestosterone, or something like
15 that. Basically, it like - it like tricks your body into not converting testosterone from one form to
16 another, which ups your testosterone levels. But - and then your body, in order to compensate,
17 goes "Oh, okay, wait, wait - wait a minute" and raises your estrogen levels.
- 18 AJ: Estrogen. Okay.
- 19 AF: And most - like, most men who take it don't experience, like, any sig - any, like, feminizing side
20 effects, really. But there are a very - like, there's a very small amount of men who have, where
21 they, like, they'll start developing breasts, or they'll, like, lose their libido, or, you know,
22 shrinking testicles and, like - all this stuff that I want to happen to me.
- 23 AJ: Right!
- 24 AF: And that's - I - I did - that's where I kind of, like, did my research on finasteride, was like, finding,
25 like, online, like, support groups for men that, like, have, like - have, like - been, like, feminized
26 from finasteride, and...which is really funny. Like, a lot of trans people I talk to don't take it.
- 27 AJ: Yeah. I've never heard of this.
- 28 AF: Yeah. So -
- 29 AJ: Finastracide?
- 30 AF: Yeah. Finasteride. It -
- 31 AJ: Okay. Finasteride. Steridal.
- 32 AF: It's the - like, the - I don't - I don't know if it's the - it's called, like, the manufacture name, but
33 - like, the name it's most commonly known as is like - is proscar.
- 34 AJ: Okay.

- 1 AF: And - so I was given the dose that men with - men with prostate cancer are -
2 AJ: Prescribed.
3 AF: Prescribed. And...that, like, worked. That was doing, like, amazing.
4 AJ: Really? Okay.
5 AF: Yeah. Like, I started developing breasts on that.
6 AJ: Uh huh.
7 AF: And so I was like that two percent or whatever it is that, like -
8 AJ: Wow. You're in that range, huh?
9 AF: Yeah. And - then I think like a month or two after that I started on spironolactone, so I was - so
10 one thing that - that has been kind of unique with me is that I've been - like that I've found,
11 versus, like, other trans women's medical regimens, or those who've been - who've like, felt -
12 AJ: Medically -
13 AF: Yeah, or - and who felt comfortable enough to tell me about their - their, like, medical
14 transition. Just take, like, spiro - there's not, like - there's not, like, those two anti-androgens
15 together.
16 AJ: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.
17 AF: But - you know, that's been working, like, out in - incredibly for me.
18 AJ: Cool.
19 AF: Like - and then in November I started on injectable estradiol.
20 AJ: Mmm.
21 AF: And I've been doing weekly injections since, which have also worked extraordinarily well.
22 AJ: Wow.
23 AF: I - like, I'm - I've already, like - I've gotten a letter from the doctor saying that my hormone levels
24 are - you know, my testosterone's, like, almost gone, and then my estrogen levels are, like, that
25 of, like, a biological woman.
26 AJ: Oh, wow.
27 AF: So - and that's, like, on the lowest dose of estradiol. So I'm - like, so happy that -
28 AJ: Yeah.
29 AF: And, like, I don't know. I feel like - I mean like, changes are - I mean, you know, changing is slow,
30 but I feel like there's always something new to -
31 AJ: Mmhmm. To discover.

- 1 AF: To discover. And I've had, like, you know, like, coming from a place where I had such a low
2 opinion of myself and, like - like, no self worth -
- 3 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 4 AF: Like, I didn't have, like, really any expectations. Like, I'm like - I'm probably going to do this and
5 turn out, like, ugly, and -
- 6 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 7 AF: I'm going to not look any different, and...that hasn't been the case, so it's...yeah.
- 8 AJ: Yeah. Yeah, you look amazing.
- 9 AF: Thank you.
- 10 AJ: Tell me about these tattoos.
- 11 AF: So, my tattoos.
- 12 AJ: How many?
- 13 AF: Oh, my god. I don't even know.
- 14 AJ: Okay.
- 15 AF: I have - just a bunch. My legs are covered in homemade tattoos.
- 16 AJ: Oh, really. Okay. So you do it yourself?
- 17 AF: I start - I started to. My - my first tattoo was this one here, which I got when I was sixteen.
- 18 AJ: Mmhmm. Oh, wow.
- 19 AF: And that - it's - that - I mean, that - I think that - it has to say a lot about my relationship with
20 what my relationship with my dad was like.
- 21 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 22 AF: 'Cause he got a lot - he has a lot of tattoos, and -
- 23 AJ: Mmkay.
- 24 AF: I really wanted to get a tattoo. Like, I was in - I was in a punk band, all my friends were doing,
25 like, homemade tattoos. I wanted one so bad. And my dad said that he didn't want me doing
26 homemade tattoos, because he's like, you're going to get some horrible disease.
- 27 AJ: Right.
- 28 AF: And -
- 29 AJ: Infection, or something.
- 30 AF: Yeah. And so he decided to take me for my sixteenth birthday to, like, get an actual tattoo, so
31 we went - we went to a diff - we went to White Bear, where there wasn't - where as long as,

- 1 like, a parent - there was like a parent willing to sign a consent form -
- 2 AJ: A parent, yeah.
- 3 AF: They would be willing to tattoo a minor.
- 4 AJ: I think in Minneapolis you have to be eighteen, or something, right?
- 5 AF: Yeah. And now I think they've changed it. I think they've changed it, like, in more cities since.
- 6 But - so I got my - my big tattoo there. And it was really - that was really fun. And it was a really
- 7 special thing, you know. And my dad - he - like, as long as, like, I was conforming to, like -
- 8 AJ: Macho masculinity.
- 9 AF: What he wanted, yeah. Like, this male - like, he had - he has so much stock in, like, firstborn
- 10 male, and -
- 11 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 12 AF: He's so sexist, so it's just, like, I mean - it was really, like - I can't, you know, deny that me being,
- 13 like, the firstborn son wasn't something that was really special to him. I mean, that's the thing
- 14 that was, but -
- 15 AJ: Mmhmm. It was.
- 16 AF: He can't, you know, expect me to just do that.
- 17 AJ: Parents are just the vessel, and then, you know...
- 18 AF: Yeah. So -
- 19 AJ: You get to do whatever we want to, it's our life, you know?
- 20 AF: Yeah. So my tattoos - my tattoos became a...a, like, a tradition. A yearly tradition for us. We'd
- 21 go, like, on birthdays, and other special events and get tattoos done together.
- 22 AJ: With your folks? With your dad?
- 23 AF: With my dad, yeah.
- 24 AJ: Oh.
- 25 AF: And that was really nice.
- 26 AJ: Uh huh.
- 27 AF: But it's like, again, as long as it just sort of stays to that, like, really confined, like, male
- 28 experience, then that's when it's okay.
- 29 AJ: Yeah.
- 30 AF: And then - so I just - we just, like, kept getting them, and then my - when I met my wife, she had
- 31 homemade tattoos that she had done herself - on herself, and I loved them, 'cause I was like,
- 32 "Oh, they're so great." And to me, it wasn't so much about, like, oh, you have, like, this really

- 1 bad looking tattoo. It's like, you're having this, like, ex - like, this, this really intimate experience
2 with yourself where you're, like, you are like - I don't know - it, you know, like not - I don't know,
3 it's kind of like, you know, like cutting, or like, you know, self-harm, where you are just, like,
4 experiencing your body in this really...
- 5 AJ: Intense way?
- 6 AF: Yeah. And when I started - so I had done - I - she had done a - a few homemade tattoos for me.
7 And I had never done any on myself, but after I came out as trans, and started my medical
8 transition, I started tattooing my legs.
- 9 AJ: Mmm.
- 10 AF: And - you know, a few other spots.
- 11 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 12 AF: And that, you know, I've always wanted, like, a bunch of, like, homemade tattoos, so that was
13 like one reason, you know, like, one - like, one way to do it, and like, you know, the excuse was
14 like, oh, I'm getting so much more comfortable in my body, like, I'm going to wear shorts! Like,
15 oh - I, you know, I can wear shorts without feeling, like, disgusting. You know?
- 16 AJ: Right. Wow.
- 17 AF: So...I just tattooed - I just started tattooing myself, and I spent - I did it - I tattooed my legs over
18 a couple-week period.
- 19 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 20 AF: And it was a really - it was a really good way to just - get to know my body in a way that I never
21 had before. Because prior to coming out, it was always this awful horrible disgusting thing I
22 didn't want to be seen or acknowledged, and I had - I mean, like, I had a - an eating disorder that
23 I've since been able to, like, work through and am working through, which stemmed a lot from
24 my - like, repressed gender expression -
- 25 AJ: Yeah.
- 26 AF: - after I finally, like, *finally* came out, that really helped fixing a lot - that helped start fixing a lot
27 of problems I - I've been having. Just, A, getting on, like, medication. 'Cause - what ended up
28 happening is my wife was like, "Either you go to a mental health crisis center or I don't know
29 what I'm going to do. I don't know what our relationship will be anymore."
- 30 AJ: Oh, wow. So she kind of pushed you into it?
- 31 AF: I had a really - I was - I was - I - it - I was going to either - something had to give. Like, at this - like
32 - I was so miserable. And...with not only everything in my life, but, like - I had a - like, when I had
33 Owen, when Cassie and I had Owen...
- 34 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 35 AF: I didn't like being a father. Like, Dad. It was just so wrong.

- 1 AJ: Yeah.
- 2 AF: It, like, you know, I felt like I was -
- 3 AJ: It's a big male thing!
- 4 AF: Yeah. And I mean, I felt like I was, like, in elementary school again, feeling like I was an alien.
- 5 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 6 AF: Like, or something. 'Cause it was just...just that. It was just so wrong. And I never wanted - never
7 wanted to have a kid, I never wanted, like, a family. And that sort of, like, like I'm - like, I'm not -
8 what it, like, I'm like, I can't, like, come out as, like, trans, or whatever. Like, everything was still
9 so messed up still, too.
- 10 AJ: Wow.
- 11 AF: And...so I - I was in this really, really, really bad spot and it was - my, I mean, like, my relationship
12 with my wife was falling apart. My, like - I was not sleeping. I was, like - I was in such a horrible,
13 like, depressive episode, I wasn't taking care of myself, like...I mean, I'm trying to learn not to
14 blame myself, but to this day my son still has a lot of problems - like, he has a lot of hygiene
15 problems, and he has eating issues, because I was...his primary caregiver, 'cause my wife had
16 the day job and I had the random evening freelance fill-in-whenever-I-could.
- 17 AJ: Right.
- 18 AF: So I was able - so I spent my days with him, and he didn't see me take care of myself. Like, like
19 brush my teeth, or like, take a shower, or...and he didn't see me eat regularly. Like, I would feed
20 him, but I wouldn't eat.
- 21 AJ: Wow.
- 22 AF: And then he started, like, copying, like, my patterns. Where like, I wouldn't eat until, like, I was
23 super hungry and cranky, 'cause I get really cranky when I don't eat, it's really bad.
- 24 AJ: That's kind of a human thing.
- 25 AF: Yeah. And - or just like - I would just hold it off and - for as long as I could, 'cause I didn't want to
26 eat.
- 27 AJ: Right.
- 28 AF: And then I would just, like, eat a whole bunch and feel horrible about it, and...so...it - it just - it
29 got to this point where I was probably going to try killing myself again.
- 30 AJ: Oh boy. So coming out an - as trans has...?
- 31 AF: Yeah.
- 32 AJ: Greatly improved your life.
- 33 AF: Yes. It has - it has -

- 1 AJ: Maybe, one might say, saved your life.
- 2 AF: Yeah. I consider that - me coming out has saved my life, and that my wife was the instigator for
3 that. 'Cause she...I - I mean I had, like, I - you know, I knew things were not going well, but, like,
4 when she, like, gave me that ultimatum, it was like - oh - yes, please take me in. So.
- 5 AJ: Yeah. So, any - any plans - just going back to the medical piece a little bit...
- 6 AF: Yeah, sorry.
- 7 AJ: Any plans or thoughts or ideas around future medical interventions?
- 8 AF: I want to get gender confirmation surgery at some - like, I - I, that - I want it so bad. Like, I hate
9 having male body parts. It's awful. And although, like, my - like, dysphoria has gotten, like,
10 significantly better from just the, like, my outward appearances...that has helped out a lot but
11 still, like, you know, like, every - like, every time I, like, need to take a shower, or like, go to the
12 bathroom, it's like "Oh, hey, uhh!" So...
- 13 AJ: Yeah. And you are married, I mean, there is this little thing called sex.
- 14 AF: Yeah. Yeah. Which -
- 15 AJ: How do - how do you identify sexually, like, what's your sexual orientation?
- 16 AF: I - I just identify as queer. I don't...I - I don't really...I don't - like, the - like, labeling. Or like, I
17 don't know. Like, labeling my sexuality isn't something that I feel like I need to do.
- 18 AJ: Sure.
- 19 AF: I don't know. I guess - you know, if you, like - if you had to, like probably, like, pansexual or
20 something. I, like, if I - I can see a potential partner in anyone, you know. Not like, like, "Hey
21 Andrea, how you doing!"
- 22 AJ: So are you guys in an open relationship, then?
- 23 AF: Sort of. But - it's not like I literally see a potential partner in anybody, but like, I - I'm, like, you
24 know, if it's, like, cis man, cis woman, nonbinary person, I'm like -
- 25 AJ: You're open.
- 26 AF: I'm totally open. And my - my wife's the same way, and we - we don't have, like, an open
27 relationship where we're like, exclusively going off to see other people. We - we like to have -
28 like - we have - we like - we'll find somebody, and then we all, like, sort of share a - like, intimate
29 experience together.
- 30 AJ: Right.
- 31 AF: So...yeah. And that's been - I mean, that's - it's just -
- 32 AJ: That's working for you?
- 33 AF: Yeah. It's just, like, we - you know, it's not something that happens very - very often.

- 1 AJ: So queer, pansexual...
- 2 AF: Mmhmm.
- 3 AJ: Sort of...
- 4 AF: Yeah.
- 5 AJ: I mean, it's not a label, but it's sort of a -
- 6 AF: Yeah, just for the ease of describing -
- 7 AJ: Philosophy, you'd say.
- 8 AF: Yeah.
- 9 AJ: When is the first time you ever met a trans - another trans person?
- 10 AF: The first time I ever met another trans person was - when I was at Creative Arts - ALC for the
11 GSA there, I had a - our counselor was friends with a lot of trans people, and even though at that
12 time, there weren't any trans students at the school 'cause it was such a tiny school. There was,
13 like, fifty-some kids there. Really, really large LG - LGB population, though. My - so anyway, my -
14 Mary Ann, the counselor, she invited in one - she invited in one of her trans friends, who was a
15 trans man, and then she invited in a trans woman, who I actually ended up, like - like, I didn't
16 know her, but I had, like, seen her at the rec center, like, on occasion. But she was sort of, like,
17 not very present, a lot there, she'd, like, show up and then she'd leave somewhere, or
18 something, so I didn't know -
- 19 AJ: So you didn't have a chance to interact with her, really.
- 20 AF: Yeah, I didn't know her very well at all, and I - like, kind of had a, I don't know, like, a distant
21 admiration type of thing going. But - like, again, I - I knew her so little that I didn't, like, it wasn't,
22 like - she just wasn't, like, very present in my thoughts. But once I - once I found out that Mary
23 Ann was going to invite some trans people to talk to our GSA about their experiences being
24 trans, I got super excited about it, and I asked if I could borrow a tape recorder so I could record
25 it, 'cause I wanted to, like, listen to it and write, 'cause I wanted to write a trans character at the
26 time. 'Cause one of the things that I had - that I've done throughout my life to, like, sort of
27 escape my - you know, to escape my pre-out cis fake personality type of thing was to create, like
28 - like, it was mostly female characters that I could sort of live vicariously through, and - and like,
29 like, narrative forms, so I was really in to writing, like - like, fantasy stories and, you know, sci fi
30 stories, and, like, drawing the characters and I was always, like, you know, my worlds were
31 always, like, femme-centric, like, we're going to have, like, this badass, like, princess who's going
32 to just be the woman I've always wanted to be, but...So I wanted to - I wanted to just - I didn't - I
33 didn't know, like, what exactly I had planned, but I - I wanted to, like, record it and use it for,
34 like, writing, or research, or something. And so I got to hear about them going through HRT, and
35 I just, like - and their life experience, and stuff, and I just - to me, like, without actually, like,
36 saying it, without actually, like, labeling it as such, it was information that was being stored away
37 in my mind for future use.

- 1 AJ: Yes. Yes.
- 2 AF: It was something, like, in me, saying, like, this is all going to come in handy someday. You are
3 going to go through this same process.
- 4 AJ: Right.
- 5 AF: To like - to like, know that, but then like, not...like -
- 6 AJ: That's interesting, though, because - you know, you have lived in a generation where, like, that
7 was happening. Like, that was a thing.
- 8 AF: Yeah.
- 9 AJ: Like, trans people were going to visit classrooms.
- 10 AF: Yeah.
- 11 AJ: That was not a thing when I was growing up.
- 12 AF: Yeah.
- 13 AJ: What - what do you think that has meant for the movement? Clearly, I think, it has meant
14 something for you, 'cause you kind of stored away that information and now you're putting it
15 into action, but -
- 16 AF: Yeah.
- 17 AJ: And how do you think that's going to impact in the future?
- 18 AF: I think that - well, I mean it's - it's really - I mean it - like, it's dangerous for trans women to be
19 visible. Trans people in general to be visible.
- 20 AJ: Yes, it is.
- 21 AF: But. From -
- 22 AJ: Eight trans women have died this year.
- 23 AF: Yeah. Mmhmm. And they're all women of color.
- 24 AJ: Trans women of color. Yeah. So it's dangerous.
- 25 AF: It is dangerous. And - so I feel like - I mean, like, I don't think trans people should be expected to
26 go out and, like, put themselves in that position if they're not comfortable. But - I think it's so
27 important that trans people, queer people, are visible for kids, because - I mean, if I had, like, my
28 parents tried so hard to, like, cut me off from LGBT culture. Like, my dad wouldn't let me get my
29 right ear pierced, so I couldn't, like, stretch my ears out - 'cause he, like, I don't know. He
30 thought I was going to be gay or something.
- 31 AJ: Yeah? Oh, wow.
- 32 AF: And like, my parents, I found out, like - like, 19 - around like 19 -

1 AJ: I mean, he was kind of right!

2 AF: Yeah, he was, but like, I found out around like, 19, 20 that my parents thought I was, like, gay
3 male. And -

4 AJ: Oh, really? How did you find that out? They told you?

5 AF: Yeah, they told me. Like, they were drunk one time and they were like "We thought that you
6 were gay."

7 AJ: Mmhmm.

8 AF: So I got to hear their drunken story about how they thought I was gay for years and years, and
9 like - it's like, "We didn't throw you out or anything," but they still just don't - like, the - the
10 respect isn't there.

11 AJ: Yeah.

12 AF: So I think, like, if I had something to - to introduce that language, and that, like, framework, to
13 be able to conceptualize what gender means to me, like, I think that I probably would have had
14 an easier time, and I would have had, I think, more - kind of, like, I don't know, almost, like,
15 more leverage, in a way, with my folks. 'Cause I - it could be, like, "Well, this is a trans person I
16 met. I've talked to them. This is a thing. This is real, and it's valid, and this is what I'm feeling."

17 AJ: Right. This is a thing. Yeah.

18 AF: Like, before going - like, not having that context to work with.

19 AJ: Sure.

20 AF: And - 'cause it - I mean, like, you know, I thought that there was something, like, wrong with me.

21 AJ: Yeah. Absolutely.

22 AF: And that's -

23 AJ: And you're - and that maybe I'm the only person in the world that has this -

24 AF: Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. I thought -

25 AJ: - that has this - until you met this person - these people.

26 AF: Yeah. I thought I was - yup. Mmhmm. I mean, I thought I was an alien for like, the first - for like,
27 the first, second, third grade. For real.

28 AJ: Oh, wow.

29 AF: I got - so they shared their stories and...yeah. It was really great. And I don't have the tapes
30 anymore, but -

31 AJ: Do you remember their names at all?

32 AF: I - I think - I don't remember - I don't remember the trans woman's names - I think the trans
33 man's name was Henry Bishop?

- 1 AJ: Oh yeah. Okay.
- 2 AF: I don't know - he - I could be mistaken but he was a musician, and that's kind of all I remember.
- 3 AJ: Uh huh. Kind of short guy, maybe?
- 4 AF: Yeah. Mmhmm.
- 5 AJ: Wow. So, we - we kind of mentioned this a little bit earlier, but today is a really, really big day.
- 6 AF: Yeah. It was a really big day. And it's been -
- 7 AJ: What happened?
- 8 AF: I got to go to the courthouse and have my court hearing on my name change and gender marker
9 change.
- 10 AJ: Wow.
- 11 AF: So it is -
- 12 AJ: How does that feel?
- 13 AF: Well, I started - I started crying in the courtroom in front of the judge when he granted it - I just -
14 just -
- 15 AJ: Got emotional?
- 16 AF: Yeah, burst out to - like, it was - it's - it's - it's just really interesting, like, the stock that we put
17 into ritual.
- 18 AJ: Yeah.
- 19 AF: Like -
- 20 AJ: How did you come to the name Ashley?
- 21 AF: Well - when I was...oh gosh, probably preteen age, around there, I really liked video games, and
22 I was really into, like, Japanese roleplaying games.
- 23 AJ: Uh huh.
- 24 AF: So I - I got this game, and I would always love to look through the booklets and look at all the
25 art, 'cause I was - you know -
- 26 AJ: You're an artist.
- 27 AF: Yeah. Like, I have been drawing for as long as I can remember. And I would just soak it all in, and
28 one of the main character's names was Ashley, and it was a male character. And I was like
29 "What?!" My mind was blown.
- 30 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 31 AF: Like, how is this possible? So, you know, later, when I - when I - when the - when we - when, you

- 1 know, internet became, like, you know, widely available, in homes, I was able to, like, look up
2 the etymology of the name and all that stuff. And I - I don't remember what exactly it means,
3 but it was - it originally started as a male's name in the 1800s in England, and when it came -
4 when the name came over to the US, it was - it was - it just - it wasn't very popular, wasn't very
5 used much, and then in the 80s, it started being used for girls' names. So I was - I knew - I - I
6 didn't know any boys that were named Ashley but I knew plenty of girls that were named
7 Ashley. And - you know, I was sort of, like - I mean, I wasn't ever really, like, in love in love with
8 the name, but just the fact that a name could be for a boy or a girl, like, a gender neutral name -
- 9 AJ: Right. A gender neutral name.
- 10 AF: Just blew my mind, and - when I started -
- 11 AJ: Wow. A gender non-conforming name.
- 12 AF: Yeah. So when I started thinking about names, that one just came into my head first and it just
13 stuck. So I - that's what I kept, and - you know -
- 14 AJ: And now it's official.
- 15 AF: It is official. I am finally - I am writing my name on consent forms, and I can't believe it. Like - I
16 mean, like, I've been signing my books and stuff, you know, Ashley Finch, but - like, to actually,
17 like, legitimately use that, it's -
- 18 AJ: Yeah! Absolutely.
- 19 AF: Absolutely crazy. And my birth certificate is going to get amended, so it's going to - I'm going to
20 be - I'm going to be listed as female on my birth certificate -
- 21 AJ: So gender marker change -
- 22 AF: Everything, yeah.
- 23 AJ: DM - you going to go around to the DMV?
- 24 AF: I have to wait to get the - I have to wait to get a notice in the mail, and then I have to go down
25 to the courthouse, and then I have to buy certified copies of the court order to hand out to
26 people, so - like, to take to the DMV and the social security office, and I'm sure the bank,
27 and...whatever else.
- 28 AJ: Yeah. Maybe your college.
- 29 AF: Yeah.
- 30 AJ: Hey, have you ever - I know you - you did the G - GSA and stuff in high school. Have you ever
31 worked for any LGBT or trans-specific organizations?
- 32 AF: No. Not until -
- 33 AJ: Like, as a volunteer, or -
- 34 AF: Not until after I came out.

- 1 AJ: Okay.
- 2 AF: I was a...I have - I've been getting on a, like - I'm on a med regimen right now that has been
3 really, really helpful for my - kind of curtailing all of my anxiety and mood swings and all this
4 other stuff, but up until I came out...I mean, I had not been on, like - I had not been medicated,
5 and I was running on - I don't know what I was running on anymore. Like, college took so much
6 out of me. We - like, Cassie got pregnant in my junior year and then had Owen over that
7 summer and then - so I was Dad in starting the senior year of my undergrad degree. And we
8 were living with my parents, and my parents were - like, they - they wanted us there, but then
9 they didn't, and then they were like, "You should finish college," 'cause I was going to quit, so
10 we could get -
- 11 AJ: To get the kid, and get your own place, and get a job, and all that stuff.
- 12 AF: Yeah. Get the hell out of my parents' house.
- 13 AJ: Right.
- 14 AF: 'Cause it's like - that's not a good place I want to raise a kid.
- 15 AJ: Right.
- 16 AF: But everybody was like, "No, finish school, finish school, finish school, finish school," so I
17 finished school. And I mean - I'm really happy I finished school, and - Cassie's glad that I finished
18 school...but my parents, like, leveraged his - like, they kind of leveraged that over - over me,
19 and...so we got out of there, though. I just -
- 20 AJ: But working for your - you're going to - you're starting out - I mean, the question was, have you
21 worked with a LGBT - ?
- 22 AF: Oh! I'm sorry. So...so I - I tried once to volunteer for the - the district GSA that I was going to. I
23 don't remember what I was even going to do. I showed up to some meeting, and I was so
24 psyched for volunteering, but it was just - it was too much for me to handle. I was, like, so
25 scared.
- 26 AJ: But since you've been out, you said you have been.
- 27 AF: Yeah. When I - when - when I..when I - after I came out and I got on, you know, a decent enough
28 meds, and, like, just the act of coming out, and - and the benefits of that - that that's had on me
29 is, like - like, self-esteem wise, and...
- 30 AJ: Right.
- 31 AF: Has been a really powerful and, like, helping me, like, overcome a lot of my anxiety.
- 32 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 33 AF: But I started going to MTHC - Minneapolis -
- 34 AJ: Minnesota -
- 35 AF: Minneapolis Transgender Health Coalition.

- 1 AJ: Oh. Okay.
- 2 AF: Because I heard that there was the - a support group there.
- 3 AJ: Yeah.
- 4 AF: And I was like, that sounds great to me. I don't know what I'm doing.
- 5 AJ: Mmhmm. Mmhmm.
- 6 AF: So I went there and I started going there fairly regularly to the - their weekly -
- 7 AJ: And that's, like, Cafe Sunshine, right?
- 8 AF: Yup.
- 9 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 10 AF: I started going week - like, fairly regularly to their - to, like, the weekly support groups. And one
11 day Roxanne was leading the group and they mentioned that they were looking to open up the
12 Board of Directors.
- 13 AJ: Uh huh.
- 14 AF: And that there was going to be a meeting and if anyone was interested to, like, show up to the
15 meeting.
- 16 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 17 AF: And I, like, thought about it, and I thought about it. And I had, like, the art I was working on was
18 - I was really - I'm really, like, interested in, like, social justice issues, and, like, exploring that in
19 my work.
- 20 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 21 AF: And that is, again, back from Nicaragua.
- 22 AJ: Right, right.
- 23 AF: And what I learned at, like, Naropa, and then everything, like - I was like, I need to do this. Just, I
24 need to do this. I have this...gift.
- 25 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 26 AF: Of knowing how to make things look good on a piece of paper.
- 27 AJ: Yeah. Right, exactly.
- 28 AF: Essentially.
- 29 AJ: That's a gift. That's truly a skill.
- 30 AF: And for so long I was saying to myself, well, I am, you know - I was, like, really living by, like, you
31 know, the pen is mightier than the sword type of thing.

- 1 AJ: Yeah?
- 2 AF: I - you know, there's all of this terrible stuff going on, but I'm just going to, you know, sit behind
3 my computer screen and, you know, write the great - the next great American novel that's going
4 to solve all of the injustice in the world.
- 5 AJ: Yeah.
- 6 AF: And it's just not - like, that's not feasible. Like, that's - I was like, hiding behind, like, my - like, my
7 own, like, anxieties and, you know, I'm sure a bunch of other weird stuff. But I finally just - I
8 showed up to the Board of Director meeting, and that has opened up all - that has been, like,
9 the one meeting has since opened up me into, like, really start - like, I'm - I'm able to, like, be an
10 activist for, like, trans rights.
- 11 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 12 AF: For - and, like, I can, you know, kind of, like, put my money where my mouth is, and, like, I'm
13 writing about it, and I'm doing it, and by doing it I'm getting experience that I take back - that I
14 can take back to my writing and create something that is more genuine.
- 15 AJ: Mmhmm. Wow.
- 16 AF: And...so...I - yeah. Like, I don't know. Like - like, for your campaign, like, I heard about your
17 campaign.
- 18 AJ: Uh huh.
- 19 AF: From Roxanne at - at, like, a support group meeting, and they were just, like, we have these two
20 trans city council candidates who are going - who are, you know, running for city council, like,
21 support them! And I'm like, yes!
- 22 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 23 AF: So I - I showed up to your campaign kick-off.
- 24 AJ: And I'm so appreciative of that, Ashley.
- 25 AF: Yeah. I was so scared.
- 26 AJ: Yeah?
- 27 AF: I was terrified. Like, I - I have such a hard time, like, going to, like, events like that.
- 28 AJ: It was a big event, too. There was a lot of people there.
- 29 AF: Yeah. I was just terrified. And I just, like, I'm - I was like, I need to, like - I need to help.
- 30 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 31 AF: Like, you know, the, you know - you know - you know...Cheeto Hitler had been - got himself into
32 the White House.
- 33 AJ: Yes.

- 1 AF: And I - you know, that was a huge, like, point for me, too, to like, see that happen and to be,
2 like, trans - like, transitioning, and being in the trans community. I mean, that was just another
3 push for me to, like - like, I - I need to - I can't just - I can't just not do anything anymore.
- 4 AJ: Right.
- 5 AF: Like - so, yeah, I just, like...
- 6 AJ: Jumped in on -
- 7 AF: Yeah, I just jumped right in!
- 8 AJ: With both feet!
- 9 AF: Yeah.
- 10 AJ: Yeah.
- 11 AF: And then I - I - one of my biggest fears is talking to, like, people - like, especially people I don't
12 know.
- 13 AJ: Uh huh.
- 14 AF: And that was always something I had such a challenge with in school, because my - you know,
15 my professors always were like, you've got to network when you go to, like, gallery stuff.
- 16 AJ: Right.
- 17 AF: And you've got to talk to people, just say something!
- 18 AJ: Uh huh.
- 19 AF: So that's literally what I did. I just walked right in and like, okay, that's Andrea, hi! I'm - and
20 you're -
- 21 AJ: You did! You totally did.
- 22 AF: Yeah. And then - you know, I was going to follow up, like, send - send you a message through
23 your website, but then Roxanne hooked me up with Michelle, who was your campaign manager
24 at the time, and she was just like, Oh, you do all this stuff, great!
- 25 AJ: Yeah.
- 26 AF: That's...and then I did the same thing with Phillipe.
- 27 AJ: Wonderful! Wow. So you helped that campaign out too?
- 28 AF: Yeah. Yeah, I'm just starting to right now. Doing some - I'm going to start to - doing some design
29 work.
- 30 AJ: So cool.
- 31 AF: For them to - for him, too.

- 1 AJ: Awesome, that's amazing
- 2 AF: Yeah.
- 3 AJ: Wow. We have, like, about a minute and thirty seconds left.
- 4 AF: Okay.
- 5 AJ: What do you want to say that I haven't asked - or, you could answer this question: Where do
6 you see the trans community in the next fifty years?
- 7 AF: Where do you see the trans people in the next fifty years? Well, I hope that, based on the
8 trajectory that's been going, that - you know, I hope it's a lot sooner than fifty years, but I hope
9 by the time fifty years happens, there's finally, like, I don't have to feel weird about peeing in a
10 bathroom -
- 11 AJ: Right.
- 12 AF: - in public. Like, I don't...I mean for, like, that early stage of my transition where I was, like, the
13 man in the dress, I - I - a lot of trans people don't like that. Like, to use that phrase, man in a
14 dress.
- 15 AJ: Yeah.
- 16 AF: That's how I describe myself. That's literally what I was doing, like, way early on.
- 17 AJ: Right. Yeah.
- 18 AF: And people see that and react to that a certain way.
- 19 AJ: Mmhmm.
- 20 AF: Like - and, it's not a good reaction. And...I really want representation for trans people that are
21 just starting their transition that haven't come out yet. That - or, have come out yet, but haven't
22 gotten, you know, started. And, you know, I want - I want to see, like, acceptance for that. I
23 want it to be, like, normal.
- 24 AJ: Yeah.
- 25 AF: For, you know - they didn't need - for - to be trans -
- 26 AJ: Well, kids are coming out so young now!
- 27 AF: Yeah. Yeah. And that - that's such a good sign. I mean, I think that has - you know, that's
28 definitely, like, that has a lot to do with trans representation for kids.
- 29 AJ: Wow. Well, I just want to say, Ashley, thank you so much for participating -
- 30 AF: Thank you.
- 31 AJ: - in this project, and sharing so much of yourself.
- 32 AF: Yeah.

- 1 AJ: And - you know, I think, talking to, you know, trans and gender nonconforming people, you
2 know, one of the main things that it's all about is being authentic with yourself.
- 3 AF: Yeah.
- 4 AJ: And with other people. And so I just want to thank you for being authentic with us today.
- 5 AF: Mmhmm. No problem.
- 6 AJ: All right. Until we meet again.
- 7 AF: Yes!
- 8 AJ: Peace out.