

Lisa Vecoli
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins and Phillipe Cunningham
Interviewers

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

November 27, 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.

Andrea Jenkins

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1 Lisa Vecoli -LV
2 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
3 Phillipe Cunningham -PC
4
5
6 LV: This is Lisa Vecoli. I'm the curator of the Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies at the University of
7 Minnesota. Today is Monday, November 27th, 2017, and I'm gonna be doing, uh, one of the final
8 interviews for Phase 1...
9
10 AJ: Wow.
11
12 LV: ... of the Tretter Transgender Oral History Project. Yeah, Andrea, a lot, right?
13
14 AJ: [Laughs]. Yeah, well you say it like that.
15
16 PC: Yeah, yeah.
17
18 LV: Yep, yep. And we're turning the chair on Andrea today and instead of having her do the
19 interview, she's gonna be the interviewee.
20
21 PC: Yay!
22
23 LV: So, Andrea Jenkins and Phillipe Cunningham have agreed to sit with me today. They are the first
24 two openly transgender black elected officials in the country, in the world? What are we saying?
25 What are we claiming here?
26
27 AJ: In Minnesota, that's for sure. [High fives Phillipe].
28
29 PC: Yeah, we know at least Minnesota. Uhm, well, so, as far as, uh, so Monica Roberts, who is, she
30 does a lot of trans history work too. She said that there had never been a trans man elected to
31 office before in the in the US and so Tyler Titus in Pennsylvania and I, uhm, are the first. And,
32 uhm, as far, so therefore I am also the first trans man of color, uhm, out to be elected. And we
33 also share being the first trans people, out trans people elected to a major city's city council.
34
35 AJ: Mhm.
36
37 PC: So that's never happened.
38
39 AJ: And, uhm, but I do want to shout out though, uhm, and acknowledge, uhm, Althea Garrison...
40
41 PC: Yep.
42
43 AJ: ... who was elected to the Massachusetts State House as a state representative I think they call
44 them there in 1992. Uhm, she wasn't able to be out at that particular time but, uhm, I still feel
45 like, you know, she paved the way. She, uhm, definitely created space for, for trans folks like
46 myself and, and Phillipe and many others to be able to, uhm, step up and, and run for public
47 office so yeah. And I'm pretty sure she's still alive.

1
2 PC: Yeah, I think she's run for a couple of offices since then as I understand.

3
4 LV: Alright, we we've got three people and two microphones so I'm gonna go sit behind the camera
5 and I'm gonna leave you guys with the microphones cause you're the important ones to hear
6 from. And I will come back here. So, to start, and if you could repeat the question, uhm, what
7 was your first involvement in politics?

8
9 AJ: What was your first involvement in politics? Wow, I tell the story I grew up in Chicago, uhm, and
10 I had come to school here in, in Minneapolis but I went home for the summer and I worked on,
11 uhm, Harold Washington's campaign for mayor. And it was, I mean, I literally was just knocking
12 on doors and hanging door fliers.

13
14 PC: That's legendary.

15
16 AJ: Yeah.

17
18 PC: That's a good story.

19
20 AJ: No, it's, it's so amazing but, uh, yeah, that, that election really swept the city. It was very much
21 like Obama's presidency, literally, it was that kind of emotion.

22
23 PC: Mhm.

24
25 AJ: Like everybody was engaged in...

26
27 PC: Hope was alive.

28
29 AJ: Hope was alive. I mean, winos were going to the polls. Like it was that kind of thing. Uh, so that
30 sort of opened my eyes a little bit to, uhm, electoral politics, but I think I, I certainly didn't have
31 any work in electoral politics per se until, uh, my first term working with Councilmember Robert
32 Lilligren as a policy aide. Uhm, and so that sort of really was my entrée into electoral politics.
33 Yeah.

34
35 PC: I actually have basically very little political experience, uh, before stepping into the mayor's
36 office when I got appointed as a policy aide to Betsy Hodges. Uhm, I would say my first
37 awakening though to politics and the importance of being active actually, uhm, was also in
38 Chicago. Uhm, during the Chicago Teacher's Union Strike, uhm, during the 2011-2012 school
39 year I believe. Uhm, and we went out into, we went out on the streets and we were out there,
40 uhm, for better contracts, for better conditions for our classrooms and our kids, uhm, and I was
41 watching this really messy, public drama playing out between the mayor and the city, or the
42 teacher union president, uhm, and it, there were retaliatory policies being put into place that
43 felt punitive and impacted just like me as a teacher and the kids. Like and, uhm, and I just
44 remember thinking so clearly to myself, if there was one mayor in, excuse me, if there was one
45 teacher in that mayor's office then I bet all that drama could have been avoided because the
46 mayor's office in Chicago has control of the school district. And so, uhm, I just, that was like the
47 first time when I was like we need people from all sorts of careers to be helping policy makers

1 make better informed decisions. Like people don't understand how kids work and so, therefore,
2 they make rules and laws that apply to kids that people who don't have youth development
3 expertise. And so, uhm, when I moved to Minneapolis, that was actually why I even attended
4 the Trans Equity Summit in the first place was because I was trying to figure out ways where I
5 could get plugged in and have my voice be, because I saw how important that was. Uhm, and I
6 wanted to get plugged in and, uh, when I went to the Trans Equity Summit that was what began
7 the pathway, uh, to be appointed to the city of Minneapolis' Youth Violence Prevention
8 Executive Committee. Wasn't an executive of anything. Uhm, but I sat down with Major Hodges
9 staff, uh, staff member and somebody else from the Health Department and was like, "I am a
10 black queer trans man. I have over ten years of youth development experience. I am a low paid
11 youth worker, but I feel like I can really bring a strong perspective." And so, the mayor
12 appointed me, uh, to that counsel. The mayor got to appoint people. I got to be her
13 appointment. And then about a year and a half later was when she then appointed me to her
14 administration as a Senior Policy Aide for Education and Youth Success. And as time went on it
15 then expanded to racial equity and LGBTQ rights as well so.

16
17 AJ: Hm.

18
19 LV: So that's what got you started in politics. What made you decide to run for office? That's a big
20 jump from being involved to being a candidate.

21
22 AJ: [Laughs]. Right.

23
24 PC: What made me decide to jump in? Uhm, so that's a, that's a good question because I think it
25 was layered for me because there, there is just like you keep going through it like, "Am I ready?
26 Do I have enough power and ability? You know, like those, am I the right fit for the job? Do I
27 want the job? So, I would say that the moment like the aha moment for me was the night that
28 Trump got elected. That was the final, that was the night that I started telling people like, "I
29 think I'm gonna run, I think I want to run for office. What do you think about that?" And
30 everybody was like crying through their, you know, like the Trump like trauma and was like,
31 "There's hope." You know? [Laughs]. And I was like, "The revolution is gonna start on the block."
32 But, so that, I would say that was, uh, the final straw for me, uhm, to finally be like, "Okay, like,
33 the time is now. It's urgent that we figure it out. We have to figure it out in North Minneapolis in
34 particular. Uhm, it's just such a vulnerable community and now with a hostile federal
35 government, a hostile state government. We gotta make sure that we have good representation
36 at the local level. So, Trump it is.

37
38 AJ: Yeah, wow. No, uhm, so this is Andrea speaking, uhm, and the question is what, what made us
39 decide to run. I, uhm, I guess had a little different approach. Uhm, I felt like my, my awareness
40 and my experience in, uhm, working in city hall was a really good preparation for, running for
41 city council. Uhm, I happen to live in a district where there was an open seat. So, uhm, those
42 opportunities don't come along very often. So, I'd like to think that was preparation and
43 opportunity kind of met up together. Uhm, a lot of people had really been asking me...

44
45 PC: I was probably, I was sitting here thinking like people decided for her. She was drafted...

46
47 AJ: Right. [Laughs].

1
2 PC: ... into being a candidate.

3
4 AJ: Exactly.

5
6 PC: She had thousands of people say, "You don't even have an option. You are going to be our next
7 council member basically."

8
9 AJ: Right, so there was this online "Run, Andrea, Run" campaign that, that took off but, you know,
10 even, even with that, I mean it took me like four days to even respond to that...

11
12 PC: Yeah.

13
14 AJ: ... uh, because, yeah, every— people can think you are but unless you know what that job is like,
15 which I did and do, uh, it's, it's not a decision to take lightly. It's, uhm, it's, it's a tremendous
16 responsibility. Uh, it's a tremendous honor to be...

17
18 PC: Yeah.

19
20 AJ: ... uh, elected to represent, uh, a group of people on, on any level, you know? Uhm, and so,
21 uhm, but I thought about representation matters. I absolutely thought about the fact that, you
22 know, given this administration that this current federal administration that local politics is
23 gonna be where, uh, we're gonna, that's where the resistance is gonna live. Uhm, and that's, we
24 have to try and protect our city, our cities from, uhm, just this, this really onslaught on, uhm, city
25 resources, on city decision making powers...

26
27 PC: Yeah, autonomy.

28
29 AJ: ... uhm, you know, all of those things so I would say that the election of he who shall remain
30 unnamed [laughs] number forty-five is how I refer to our current president had, had a small role
31 but, you know, I, on November 8th like pretty much everybody else I thought we were gonna
32 have our first woman president and, uhm, you know, it would have been great to serve on the
33 city council...

34
35 PC: Yes.

36
37 AJ: ... during that reign.

38
39 PC: That administration, yeah.

40
41 AJ: Uhm, but, uhm, that's not the case and, and I really, you know, I've had... I've always had a
42 strong, uh, commitment to helping people improve their lives and, you know, Phillipe even
43 mentioned the Transgender Equity Summit. That's, you know, I was, I was one of the founders
44 of that summit, which is, uhm, a gathering of transgender and gender non-conforming folks to
45 come together with city policymakers and leaders to talk about ways that, uhm, the transgender
46 community can be more engaged in, in city government in ways that the government can be
47 more supportive of transgender residents. And so how do we get people engaged in, uhm, in

1 commissions and boards. How do we make sure that interactions with police are safe and, and
2 comfortable for folks? Uhm, and so that's, that has been an extension of my desire, my work to
3 help improve people's lives. Uh, it's also interesting that, you know, Phillipe got a career path
4 from that summit.

5
6 PC: Seriously.

7
8 AJ: As did I, right? And so, uh, it's, it's where Lisa, uh, announced that, you know, there's gonna be
9 this oral history, oral historian and oral history project here at the university. And, uhm, I
10 thought, "Wow." Telling people's stories and giving people opportunities to share their, their
11 histories is definitely a way to not only through their individual lives but to improve the lives of
12 the broader transgender community and create this awareness, create this, uhm, this record of,
13 uh, lived experiences from the people who have lived them.

14
15 PC: Yes.

16
17 AJ: Uh, and, and preserve that at a major institution like the University of Minnesota. Uhm, it just
18 felt like an opportunity of a lifetime, so I actually got a new career from that summit too.

19
20 PC: Me too. I didn't realize that. That was a good day for us. [Laughs].

21
22 AJ: It was. It absolutely was.

23
24 LV: So in your campaigns, there's lots of dynamics in a campaign...

25
26 AJ: Mhm.

27
28 LV: Lots. Uhm, can you talk a little bit about the dynamics of your campaign with your constituents?
29 And then we will go through a couple of other groups.

30
31 PC: Sure.

32
33 AJ: Why don't you go Phillipe.

34
35 PC: So, I'm sorry, what was?

36
37 LV: The dynamics of your campaign with your constituents.

38
39 PC: The dynamics of your campaign with your constituents. Well I can say that, so I went into this
40 campaign, uhm, as a policy nerd, uh, who really loved his community but, uh, very actually shy
41 and introverted and having social anxiety and so, uhm, calling strangers on their phones, uhm,
42 knocking on their doors was a huge growing process for me. Uhm, and honestly it got easier and
43 easier and I started to look forward to it and love it actually by the end of the campaign and the
44 reason why is because northsiders are amazing. Like I fell in love with my community like a
45 hundred times over already, uhm, because of the fact that I got to build so many relationships
46 all across the ward with, uhm, folks that in my introverted bubble I might not have met
47 otherwise. And, uhm, folks interacting with me, folks were excited, hopeful. Uhm, I was, my

1 campaign was running against a twenty-year incumbent, uhm, city council president as well as a,
2 she comes from a family that has held the seat for forty-seven years, consecutive years. And so,
3 uhm, so I was up against a very well-established figure in the community and so I was the new
4 kid on the block. And, but folks were increasingly engaged, increasingly excited and hopeful, uh,
5 because of the vision and energy that I'm bringing. Uhm, I ran as an out trans person, as an out
6 queer trans person the entire time in was in the election. Uhm, I never hid that. Uhm, in fact I
7 discovered, I mentioned it at the DFL endorsing convention, uhm, and so I announced it to the
8 delegates. It was just part of my questions, or one of my answers. But, uhm, folks were generally
9 speaking very well, they, uhm, were well supportive of it, and, uhm, I, I never felt afraid to be
10 out as myself. I never was afraid to say my husband. Uhm, you know, my husband and I and
11 things like that. I, I felt like I got to be my full and authentic self every single day with every
12 single person that I interacted with and that is what makes the Northside so special. And north is
13 Northsiders. And so, uhm, so I would say that that was probably, and then, uhm, one of my like
14 just a really earth shifting moment for me like I was like, "Wow, is this real life?" Uhm, I did
15 have, uhm, a woman, uhm, who, a wealthier woman who lives in the Victory neighborhood,
16 which is the, one of the really nice neighborhoods in north Minneapolis, and, uhm, little bit
17 older than me but she came over and said, you know, "When I saw you and I found out that you
18 were black or that you're black and you're queer and you're trans, and then I found out that you
19 have a husband who is also trans," she said, "that's who, I thought to myself, that's who I want
20 to be the face of my community."

21
22 AJ: Hm.

23
24 PC: And that, uhm, that really moved me because it wasn't just like, "Oh, I'm supporting you." It was
25 like, "I want you to be the face of what our community is now," knowing all of that. And so, you
26 know, of course I've gotten, uhm, you know, I've received threats, you know, and negativity and
27 all that BS but honestly the good outweighs the bad like hundreds fold. Like it's been, uhm, it's
28 been a really beautiful blessing to be honest.

29
30 AJ: Right. So, yeah, this is Andrea. Uhm, the, the dynamics in my race were really interesting. Uhm,
31 for about four months I had no opponent whatsoever. [Laughs]. Uh, no one had stepped up to
32 challenge...

33
34 PC: She cleared the field for a long time. That's what happened.

35
36 AJ: ... challenge the seat. Uhm, and I, so it was really, it was a, it was a challenge to try to keep
37 people motivated, engaged, uhm, interested, and yeah cause people just thought she's got this,
38 there's no opponent, she's got all of this experience. And, and I literally had to, to fight that or
39 dispel that notion every day. Anybody that I would meet would say, "You don't have an
40 opponent, do you?" Uhm, and so, you know, that, that got us to the DFL nomination, and I'm
41 really proud to say that I am the first trans person, probably black trans person to, to be, uhm,
42 endorsed by the DFL so thank you. Uh, but, uhm, but then right after that then a green party,
43 uh, candidate got into the race and, uhm, then there was a libertarian party candidate and, and
44 another DFL'er or so. So, I consequently eventually had three opponents, but I would say almost
45 right up until election day people would still come up to me and say, "You don't have an
46 opponent, do you?" And so, it was, it was really, it was one of the biggest dynamics was fighting
47 complacency. Uhm, and complacency within myself but I vowed never to let that happen, but

1 also on my campaign team, which, who were amazing, and they really bought into the concept
2 that I, you know, preached to them. No, we don't have a physical opponent, but we are always
3 fighting, uhm, transphobia and racism. And, and I got them to buy into that and that we have to
4 be professional. We have to show up. We have to have our mailings go out on time. They can't
5 have typos. Like we have to be...

6
7 PC: We still have to run a professional campaign.

8
9 AJ: Absolutely. Yeah, we still have to run a professional campaign at every step of the way. Uhm,
10 and, and they really bought into it and we did. Uhm, I actually had, you know, I had a question
11 earlier today, what were some of the obstacles of the campaign? And, uhm, you know, it was
12 probably, if you had obstacles, it, it might have been one of the better obstacles to have I guess
13 but I, my campaign managers were so talented that they kept getting hired away from me.
14 [Laughs]. And so, consequently, I had four different campaign managers, uhm, and two of which
15 who went to work on, uhm, fulltime staff persons for, uhm, mayoral races. So that made me feel
16 good that, you know, I had staff that was, you know, seen as being that talented, uhm, that they
17 would be offered, uhm, fulltime positions because, you know, while I, I recognize that we
18 needed to run a fulltime, a full campaign, we, fully professional campaign. We also recognize we
19 didn't need to spend our resources on fulltime staff, right? Like we don't have an opponent.
20 [Laughs]. I recognize this so we can't, you know, it would, it would have been foolish to spend
21 our, all of our resources on fulltime staff. So, I could understand people wanting and needing to
22 have fulltime employment. Uhm, but I ended up with the last campaign manager, a twenty-
23 year-old young woman student here at the University of Minnesota. Just smart, energetic, uh,
24 personable, hard worker that just really motivated a team of about eighteen different people,
25 uhm, and, you know, sometimes it's a little hard for, you know, some of the people in my
26 campaign team were in their fifties and, you know, they're taking marching orders from this
27 twenty-year-old young Bangladeshi woman, you know, so a brown girl. Uhm, but, but she, she
28 did it. You know, I was, I was behind the scenes supporting her but also letting her push me
29 cause I think that's what a campaign manager needs to do and a campaign, uh, I mean a
30 candidate needs to listen to their campaign manager, right? If you want to have the best team
31 going forward so, uhm, so those were the few of the, uhm, dynamics, if you will, uhm, that were
32 at play in, in my race. And one of the things that I talk to people is that you have to understand
33 your race. Phillipe and I we're being named as the two transgender black people ever, I don't
34 know what that means even but...

35
36 PC: Right.

37
38 AJ: ... uhm, but we had completely different races.

39
40 PC: I mean night and day.

41
42 AJ: Yeah. Night and day. And you have to understand your particular race, I mean, we went through
43 the same campaign training even.

44
45 PC: Yeah, yeah.

1 AJ: Uhm, you know, so there's this manual but you need to understand when to depart from the
2 manual...
3
4 PC: Yeah.
5
6 AJ: ... when to bring your own intuition, creativity, uhm, when, when the winds shift in a campaign
7 cause they always do.
8
9 PC: Yeah.
10
11 AJ: Uhm, and you have to be prepared and, and ready to, to take that on. Uhm, cause there was a
12 pretty big shift in your race, I would say in the last couple of weeks, uhm, I, I personally thought
13 that there was a big mistake made by Minneapolis Works or Minnesota Works or whatever they
14 were...
15
16 PC: Minneapolis.
17
18 AJ: ... uhm, in attacking you. That actually worked in your favor. I think, you know, a lesser
19 candidate could have really took the attacks and just crumble but, you know, you were able to
20 kind of see the tea leaves and see how this was impacting other races in the city and stand up
21 and stay strong and, and really press even harder.
22
23 PC: Yeah.
24
25 AJ: And, uhm, I'm feeling like, you know, that was one of the things that brought you through.
26
27 PC: Yeah.
28
29 AJ: I know you worked as hard as I did. You were out knocking on doors every day for about a year.
30
31 PC: Yes.
32
33 AJ: [Laughs].
34
35 PC: Yes. And then going home once it got dark and called people, yes. [Laughs].
36
37 AJ: Yeah. No, that paid off too.
38
39 PC: Yeah.
40
41 AJ: Yeah.
42
43 LV: Well, you both represent wards that have significant African American populations.
44
45 AJ: Mhm.
46

- 1 LV: So, what are the dynamics between you as out trans people and the more traditional black
2 communities in the wards you're running in?
3
- 4 AJ: Yeah, that's a, that's a really great question.
5
- 6 LV: Can you repeat it just for the mic?
7
- 8 AJ: Right, this is Andrea, and, uhm, the question is, you know, as being African American candidate
9 in representing, uhm, two wards that have fairly significant, uh, African American populations, I
10 know, I don't know if there's any area in the city that's predominately African American or
11 uhm...
12
- 13 PC: Not that I know of. Neighborhoods are but yeah.
14
- 15 AJ: Majority, majority African American but we had, I had a very sizable and historical, uh, African
16 American community that I'm representing. I think in my situation, uhm, because I had worked
17 in that community for so long, you know, people, the African American folks in particular had
18 sort of gotten over the transgender issue if you will, uhm, and, and really had come to respect
19 my work ethic and my ability to understand issues and me showing up at neighborhood
20 cleanups and events and art parties and fundraisers in the community over, throughout the
21 years. So, there was, there was a little less hang up about that. Uhm, I think there were some
22 whispers, rumors that were kind of going around that people were feeling a little uncomfortable
23 with me being the face of the community but, but that was outweighed by people just really
24 having that experience with me and understanding that I, I do in fact understand the issues that
25 impact, uhm, the community as well as have the network and the experience inside, uhm, you
26 know, the city, institutions, structures to, to really make some positive change so it was, it was
27 sort of lurking underneath the surface a tiny bit but it never really became an issue.
28
- 29 PC: I, so I would, this is Phillipe. I would say that one of the nuances about me being trans and
30 running for office is also being cis passing and trans and, you know, like as a trans man and folks
31 look at me and they make a lot of assumptions about who I am based on face value. And so I
32 would say that rather, you know, I mean, transphobia and other things are two sides of the
33 same coin oftentimes but I would say what actually showed up more often was, uhm,
34 homophobia and femmephobia. Uhm, I, I'm very well aware that I make other black men, uhm,
35 from time to time uncomfortable with my feminine expression, and, uhm, but I haven't reigned
36 that in and it's something that as time goes on folks are just, they get used to it. Like because it, I
37 mean, I do not know how to perform in any other way. This is exactly who I am. I've never had
38 to pretend to be a straight dude ever in my life so I have no idea how to do that. [Laughs].
39
- 40 AJ: [Laughs].
41
- 42 PC: I'm not trying to figure it out now but especially for other people's comfort. Like, uhm, and so,
43 uhm, overall though like again I was out on the doors. I was talking to this brother and he was
44 like, you know, he's like, "You're a young black man, and I think you might, might be kind of gay,
45 you know, I'm just kind of concerned that, you know, people are gonna get in your way and
46 judge you for, you know, not being able to get your work done at the city." He was concerned

1 like as me as a gay man, as a gay black man that it would be even harder for me to be able to get
2 work done in the city. So that was, he was actually concerned.

3
4 AJ: Wow.

5
6 PC: He was like, you know, "You got, you got two strikes against you," or whatever, you know. And,
7 uhm, I didn't tell him I was trans cause it wasn't necessarily relevant to the conversation...

8
9 AJ: Right.

10
11 PC: ... but like it was funny cause he was like, "I think you might be kind of gay." I'm like, "I'm
12 actually super gay so uh..." [Laughs].

13
14 AJ: [Laughs].

15
16 PC: But I was like, "But don't worry. I've worked with the city, and I've always been out, and people
17 know who I am and I'm not worried about that." So, I think that that, uhm, that's really where a
18 lot of the discomfort can come from but, uhm, and then, you know, that works both ways as
19 well. Like my own nervousness about being a femme expressing person in masculine spaces.
20 Like I also have to like figure out how to be in relationship, I have had to figure out how to be in
21 relationship to that, uhm, as a representative of the community, right? And so, uhm, so it, it's
22 been navigating homophobia and femmephobia I would say. Uhm, I haven't had a lot of
23 transphobia, uh, like explicit transphobia and it's actually, it's never come from people of color.
24 So, and my ward, actually is majority, uhm, so we actually have no ethnic majority. Uhm, I think
25 we're considered possibly the most diverse ward in terms of ethnic makeup because, uhm, it's
26 like 30%, 40%, between 30% and 40% like white and black. And then a solid portion of Hmong
27 folks and a solid representation of Somali folks as well so it's, it's, I get really frustrated when we
28 talk about segregation. This is a total side. But, you know, it's like when we talk about
29 segregation people think about, uh, like north Minneapolis as being segregated. Uhm, however,
30 we're actually the most diverse. Who's most segregated is ward 13, which is the richest, whitest
31 area of the town. And so, uhm, but what I love about our ward, uhm, in the fourth ward is the
32 fact that there is no ethnic majority. Like door knocking you can go from a black lesbian couple
33 to a Hmong family to a white family. I mean, it's like door to door. And so, uhm, I would, I would
34 not say that there was any particular push back that was noticeable specifically from the black
35 community. In fact, I think, I would say in north Minneapolis we, so like I said, our representative
36 had been there for twenty years and her family for fifty years. They're wealthier white people.
37 And this area is, when you put all the people together, it's like 65% of, so it's a majority, minority
38 area, uhm, and so people are really excited, uhm, about the possibility of a black person,
39 actually a person of color, period, first time ever representing north Minneapolis, which, you
40 know, folks who know Minneapolis...

41
42 AJ: Well, ward 4.

43
44 PC: Yes, ward 4. Did I say north Minneapolis? I meant ward 4, not north Minneapolis. So if you
45 know, but if you know north Minneapolis, it is so diverse to have only white people representing
46 a significant chunk of it is quite, uh, [laughs], you know, quite a history. So, uhm, so I would say,
47 uhm, there was that. And, I don't know if you experienced this but on the other side of that,

- 1 uhm, I, where I experienced a lot of racism was around white folks then saying that I was only
2 being supported because I was black so that started to creep up and on the other side of that so.
3
- 4 AJ: No, I didn't really experience a lot of that.
5
- 6 PC: Yeah, there was a lot of racism in my case.
7
- 8 AJ: I... I'm trying to... cause your experience is, I'm not trying to dispute that at all but I just, like I
9 unfriended some people on social media for, some black folks because they seemed really
10 transphobic in, in your race. Uhm, so I'm glad you didn't experience it as such.
11
- 12 PC: I don't absorb it. I mean I guess I, yeah.
13
- 14 AJ: It, it was, I...
- 15
- 16 PC: There was a lot of transphobia. Okay, that's fair enough. [Laughs]. That's fair enough.
17
- 18 AJ: I experienced it as being transphobic.
19
- 20 PC: So I, so, so, yeah, so I, that's real. Uh, cause I was thinking more door to door, human
21 interaction. Online is a whole other thing. Like, so that, like thank you for bringing that to my
22 attention because, yes, online, like door to door people weren't messed up with me. Like I said it
23 was more homophobia and femmephobia.
24
- 25 AJ: Right.
26
- 27 PC: But online, now that's a different story. There was definitely, uhm, a concerted effort to, I feel
28 like, like erase my, my trans identity, to, uhm, dismiss the like the attacks that were happening
29 on me, like, like there were threats that had happened. Uhm, that no one talked about. Like no
30 one talked about, like cause I was like, "Oh there are, you know, this threat happened, and I
31 asked just to put it out there." Nobody talked about it at all. And, uhm, and then when other
32 things happened throughout the city I was watching people have conversations about like less
33 dangerous things. And so I really appreciate Andrea because it was like, I think that sometimes
34 when you are just so in the thick of it, it's hard to name it and see it because you're just
35 regulating and not internalizing it and that's why I'm thinking about knocking on the doors
36 rather than online because that, that was a much uglier space, yes.
37
- 38 AJ: And the reality is that social media is such a huge part of our lives...
39
- 40 PC: Yes.
41
- 42 AJ: ... and campaigning now. I mean, that's where a lot of campaigning actually happens so.
43
- 44 PC: Yeah.
45
- 46 AJ: I think that has to be sort of included in, in the dialog.
47

- 1 PC: No, I appreciate you bringing that up cause truly I was thinking door to door but like I had
2 experience some pretty gross stuff online.
3
- 4 AJ: And I would say even, you know, myself and just staying on that a little bit, I mean, there were a
5 couple of spaces that I felt, uhm, that I felt I was, uhm, kept out of or, or what's the language I'm
6 trying to... barred from.
7
- 8 PC: Excluded.
9
- 10 AJ: What was that?
11
- 12 PC: You said excluded?
13
- 14 AJ: Excluded! Thank you. Yeah, yeah. [Laughs]. Excluded from, uhm, by, so, you know, there were a
15 couple of forums. One was for black women running for political office.
16
- 17 PC: Stop.
18
- 19 AJ: I was not invited.
20
- 21 PC: Stop.
22
- 23 AJ: Another event was, uhm, how to run as a black person in the twenty-first century. And there
24 were all of these black candidates...
25
- 26 PC: I didn't even hear about it. [Laughs].
27
- 28 AJ: I wasn't, I wasn't invited to that. You know, and, and while you're on the campaign trail, I mean,
29 yes, you're, you know, your time is limited. You gotta be efficient, uhm, uhm, but those are
30 some conversations that I would have been interested in participating in. I think I could have
31 brought some valuable insights, uhm, to but, but I wasn't invited. And I, I can only assume that it
32 was because of my gender identity.
33
- 34 PC: Yeah.
35
- 36 AJ: Uhm, you know, the second one that I mentioned, the twenty-first century thing was more sort
37 of a green party kind of thing, and I don't identify...
38
- 39 PC: Yeah.
40
- 41 AJ: ... with the green party.
42
- 43 PC: Oh yeah, that one, I was really frustrated.
44
- 45 AJ: But they didn't really bill it as a green party event.
46
- 47 PC: No, they didn't. No, they didn't.

1
2 AJ: Uhm, so it was just billed as how to run for office in the twenty-first century.
3
4 PC: As a black person.
5
6 AJ: As a black person, right.
7
8 PC: And, yes, cause I, cause I, so I know which one you're talking about. I saw that on Facebook, and
9 I actually immediately put like, oh convenient that the black trans people weren't invited to this.
10 And I was like oh it's a green thing. Delete. [Laughs].
11
12 AJ: [Laughs]. Yeah.
13
14 PC: But still. I was like dang.
15
16 AJ: But it wasn't, like you said, it wasn't just clearly obvious that it was a green party sponsored
17 event...
18
19 PC: It wasn't clear, yeah. And I think the reason why...
20
21 AJ: And a lot of people who were invited were not green party candidates.
22
23 PC: Right. Well and that's why I was frustrated because there was, uh, at the beginning of the race
24 there was another black man in, in the election who was explicitly transphobic all the time to
25 me, just to throw that out there and that dynamic as well. But he, uhm, he was invited to speak
26 at that. And so that felt insulting to me as like the black person, the black person in the race, still
27 in the race and they had him come in, uhm, and so like when I, he was in the DFL convention
28 with me. Like so he wasn't a green party member. So, so that kind of rubbed me a little bit.
29
30 AJ: Yeah, and I think it's transphobic, transphobia. Uhm, and not to say that that is, you know, I
31 want to be real clear that's not the hallmark of the black community, and I don't think it solely
32 exists in the black community.
33
34 PC: No, and I think that's a dangerous narrative, yeah.
35
36 AJ: Right. Exactly. But, but it did, uhm, it, it did, it does occur.
37
38 PC: And it cuts deep. I personally like when, when transphobia comes out of the black community
39 towards me personally it just, it cuts me so deep cause I'm like family like y'all should know
40 better.
41
42 AJ: Right.
43
44 PC: Like so it does, it does cut a little deeper, yeah.
45

- 1 AJ: Right, and well when you consider that, you know, as African Americans we have had to fight
2 oppression and so how, how do we move beyond that when we're still oppressing other
3 communities, right?
4
- 5 PC: Right.
6
- 7 AJ: Like that just... those two things don't necessarily comport, uhm, but..
8
- 9 PC: Yeah, no.
10
- 11 AJ: But, uhm, you know, I think we did get elected.
12
- 13 PC: Yeah.
14
- 15 AJ: We do have this opportunity to really...
16
- 17 PC: And we both ran as out trans people like...
18
- 19 AJ: Absolutely.
20
- 21 PC: ... you know, I think that's really notable.
22
- 23 AJ: Right. I, I didn't hide my identity in the least.
24
- 25 PC: Yeah.
26
- 27 AJ: Uhm, and though it wasn't like my calling card either, you know, uhm, and I don't think it was
28 yours.
29
- 30 PC: Not at all, yeah.
31
- 32 AJ: And, uhm, but now we do get to have this platform to speak. Uh, and, and demonstrate, uhm,
33 that, you know, at least these two black trans people are competent and capable.
34
- 35 PC: Excellent in their jobs, yes, yes.
36
- 37 AJ: Uhm, and... Exactly.
38
- 39 PC: People that are capable of representing everyone.
40
- 41 AJ: And hopefully that brings more, opens up more space for folks.
42
- 43 PC: Yes, absolutely.
44
- 45 LV: So Phillipe, you mentioned that you've gotten some threats and some negative reactions.
46
- 47 PC: Yeah.

1
2 LV: Andrea, have you gotten any negative reactions, threats, harassments?
3
4 AJ: I have really decided that I can't read the comments sections when like...
5
6 PC: Oh yeah, don't do that. I don't do that.
7
8 AJ: That's kind of where that lives, and I try to avoid it. It was, you know, it kind of got to me. Since
9 election day, uhm, you know, Phillipe and I had a lot media reactions.
10
11 PC: National.
12
13 AJ: Some national media together.
14
15 PC: Yes.
16
17 AJ: Uhm, and the Root 100 page was...
18
19 PC: It was pretty ugly.
20
21 AJ: ... pretty brutal.
22
23 PC: Yeah, it was ugly.
24
25 AJ: It was a great story.
26
27 PC: I made the mistake of looking at the comments sections on that one too, and it's because I love
28 black people and then I was like, "Damn it!"
29
30 AJ: Right, I know, like those are my people, and they were going in pretty hard.
31
32 PC: Yeah.
33
34 AJ: Uhm, I haven't had any, uhm, specific threats, uhm, you know, I got, I got... I think the
35 community got attacked by Minnesota state legislator, uhm, and we had to kind of clamp back
36 on that that one a little bit.
37
38 PC: You let her know, right, you let her know.
39
40 AJ: Plant some edges.
41
42 PC: [Laughs].
43
44 AJ: Uhm, she didn't name me specifically, but she sort of said any man that thinks she's a woman is
45 a man with a mental illness problem or something like that.
46

- 1 PC: Yeah. And then her apology was like even worse than that. Basically, saying like, "Sorry
2 snowflakes, it is what it is." And your clamp back was heard to the gods because you let her
3 have it [laughs] in the classiest, most professional way. "Thank you for showing your true
4 colors."
5
- 6 AJ: Yeah. Right. Exactly. And so, you know, I think a lot of, uhm, a lot of legislators, a lot of, uhm,
7 other public officials' kind of stepped up.
8
- 9 PC: Mhm.
10
- 11 AJ: Uhm, said, "No, we're not going to tolerate this."
12
- 13 PC: Really reprimanded that.
14
- 15 AJ: Uhm, and that's been the extent up to this point. You know, my partner is really concerned and
16 wants to make sure that we get, upgrade the security on the house and I think that's a great
17 idea.
18
- 19 PC: Yeah, I did that back in the campaign.
20
- 21 AJ: Yeah.
22
- 23 PC: Uhm, because of the fact that I've been receiving threats throughout the campaign so...
24
- 25 AJ: And Phillipe and I have been talking to, uhm, MPD and the Building Commission. Like how do we
26 have a little more security in city hall. I mean, I think we're, we, we're on government campus,
27 right?
28
- 29 PC: Yeah, yeah.
30
- 31 AJ: It's sort of the government campus. There's the federal building, city hall, and there's the county
32 building.
33
- 34 PC: Yeah.
35
- 36 AJ: All in a row. The federal government and the county building, everybody walks through metal
37 detectors.
38
- 39 PC: Yes.
40
- 41 AJ: And security searches and there's only a few access points so people can kind of really monitor
42 what's happening. City hall, you can just walk in.
43
- 44 PC: You can literally just walk in.
45
- 46 AJ: [Laughs]. And, you know, we're taxing people, we're, you know...
47

- 1 PC: Trans people, visible trans people. [Laughs].
2
- 3 AJ: Exactly. Exactly. You know, somebody runs over a pothole and they get mad at the city council.
4 We're very vulnerable, uhm.
5
- 6 PC: And there have been scares in the past. Like pretty serious scares in the past anyway, uhm, with
7 people who were upset about decisions and then, oh, there's an unattended bookbag all of a
8 sudden in the room and like so there have already been instances so I, we, I am fully on board
9 for us to increase security. Again, as somebody who's been experiencing threats. I already had
10 to file reports with the inspector, uh, so the top person at the forth prescient, which is the MPD
11 prescient in north Minneapolis. Uhm, and, uh, so I think it's gonna be, it has to happen to be
12 honest. I have a few officers who are interested in being on my detail if we ever get to that so at
13 least that's fun. [Laughs]. So I'm grateful for that.
14
- 15 LV: Well, I'm sorry to hear that you're experiencing that.
16
- 17 PC: Yeah.
18
- 19 LV: Uhm, do you think that your identity as trans people will impact how you fulfill the role as
20 council member?
21
- 22 PC: How our identity will impact or influence our decision making?
23
- 24 LV: How you fulfill the role?
25
- 26 PC: Yeah, how we fulfill the role. So I would say. So this is Phillipe. I would say, uhm, that just
27 inherently from my experience on different places on the gender spectrum throughout life that
28 it's given me multiple life experiences within one. Uhm, and so when I'm sitting at the table and
29 I'm looking at policy or a problem I'm looking at that both as a black woman and a black man
30 like because I spent the first twenty-three years of my life as a black woman so I'm reading that
31 through that lens still. And I'm, I, I incorporate that and identify with that. Uhm, and so I'm
32 bringing in that intersectional lens of, you know, how, how am I looking at it from the
33 perspective of gender? How am I looking at it from the perspective of, uhm, socioeconomic
34 status or history or human behavior? Just looking at it from the entire context adding that layer
35 of, uhm, just the complexities of those of us that live at the intersections because we can look
36 down at a problem and have multiple eyes in one experience on that one problem. [Laughs].
37
- 38 AJ: I agree. [Laughs]. Yes, yes, it will have, it will. It informs my decision making, uhm, every day. I
39 mean, the same as being African American. It's, you know, I have the lived experience of, uh,
40 dealing with oppressive, uhm, situations. Uhm, you know, being thought of as less than or not
41 capable or, uhm, all of those kinds of things, and so, it, it will inform my work, my decision
42 making, processes, uhm, and I think in a positive way.
43
- 44 PC: Yeah.
45
- 46 AJ: Uhm, because I have that, that insight into how well intended policies can have unintended
47 consequences for people.

1
2 PC: Dire, yes.

3
4 AJ: Uhm, so that is, you know, yeah, that experience I think will, uhm, positively impact my work on
5 the council.
6

7 PC: I think that's one of the things that actually that won't be appreciated until later and further
8 along in this experience is the fact that we are bringing an absolutely unique and new voice to
9 the table in the decision making process so folks don't understand how nuanced our policy
10 analysis lens is because we both have that institutional knowledge as well as lived experience.
11 And so the perspectives that we are bringing to the table have never been there before period.
12 And so we're going to be changing the conversation in serious ways, ways that we've already
13 have been doing in city hall by starting the Trans Equity work...
14

15 AJ: Mhm.

16
17 PC: ... and building a lot of things already. Uhm, I'm already that guys who's always, "Mm, that isn't
18 gonna work actually. This is how that perpetuates, you know, income inequality or inequity.
19 And, uhm, already being that and pushing that conversation. So I think that folks really won't
20 fully understand the breathe of analysis that we're bringing to the table as trans folks, as black
21 folks, as queer folks. Really bringing all of that to the table. Uhm, I think that it's going to be,
22 uhm, because we've had the same, majority of the time, the same perspective looking at these
23 problems over and over again. And again you have completely new eyes on it and so I think that
24 what's just going to happen is folks see how enriching it is to have that intersectional lens and
25 form more impactful work that actually plays out.
26

27 LV: Uhm, what impact do you see trans visibility in electoral empowerment having on society? I
28 mean, you were both elected, uhm, Danica Roem was elected. There were several other trans
29 people who've stepped forward. Seems to be kind of a moment.
30

31 AJ: Mhm. Seven, seven trans people were elected, uhm, in, on November 7th, uh, 2017. Well, you
32 [gestures to Phillipe] November 8th. But on the 7th...
33

34 PC: [Signs and rolls eyes]. Since the runoff, yes.
35

36 AJ: On the 7th we pretty much knew. I mean, for those who were watching the results that you
37 were in there. Uhm, but, uhm, I think it's going to actually have an enormous impact in, in many
38 ways. Uhm, you know, from, I don't know if it's like a backhand complement or, uhm, or
39 inspiration but I know for a fact that people have said, "If Andrea and Phillipe can win a office of
40 course I can!" [Laughs]. You know, uhm, they, they're discounting my fifty-six years of life
41 experience and thirty years of public, uhm, public, uhm, service, you know, which, uhm, eclipse
42 many people who's, uhm, experience in, in doing this kind of thing but, all of that aside, if, if my
43 being a trans person can inspire someone to run for, for public office, uhm, absolutely more
44 power to them, uh, and, and I support that. Uh, I think it's going to change the landscape too
45 though in, in ways that, you know, Laverne Cox was able to have on sort of the entertainment
46 industry but it didn't fully cross over into the broadest levels of society. Uhm, the way that, uhm,

- 1 Caitlyn Jenner's coming out, you know, literally made it impossible for anybody in the world to
2 now say, "I've never heard of transgender, right?"
3
- 4 PC: Yeah.
5
- 6 AJ: Cause, you know, uh, but our elections and the elections of, of Danica and other trans, uh,
7 people around the country I think sends the message that A. We're not going to let hate, uh, be
8 the signature calling card for America. I think it says that we are moving to a place where people
9 are beginning to understand that whatever communities that you come from and represent, you
10 can be, uh, positive, contributing members to our society and to our culture. Uhm, I think it's
11 gonna open up people's eyes to this whole concept of gender fluidity as well. Uhm, you know,
12 uh, a lot of people have been sort of ignoring it or haven't had any real reason to think about it.
13 Uhm, but we're gonna be on television every other week.
14
- 15 PC: Yeah.
16
- 17 AJ: And every other day sitting in committee meetings, and I recognize that those, that's cable
18 access and not everybody tunes into that. However...
19
- 20 PC: We're gonna be in the papers. We're, I mean, yeah.
21
- 22 AJ: Absolutely.
23
- 24 PC: Yeah.
25
- 26 AJ: You know, when things happen on the Northside, you know, they're gonna have to come talk to
27 Councilmember Cunningham, you know. When things happen south of Lake St., you know,
28 they're gonna have to come talk to Councilmember Jenkins, you know. And so, uhm, I think that
29 level of awareness, that level of visibility is going to, uh, uhm, create some dialogues. And I
30 actually intend to have some dialogues around some of these issues and bring community in to,
31 to talk about some of those kind of things so that, uhm, so that we can begin to create more
32 understanding. What I would hate to see happen is that there is some, and I don't think that's
33 gonna happen here in, in Minneapolis, but, you know, after the eight years of...
34
- 35 PC: Yes.
36
- 37 AJ: ... the first black president, I think there was a significant backlash...
38
- 39 PC: Yes.
40
- 41 AJ: ... and, and I would hate to see that happen, but honestly I don't think it will. I just feel like it's a
42 different moment now. Uhm, I certainly don't think Minneapolis would be that, uhm, that place.
43
- 44 PC: Yeah.
45
- 46 AJ: But, uhm, you know, we, we have to stay on guard, on the lookout for that which is why I want
47 to have these broader conversations. You know, one of the things that I think was a mistake in

1 the Obama administration is like he kept running from that conversation. Like he didn't want to
2 have a conversation about race. Uhm, you know, and, and it's understandable. It's a, it's a very
3 difficult conversation to have. It's even more complicated...

4
5 PC: ... when you're the leader of the free world.

6
7 AJ: ... when you're the leader of the free world.

8
9 PC: [Laughs].

10
11 AJ: Uhm, but, by the same token like the leader of the free world is the person who can initiate that
12 conversation as well.

13
14 PC: Yeah.

15
16 AJ: And so, uhm, I think I'm gonna take a little bit of an opposite approach to that.

17
18 PC: Uhm, I, I would say, I agree on the fear of the backlash. Uhm, I, one of the things, coming from,
19 so I'm originally from a small town in Illinois, uhm, and very rural America. And I knew that there
20 was going to be a backlash, uhm, to President Obama, uh, getting elected because I saw how
21 rural America responded. Uhm, and, uhm, I saw how the people around me responded. And,
22 uhm, or who had been around me at that point. I was, I had moved but I was able to see that
23 though, uhm, you know, in my hometown. These white men have been since Obama got elected
24 have been collecting guns and ammo because they truly believe that Obama at any moment was
25 going to start a race war and that they had to be prepared. Like, literally, my dad is a black man
26 and these white men feel audacious enough to process these fears with like, with him for
27 whatever reason. Uhm, but, so I have been nervous about a backlash as well which is one of the
28 reasons why security is such an interest to me. I don't think that Minneapolis like the culture
29 here you're gonna see like sudden Republican wave come in.

30
31 AJ: [Laughs].

32
33 PC: Like I don't really see that happening but I, I'm scared about the Republicans in greater like rural
34 Minnesota, greater Minnesota who don't know a trans person but believe that we're gonna
35 cause harm to people by just merely being trans people in decision making spaces. And so, uh,
36 so that is something I will admit that I'm, that I am concerned about but, you know, on the more
37 positive, you know, looking at it in a different way, uhm, there have been generations of genius
38 that has been lost because of the fact that the majority cannot see what the minority brings to
39 the table. And so, you know, I'm thinking about like, oh my gosh, if we could have had Dr. King in
40 the senate, right, as a decision maker like we could have had that voice and that power in that
41 space but those folks like people would not be able to see him and what he was bringing to that
42 table for the most part. So, uhm, and so we have a chance to now do things differently because,
43 like she said, like when there's an issue in north Minneapolis it does not matter that I'm trans.
44 Like I am going to have to adjust that challenge. I am going to have to face it head on, and I'm
45 going, and I am a person representing thirty-five thousand people in north Minneapolis. It has
46 nothing to do with the fact that I am trans at the end of the day. And now I can say like thirty
47 thousand people can never say that they don't know a trans person because their city

councilmember is a trans person. And so it's just beginning that humanizing piece of it. Uhm, it's not necessarily super humanizing doing it from a political space because I think that once you step into politics you become more of an idea and a story rather than a human being.

AJ: That's true.

PC: So it's not necessarily the most humanizing space to step into but, uhm, as a like local representative I will be very directly engaged with my community all the time. And so, uhm, so I think that, you know, it's on the larger scale that it's actually going to have such a great positive impact because if folks get, if people are able to move through their discomfort with me like on my time like alright, we can work through that discomfort so that you are able to see other people, other marginalized people as human beings who are really good at our jobs and it doesn't matter. Uhm, the fact that we're a first is really frustrating. "The first." You know, people are labeling us as the first. Like it's really an honor but it's also incredibly frustrating. Like our elders and ancestors have been fighting for so long to make this happen, present company included. Like fighting for so long and so hard. And so, uhm, and so I think that we are in a moment. There are times in history when thing become, there's like a huge shift that happens, and we can take a different path and I feel like we're in that time right now. That, that nebulous time in which we can actually step forward and do things differently. So I actually, uhm, I'm excited because I think that this is bigger than even just the trans community. It's, uhm, if you're able to see the humanity in an intersectionally marginalized person then, you know, hopefully that spreads, you know, to that person being able to humanize an undocumented person, being able to humanize other marginalized people. Uhm, that's what I'm hoping for at least out of it.

LV: What else do you want to say to people about your legacy, your message, your role?

AJ: Hm. Wow. Uhm... all politics are local. [Laughs]. You know, I wanna, I wanna keep emphasizing that. Uhm, that if we want to change, uhm, if we want to change humanity for the better we have to be involved. And that doesn't always mean running for political office but it does mean being involved in electoral politics. Like nothing's, if we don't show up at the polls nothing is going to change. We're gonna keep electing, uhm, abusers to, to the highest office in the land. Uhm, we're gonna keep having child molesters running for political office. Uhm...

PC: Which is, just for the record, happening right now. Literally, on November 27th, 2017 on the record like somebody right now like a child, like a person is being accused of child molestation. Like oh my gosh.

AJ: [Laughs].

PC: At this very day. I'm sorry, it's just like I can't get over it.

AJ: I know. It's very, very, uh, frustrating. Uhm, so, so we, my message is we have to be involved, we have to be engaged in, uhm, in electoral politics. And it's not the only thing. I think we have to be activists in the streets. We have to be in think tanks working on policies. Like all of those things have to, we have to be in soup kitchens making sure people get fed and get housing and clothing. All of those things work together. Uh, but if we keep leaving the, uhm, representative

1 democracy to a few people, uhm, it's no longer gonna be representative and it's no longer going
2 to be a democracy, and, and I am absolutely committed to it being the ladder.

3
4 PC: I believe to my core that our democracy will be saved at the local level. Uhm, for, since Obama,
5 even a little bit before then but once Obama got elected our federal legislatures decided that
6 they were done working, that they were not going to work together, that they were not good
7 governing. No longer was, well, politics became the, the top priority.

8
9 AJ: They stopped working long before Obama but...

10
11 PC: That's fair but the gridlock, I mean, the gridlock, I mean, like there was a very solid gridlock that
12 just like did not move. Uhm, and then now the state level is a hotbed of political ideology, uhm,
13 with a Republican majority in both the house and the senate. Uhm, it's been bill after bill of
14 harmful legislation that's not good for people but it's politically ideological and so there isn't
15 good governing happening there. It's not representative. It's, it's not good policymaking, and so I
16 firmly believe that at the local level that this is where we're gonna figure it out cause we're
17 flexible. We get to meet the cultural and diverse needs of the residence in different ways. Uhm,
18 we know the issues in more intimate ways. The higher level that you get up, the more further
19 you are removed from the human beings that are impacted by your policy. Uhm, and so at the
20 local level you can't escape that. Like they're your neighbors. Like the people who are impacted
21 by the decisions you make and so, uhm, and I would say, uh, in terms of legacy I would say that I
22 hope to be remembered as a councilmember who helped change the world. [Laughs]. Dramatic.
23 No, uhm, but because right now there are like not because I'm trans but because there are no
24 cities where there has been a housing crisis that has not resulted in gentrification and mass
25 displacement of people of color. And so it's like that is my charge in north Minneapolis. We are
26 super, super vulnerable right now to that, uhm, to being the, the next community hit. And so we
27 gotta figure out a model that works and so I'm hoping, you know, again I believe that the local
28 level is gonna be where we are able to incubate ideas and so hopefully we will be able to
29 address the housing crisis on the local level. I want, I want to be remembered. You know, it's
30 cool to be the first of things but I want to be remembered for my excellent work.

31
32 AJ: Yeah. Same here. [Laughs].

33
34 PC: [Laughs].

35
36 LV: Anything else you want to say before we wrap up?

37
38 AJ: You know, I, I do want to say, uhm, I'm not quite sure if I've said how deeply honored I am to
39 have played a role in the Transgender Oral History Project at the Tretter Collection. And, uhm, it,
40 when, when I started this project a little over two and a half years ago I had absolutely no idea
41 that it would culminate in the interview of two, uhm, transgender black elected officials being
42 interviewed and that I would be one of them!

43
44 PC: Yeah, girl!

- 1 AJ: Like who could have thought that at all. Uh, but, uhm, you know, I'm really proud that we hit the
2 numbers, that we reached the goals that we set for ourselves. I'm really proud that we had the,
3 the diversity of voices...
4
- 5 PC: Truly.
6
- 7 AJ: ... that, that we were able to include in the project. Uhm, I'm proud that we put ourselves in a
8 position to have the project to be extended for another, you know, for a second phase to
9 continue to add to these stories. But I am most proud of the fact that we are preserving these
10 stories, uhm, from every single walk of life. Uhm, from the deep, deep hardships to the absolute
11 incredible joys that so many people talked about in their, their interviews. Uhm, if, if people
12 watch these interviews they are absolutely fascinating. Uhm, you know, the numbers are great,
13 the diversity is great, all of that, getting, but the actual interviews, the content...
14
- 15 PC: Yeah.
16
- 17 AJ: ... is so life affirming, uhm, so hopeful. You, you get to meet these people who have overcome so
18 much adversity, and they're smiling. They're happy about there, they've lost their families,
19 they've lost their children, they've lost jobs and homes and all of these kind of things but, but
20 they're here on tape talking about the joy that it feels to be able to live their true and authentic
21 life. And, uhm, that has been absolutely one of the, the most incredible accomplishments of my
22 life thus far. Uhm, and I'm, I'm just so thankful for the opportunity that, that the university has
23 provided for me to do it but also, but even more so for, uhm, the narratives like yourself Phillipe
24 and, and so many others who have been willing to share, let me come and ask invasive
25 questions...
26
- 27 PC: [Laughs]. That only Andrea Jenkins is allowed to ask.
28
- 29 AJ: [Laughs].
30
- 31 PC: But that people answer with like, you know, full abandon and just really, deeply pour out their
32 hearts and, uhm, it's been a pleasure. Yeah.
33
- 34 PC: I'm good. I'm proud of you in this work.
35
- 36 AJ: Thank you.