

Kylar Broadus
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

January 24, 2016



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

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

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

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1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 Kylar Broadus -KB
3

4 AJ: Hello, my name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History
5 Project at the Jean Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. Today is January 24, 2016,
6 and I am sitting here with a very dear friend of mine, Kylar Broadus. We are at the tail end of
7 the Creating Change Conference in Chicago, Illinois. In the background is the scenic Lake
8 Michigan and I'm just happy to be here. So Kylar, please introduce yourself, tell me your
9 preferred gender pronouns, your gender assigned at birth, and how you identify now.

10 KB: Well I'm Kylar Broadus and thank you for doing this project and making this happen.

11 AJ: You're welcome.

12 KB: We really need to keep our history and I really am grateful, so thank you. And thanks for
13 including me. I go by he, him, his or male pronouns. Gender assigned at birth on my certificate
14 is a female on my birth certificate. And what was the other part of the question?

15 AJ: The other part was what is your gender identity today?

16 KB: For activism I always identify as a transgender man but in my life I'm just a man – period and
17 simple. But I think it was important for the identity, for people to have the awareness, and that
18 my male journey was not like another male's journey to this position.

19 AJ: So what I'm hearing is political activism is important to you.

20 KB: Right.

21 AJ: And you look at the term transgender male as a political . . .

22 KB: Usually I'll say trans man or trans masculine spectrum. I was always on the masculine side of the
23 spectrum so recognize that as we connect with folks.

24 AJ: Well I'm really happy that you're here, Kylar. You have been one of the stalwart early leaders in
25 this movement and so I'm just looking forward to our conversation.

26 KB: Me too. I'll send you a kiss because I think you're wonderful and you've made things happen
27 and that's why we're here also.

28 AJ: Listen, I want you to tell me what is the first thing that . . . your earliest memory in life. It
29 doesn't have to do with your gender, even though if it does – that's fine. But just to kind of get
30 your memory bank rolling, what's the first thing you remember in life?

31 KB: Well for me, most traumatic was around gender identity. I remember being . . . and then you
32 get an awareness around three or four, and I know people say, "Well, how can you remember
33 back to that?" But when you have certain things happen in your life, you can. And where then
34 you knew the difference between girl and boy and I never understood why people were saying
35 to me, "Girl."

36 AJ: Really?

- 1 KB: Yeah. And so it really baffled me and it blew me away. But at 3, you don't have those words of
2 articulation. So 4 or 5, I get out World Books because I was reading by 3 or 4, it was very
3 important – my parents are children of slaves which meant that they were slaves and they didn't
4 have opportunities in this country and they wanted their children to. So I started reading early
5 and I was trying to find stuff about people like me. I remember looking up, and it was in the
6 encyclopedias when they were by hand because I didn't come out with the internet movement,
7 and it's like, "Wow, hermaphrodite," this must be close to what I am. What does that mean and
8 da-da-da? Because that was the terminology used for intersex at that time. I just knew
9 something was wrong. I always just felt masculine. Then when I realized I wasn't, I think I tried
10 to revert back to the womb and my parents indulged me and being Black parents, Black parents
11 make their children very independent very early – no bottle, no Pampers, but I remember at the
12 age of 5 or 6 realizing this was all a screw-up. I was thinking, "What happened? I got here
13 wrong." So I did try to regress and my parents actually let some of that and then, sadly, because
14 when I went to school, and it still goes on now, we have systemic and structural racism along
15 with the gender stuff, is that I had trans anger, I had the trans youth anger. They didn't know
16 what that was so they sent me and my mother to the mental hospital and my parents, not being
17 as educated but were very bright, they just told her . . . and I remember standing there by her
18 side when they told her that, being this little kid and I can feel that moment now, saying, "Oh,
19 your child is just evil and mean, there's nothing wrong with your child." And now we look back
20 and it was just trans – what they find now and have diagnosed in transgender youth, because I
21 was having to pretend to be a female and my dad was my best cover. Once I started
22 kindergarten at 5, and he would like take me to school and I'd switch up the outfits that my
23 mother had laid out, because she commuted, and he never would say a word.
- 24 AJ: At age 5?
- 25 KB: Yes. And then I knew that he was my ally.
- 26 AJ: This is your dad?
- 27 KB: This is my father, yes. My BFF, the person I look like – always apparently. I just was reminded
28 by a friend I had breakfast with, a childhood friend who I grew up, this morning and said, "Oh
29 my God, you look like your father," which has always been the case. And so then I'd go on truck
30 runs with him, even at 5, and on spring breaks and he'd never out me. They'd be like, "Oh, you
31 brought your son along," and he'd say, "Yup," and keep it moving.
- 32 AJ: Wow. Oh my goodness.
- 33 KB: So it was . . . so I had no words to put to it or whatever, but I just knew that my soul was in the
34 wrong body. So that was affirmed, it really was – because kids would look at me and they would
35 say, when I would do girl drag for my mother because, you know, on the holidays . . .
- 36 AJ: I love that, "girl drag".
- 37 KB: It was horrible. It was drag, I felt in drag – it was like, "This is horrible," and just pretend for her
38 photos and pictures on holidays until I just began to say, "This is what I need to be wearing, I
39 can't do that anymore." I was from a rural area – boys wore t-shirts, jeans, and a jean jacket.

- 1 That was it. And in the winter you put a thermal shirt under that because you were tough
2 country boys and you just withstood the weather when it snowed deep.
- 3 AJ: So where did you grow up?
- 4 KB: I grew up in a small town called Fayette, Missouri. Population, less than . . . I'm not sure, 2000
5 or 3000. A very small town.
- 6 AJ: Oh wow. F-a-y-e-t-t-e.
- 7 KB: Exactly, which comes from a French derivative because we were part of the Louisiana Purchase.
8 I was just always different, I was always gender non-conforming. I was shocked at the onslaught
9 of puberty when the wrong things grew and that just freaked me out. It was like, "Oh my God,
10 what are these things on my chest?" I'm like, "I'm attracted to them on other people, but these
11 don't belong on my chest." And that was . . . and then losing my strength and power, and I
12 remember all that in the 6th and 7th grade when I could compete and then how the hormones
13 just took off differently for the boys that were boys and I wasn't as strong anymore and having
14 to start dealing with, "What's a period?" "Oh God, this is a curse. I don't want to deal with any
15 of this stuff." So I just did, and I continue to say, "You know, I'm not a girl." It was very evident,
16 but yet I tried to hide because there were no words, we had not words.
- 17 AJ: Right, the language didn't exist around trans identities . . . not broadly anyway.
- 18 KB: Not broadly, exactly. And the only people you saw pictures of were Christine Jorgensen and
19 then Renee Richards so then I was like, "So only white people do this stuff. I don't see nobody
20 like me do this stuff, so something's wrong."
- 21 AJ: That's an interesting point that you bring up and I'm sorry, I just want to explore that a little bit
22 more. What are the race dynamics or what were the race dynamics when you noticed that
23 there were only these white women and no people of color really, sort-of coming out or being
24 given the spotlight anyway?
- 25 KB: Well it was shocking and it was shocking that . . . it was just shocking. And then you had the
26 white trans women coming out and then the trans brothers coming out, well John Alexander
27 Goodrum who passed away, was one of the losses we had. He was a Black out trans advocate.
28 But at the expense of doing the work in the community and how volatile our community was,
29 still is, but we were extremely marginalized then. We couldn't go out and get a job at
30 McDonalds looking the way I looked. I was just some big butch queer, freakish looking thing to
31 people. So it's hard when people make assumptions on the other side and then lace that with
32 race and you have . . . there was nobody. I remember dragging and then I would call and we
33 finally figured out there were some of us from trans conferences and bringing them here,
34 "We've got to come here, we've got to be visible, we've got to create a pathway for our people
35 and so they can get in and be part of this advocacy." From picketing outside to getting in the
36 building to be at a Creating Change or any conferences because gay people didn't take us
37 seriously either and thought we were all mentally ill, just like everybody else thought we were
38 all mentally ill. I met many people that came out of the closet that had been on disability just
39 because they were trans. I was out and I've always been out because it was about race to me
40 also. I've always been Black, but then people always wanted to beat me up because I wasn't

- 1 Black enough – like I chose to come into the world like this, just the same with gender. So it
2 made so much sense to me. My parents taught me, just from their civil rights, to be proud of
3 who you are even though my father got it, discussions weren't words. But I needed to be with
4 both parents. I always looked like a boy da-da-da-da. But we were in a very gendered society
5 then, more so than today, which people don't recognize either, is trying to slip into the girl's
6 locker room to go to gym when you don't feel comfortable even being in the girl's locker room
7 and you're hiding from your girlfriends who think you're a boy to sneak to gym. I remember
8 feeling like Mission Impossible navigating junior high.
- 9 AJ: So you were passing in school?
- 10 KB: Oh yeah.
- 11 AJ: You had friends that thought you were a boy and didn't know . . . ?
- 12 KB: They didn't know any different. It was so stressful because we were totally . . . there was no co-
13 ed gym or co-ed, so then I would sneak . . . so I remember the stress.
- 14 AJ: But the teachers knew, right?
- 15 KB: Teachers knew. Yeah, but colleagues in different classes didn't.
- 16 AJ: What about name? Was your name gendered?
- 17 KB: Yeah, my name was gendered but it's my aura and my presence that precedes, you know – and
18 preceded.
- 19 AJ: I've met men with "gendered" names before.
- 20 KB: It's really funny because my name was Karen, my parents didn't intend to pick out . . . they
21 didn't have a girl's name picked out, literally. Everybody likes to tell their own story, but it was
22 true. Actually my doctor wasn't there to deliver me and the doctor that delivered me only
23 always delivered boys, seriously. His name was Dr. Leech, it was a small town that had two
24 doctors then.
- 25 AJ: How do you plan that?
- 26 KB: It just happened. And literally all the babies he delivered were boys except, supposedly, me.
- 27 AJ: And you were no exception though.
- 28 KB: Bingo. And that was the funny thing. And so they had to pull a girl's name out of the air at the
29 last name because my name was going to be William, which is my father's name. And so when I
30 did my name change I didn't want to be William because I actually was . . . he was my BFF and
31 my father and it was very hard, particularly because he was dying at that time. So I separated
32 myself and had my own identity. That's the first thing his brother said when he came in for the
33 funeral, "The first person I thought about was me because I was on this man's legs since the
34 time I was born." I'm a mama's boy and a daddy's boy, so I don't lie about that. I'm just real, I
35 keep it real.
- 36 AJ: We love our parents.

- 1 KB: Exactly.
- 2 AJ: So you've had this sort of long-term perception in the world of your sort of true gender identity
3 – like people were responding to you as how you wanted to be perceived.
- 4 KB: Male – right, exactly, even when I got into . . . I worked at the corporation and clients would still
5 call me Sir da-da-da-da.
- 6 AJ: Prior to transitioning?
- 7 KB: This is all prior to transitioning.
- 8 AJ: So what I want to know though is at that time, what language did you use to describe yourself
9 and how has it changed over time?
- 10 KB: It was hard to find. I felt like a guy and, honestly, I was very masculine-identified. I was walking
11 around going, "Hey man, whatcha doing? What's going on?" You have to realize, this time was
12 during the lesbian, separatist, feminist movement which these young folks know nothing about.
13 So you had to really be politically correct and understanding. So I was very offensive to lesbians
14 . . .
- 15 AJ: Right.
- 16 KB: . . . just by my male persona and presence, but I never felt like a lesbian.
- 17 AJ: So you never used lesbian when you . . .?
- 18 KB: I tried because there was nothing else.
- 19 AJ: You needed a community, right.
- 20 KB: I needed a community. I couldn't even say the word about myself. I could say, "Oh, there are
21 lesbians over here," but if you asked me what I was, I would . . . blah, blah . . . I would look in the
22 mirror and practice, it was just not there.
- 23 AJ: So the label just did not fit.
- 24 KB: The labels just did not fit. So I just kind of crafted my own gender non-conforming way. We've
25 always had gender non-conforming people. Nothing is new.
- 26 AJ: Right.
- 27 KB: We just called them androgynous in the 1970s and I forget what we called ourselves in the
28 1980s and then we came to gender queer, non-conforming . . . we've all been around. Poor
29 David Bowie who just died – hello folks. That's my problem with youth today is the lack of
30 connectivity to the past. Nobody is asking for the ring to be kissed, nobody is asking for you to
31 be sitting at their feet, but they are asking for the respect that they deserve because people that
32 paved the way for me I give the upmost respect for. I've paved the way for a lot of people and I
33 didn't expect anything but rights out of it, but now to see the shift in the community and the
34 lack of connectivity of history and then the . . . when you don't have to repeat the cycle.
- 35 AJ: Why do it, right?

- 1 KB: Exactly. But they're trying to repeat the cycle that my age of people couldn't get jobs because
2 we were trans, and now you can. It's not a great playing field but there are protections. There
3 were no laws when I lost my job, to protect trans people, which got me into this. So I can work
4 hard, be bright, but then all of a sudden I'm a lesser person because I'm trans, so I'm not smart.
5 I'm Black, so then I'm not smart. And then all of a sudden I've done all that work for you, have
6 all these stellar interviews or your reviews, which I still keep because it was such an invalidating
7 process to be swept out after almost 7.5 years when I just officially announced I'm transitioning.
8 Minding you I'm already wearing suits and ties to work.
- 9 AJ: So this is your employer?
- 10 KB: This is my employer.
- 11 AJ: Can you state the . . . ?
- 12 KB: Fast forward, I don't ever do that. It's not hard to find if people want to research so I let them
13 do that. But I learned to be a good player. People think, you know, you have to be evil to
14 people that were evil to you – those are different paths. So no, I don't name them. Did they
15 oppress me? Yes. Did I sue them? Yes. But there was no laws.
- 16 AJ: Did you win?
- 17 KB: No, because nobody was winning in those days because we didn't have the theories to win, but I
18 challenged . . . we didn't have attorneys that wanted to take our cases, and then I hung out my
19 shingle and then I was the referral source for Land of Legal, TLC, SLR for the whole Midwest.
- 20 AJ: So you went to law school?
- 21 KB: Oh yes. I went to law school.
- 22 AJ: You're an attorney.
- 23 KB: Yes, I'm an attorney.
- 24 AJ: I've just got to be real . . . sort of specific, because the people that are going to watch this, they
25 don't know. I know you. Where did you go to law school?
- 26 KB: At the University of Missouri-Columbia, called Mizzou Law School. They actually have an alum
27 now that sponsors a grant for a transgender student but, of course, in my time, I was just a
28 standout. Lesbians were not pleasant to trans masculine people at that time, at all, and more
29 aggressive. I was very shy and an introvert because I was living in my own world and trying to
30 keep my gender together while being disrespected by the rest of the whole world. So, yes, I
31 went to law school.
- 32 AJ: Went to law school, a practicing attorney.
- 33 KB: Took on tons of legal cases . . .
- 34 AJ: Was the law school prior to coming out and suing your employer?

- 1 KB: Yes. I was a lawyer already once the employment stuff happened. I have to get the chronology
2 right. Yes, so that was prior to me being treated that way by an employer. But yes, I'd gone to
3 law school because I knew I wanted to do some sort of advocacy and the people that I studied
4 that did advocacy either did somewhere in public policy or law, and law had always been one of
5 my loves – besides my other passion which is music, which I never get to do because I put all
6 that aside, which was going to be my real career, to do activism.
- 7 AJ: I had no idea you were a musician.
- 8 KB: Yes, I've been coming out the last two years as a musician because I've been a musician for a
9 long time.
- 10 AJ: Singer? You play the piano? You write concertos?
- 11 KB: Well, I'm a low brass player. I'm not a good writer because I'm too uptight, but I wish I could.
12 That would have been where most of my career would have been and I promised myself this
13 half of my life would be committed to that and we're slowly transitioning to that. I do have a
14 good voice but I was an instrumentalist because you had to do all of the piano, the voice, da-da-
15 da-da. An instrumentalist and low brass . . . so euphonium, which is a baritone . . . they're
16 different, one is German and one is English and there's nuances to that which I don't need to go
17 into for this. Sorry, I get into my details . . .
- 18 AJ: But you studied music then?
- 19 KB: Yes.
- 20 AJ: At Mizzou?
- 21 KB: No, I went to a small liberal arts college, private college, called Central Methodist University
22 now.
- 23 AJ: OK – CMU.
- 24 KB: CMU, exactly. Where they are . . . unlike other schools of religious background kicking trans
25 students out, reaching out and I've actually been a support for the one young out trans man
26 they have on campus.
- 27 AJ: Wonderful.
- 28 KB: They sought me out, I was a distinguished alumni – awarded last year, first ever transgender
29 person of color to be awarded that.
- 30 AJ: Congratulations. So this is your undergraduate alma mater?
- 31 KB: Undergraduate. And then also they've asked me now to join the board of curators, or regents.
- 32 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 33 KB: Which I will be . . . I just continued to put them off, but I will be officially joining this May.
- 34 AJ: As a regent for your . . .?

- 1 KB: Alma mater, my undergraduate university, which shows that religion doesn't have to stand in
2 the way of humanity.
- 3 AJ: I love that, that's a beautiful statement. Do you consider yourself a very religious person now?
- 4 KB: I'm spiritual because I'm just a direct person and I get tired of people doing games. So going to
5 church every week to see people play games is not for me. I'm about being real, getting stuff
6 done. So I learned about being just spiritual and that I don't have to proselytize or do anything
7 or prove anything to anybody else. But yes, I believe in a higher power. I was raised
8 Catholic/Baptist, that's an interesting . . . my mother's father was Catholic. And then I went to a
9 religious undergrad institution where I got to see lots of ministers and what goes on and deal
10 with that. There's lots of flavors of different denominations and so that's why I choose to be
11 spiritual because I think it's really . . . it's about one people, one universe, and bringing that
12 together.
- 13 AJ: Wow, that's powerful. Kylar, talk to me about some of the challenges that you have faced since
14 you began to express your true gender identity. And I recognize, I'm listening here, so I
15 recognize that you have stated all your life you have been perceived as male or, to use the term,
16 as passing.
- 17 KB: I don't even like using that word, I want to clean that up because a friend of mine, because it's
18 true and particularly since I'm a high yellow Black man during the days when people used to do
19 passing and people want to criticize if it was for safety, I get that – do you know what I'm
20 saying? But I'm all Black and proud and I've taken too many ass beatings by people who said I
21 wasn't Black enough. You know what? I'm Black enough and I don't need you to measure my
22 Blackness. My actions speak stronger than anything. I taught at a historically Black college, my
23 work revolves around POC, all people of color and humanitarian efforts. So your direct question
24 was though, I'm sorry . . .?
- 25 AJ: What have been the challenges since you began to express your true gender identity?
- 26 KB: Really to me it wasn't as traumatizing, I think, as it is for some people when they transition
27 because it was really just not a transition. That's the reality of what it was, but I made it bigger
28 than what it was in my head because I did come out as an "L" person, and I can't even say that
29 by myself, earlier because there was nobody I identified with. I was attracted to women so
30 there's no other box or whatever but . . .
- 31 AJ: But that's a sexual orientation, right? Versus this gender identity.
- 32 KB: Gender identity – yes, it is. But that wasn't me.
- 33 AJ: But you even felt heterosexual liking women, is that accurate?
- 34 KB: Oh yes, and I'm going to be totally honest, totally heterosexual women are my attraction. For
35 political purposes and having gone through the trans experience, I can see how people . . . I
36 usually will identify as bi-sexual, just because it seems politically OK to do. And then being in a
37 gendered world of understanding, because the first time I ever thought a man was attractive, I
38 remember, was after I started doing . . . hormones have helped. Of course, I didn't have facial

1 hair, my voice sounds the same. Of course I had more hair on my head when I was younger, but
2 everything else has been the same. They would just . . . I don't know. I lost track of the thought
3 there. So it put up barriers at work is what it did.

4 AJ: When you came out?

5 KB: Yeah, even though I was already out. And the interesting thing I found were my co-workers
6 were fine with me, those are some of the guys . . . because my dad had deteriorated, that
7 helped me learn how to tie ties. So it was more management, to me, that had the issue because
8 I was dressing like that every day and being me already anyway. So that I officially announced, it
9 was catapulting because it put me into unemployment, which at that time trans people were all
10 unemployed unless they did the stealth method. Once you come out and then basically it's like,
11 "Oh, we can't deal with this." And that's what it was about. And then it becomes about your
12 sexualization, not my gender identity, of allegations of some impropriety towards a female boss,
13 which didn't happen. OK, because people who know me know what I do. I help people and that
14 I'm also honorable and respectful. I don't date married women and didn't – it's like my
15 employer and my boss, what would I be doing? That doesn't even make sense when I was going
16 through my own personal crises of actually losing my father, transitioning and losing my wife –
17 my significant other, all at the same time. And then dealing with the workplace that couldn't
18 deal with me being transgender. And then all of a sudden thinking the quality of my work didn't
19 matter, the content of my mind didn't matter. It was all the rest of me they couldn't take –
20 because my work was stellar and I keep those to remind myself, because I know it's been a long
21 time . . . that was the early to mid-1990s. That messes with your self-esteem, leaves you with
22 post-traumatic stress syndrome because you're not doing anything but you're stalked and
23 harassed and then all of these allegations are made based purely on racism, transphobia and
24 lack of understanding. It's like, if I slept with somebody I'll tell you I slept with somebody. For
25 people who know me, I'll tell you what I did. If I did anything wrong, I do that too because that's
26 what my parents raised me to do, is be accountable. So I think those were some of the
27 limitations and then it was trying to get jobs. Because then the paperwork and changing the
28 paperwork and tracking that. And then walking into Gender Queer, they're like, "Yeah, we filled
29 out that application blah, blah, blah." So I've always been underpaid and over qualified and I
30 think that the LG movement takes advantage of us too in that way. And we have to be real
31 cognizant of that because I think we get disrespected as leaders when we've been leading a
32 movement for a long time and now they're coming into our movement – and really, I feel, taking
33 over our movement and not letting us lead it, which creates more problems within the
34 movement because they don't know the real players and the non-players.

35 AJ: Right, wow. I don't want to stop you.

36 KB: I'll finish that by saying why is it that we still marginalize people when we're marginalized and
37 that we're still going to prey off people when they're marginalized – not to hear them and not to
38 recognize, like you – you've been doing this for years. I should bring you in as a consultant, I
39 should pay you, but no they don't want to do that to trans people, just like they don't want to
40 do that to Black people. They want to use us for free and then they get grant funding and then
41 we're excluded and then the real work doesn't get done because we know what the real work is
42 and we know how it should be done because there are enough of us that have been activists for

1 just as long or longer than these people trying to tell us what to do. I've been in the LGBT
2 community for 30 years – out and trans, because I finally could get a marker. "OK, I'm an other
3 thing," which was totally about my gender identity. So yeah, and then they failed to realize the
4 experience I've had in private sector and public sector, and then you come into this world and
5 now it's like we're second-class citizens again even though we're fighting for our rights and
6 you're claiming the fight for our rights on behalf of us, then you need to listen to us and let us
7 tell you who the good people are and let us plug you into the information that we know and not
8 tell us what we should know because we're trans and you're not.

9 AJ: Right, yes. What's it like walking around the world as a Black man?

10 KB: Well that's also interesting because I remember from my own law office, which I had to hang
11 out my own shingle and start my practice after being booted out by the corporation, and then
12 people were like, "Well nobody is going to come to you because . . ." I even got hate mail from
13 other lawyers, "You'll never make it." I love those challenges of I'll never make it, because I'm
14 going to show you I'm going to make it. I've had those challenges all my life and that just makes
15 me more determined to make it. And so, I built a clientele because I served everybody. I served
16 people that were in need, because I'm a humanitarian and I've got criminal to family law to
17 whatever. But it was all still about doing the activism, but I took lots of disrespect in the courts
18 and paved the way for us to do name and gender changes in court and figuring out ways to do
19 that. And to be ostracized and attacked by courts for, "How dare you, Black person and trans
20 thing." And I'm using "thing" because we were really not thought of as people then, we still
21 aren't in my own opinion. We were treated as things. Could come before him and ask him to
22 not take this case on and I needed to be very careful because I need to follow confidentiality,
23 but the long and short of it is, is that I was being persecuted when they were doing the wrong.
24 That's what I think it is. Somebody said this to me last night, and I do remember keeping that
25 close to my heart when I would be at my home base, that haters are gonna hate, that prophets
26 are always hated and never loved. So I realized that I'm not bought, nobody can buy me; that
27 I'm going to do what's right for the people, and that sadly some people don't get that and
28 what's right for the community. For me it's not about money, it's not about being on a poster or
29 a TV show, and I'm not throwing shade at anybody because we need people in those positions
30 as well.

31 AJ: Absolutely. Hollywood.

32 KB: Exactly. And that's how we work together, but until the trans community gets that together
33 we'll never do that. And I hate that if we would have to have a crisis like it took of AIDS to bring
34 the community together, where I served in war with and lost friends, and I know you did too.
35 During the major AIDS crisis in this country, when we had people dying every day and doing fund
36 raisers and what have you, and the whole nine yards. I didn't know if I was going to see you
37 next week or not, because I didn't – that was hard because I was there loving and
38 compassionate for gay men. And then for lesbians as well. I'm not really an L, and I took a lot of
39 abuse, and trans masculine people tend to from people that are lesbians. And so that's a part
40 that people don't see, because everybody says, "Oh trans masculine people have it so easy to
41 transition," which it's not. We were socialized female so we don't utilize the same male
42 privilege that people grew up with male privilege had. And so we're more likely to step back

- 1 than to step up and that's where we get trampled on. And then we're offensive because, if
2 you're somebody like me who is not going to sit down and not going to shut up and tell you the
3 truth even if you don't want to hear it, then that's what it has to be because I'm not going to
4 prostitute any of my sisters or brothers out, I'm not going to pimp them out. I've done the work
5 legitimately and I've done it for the community. And honestly, at the sake of my own personal
6 life. And that's a hindsight lesson. I was married to this movement because I was going to make
7 things right so that we could have brown and black people in these spaces talking about issues.
8 Is it great? No, but progress takes time. If you're not part of the solution, then don't be part of
9 the problem.
- 10 AJ: Kylar, tell me what are some of the positive aspects of realizing and coming out as your true
11 gender identity?
- 12 KB: Well one, I think it's important to be out and open and honest because that way that's not a
13 stressor to you and then nobody holds power over you. So I was out in what was called Brandon
14 Teena country when I was out and people fail to realize the Brandon Teena story of the young
15 trans man who was killed in Nebraska. I lived in rural Missouri and I was out, so my life in
16 danger every moment of the day and every moment of the night. Even to my law office, my
17 own assistants calling me and telling me not to come in. I was followed around by the media all
18 the time, "Transsexual burps at 11, details."
- 19 AJ: Wow.
- 20 KB: I ended up becoming a human rights commissioner because I'm going to make change, nobody
21 is going to treat me as a lesser than. My parents fought to be here, my parents were slaves – if
22 they could go do what they needed to do to stay here and be here, to make sure that we were
23 here, then I felt it was my legacy for the people that came before me whether they were trans
24 or not, but definitely the Black folks and the folks in the civil rights movement and the folks that
25 led the way before me – get all my props. Is anything perfect? No. And everybody became a
26 Monday morning quarterback when they were never there. So we need to always pay homage
27 to our elders and respect, and get the knowledge that needs to be passed down – which is why I
28 am glad that you're doing this oral projects. We can't come back and keep reinventing the same
29 trauma without solutions or else we move nowhere. And then we perpetuate the trauma
30 against each other and then take no responsibility for that trauma. And that's when I say, "Take
31 your medication and see your therapist."
- 32 AJ: Yeah, there's no doubt that trauma exists but there's ways to deal with it.
- 33 KB: Exactly. So you asked me the upsides, the upside is just being me and feeling good all the time
34 about being me. People that know me and would come and do panels say, "This is night and
35 day – night and day. You're such a kind, sweet gentleman, as opposed to the angry pent-up
36 butch macho person on the other side that would rip your head off and spit it up your ass or
37 push it up your ass or whatever." Because people just didn't fuck with me and that was just the
38 way it was because I was beaten up for being high yellow, beaten up for being gender non-
39 conforming, so then I decided to take my power back.
- 40 AJ: "I'm not having any . . ."

- 1 KB: Yeah, you're not going to beat me anymore. So, there have been tons of highs. I told you things
2 that I've gotten to do that I would never have thought I would do. I don't have a bucket list,
3 hope to never plan one – I just want to live. But never thought I would be testifying before
4 Congress and continue to do those things.
- 5 AJ: Wow, the first transgender person in history to testify.
- 6 KB: Before the Senate.
- 7 AJ: Before the Senate.
- 8 KB: Because Diego had done it before the House. But I continue and I continue to work with
9 Congress.
- 10 AJ: Well the Senate is a higher body than the House.
- 11 KB: It is, yes. And I was requested and I was really honored to have a legislator who I do respect, it's
12 also a Midwesterner . . . Midwesterners are straight shooters, it was Senator Tom Harkin and
13 when his office called I couldn't believe it – because one, I was in my chair because usually I'm
14 running between my three or four jobs that I've had to maintain to maintain my life and my
15 organization, Trans People of Color Coalition. It's like, "Really?" And they're like, "Yeah, we
16 need you to testify next week." And my biggest thing was making sure I told everybody's story.
17 It wasn't about me, I had to tell my story because I know my personal story but the stress was to
18 then weave in other people's stories so that I'm telling a story not just about me but about how
19 you treat the trans community. I felt successful because I got so many texts and emails from so
20 many people saying, "You told my story." And I just broke down in tears. I was at my desk and I
21 pulled it up on the computer and it was just so chilling. It doesn't take power, it just takes a
22 good heart and doing the right thing. And then you create your own power and it emanates
23 from that. So being with the President, signing the Executive Order which gave more jobs rights
24 than any other Executive Order or any other piece of legislation, which was just last year. All
25 those things, those are the heights. The others are seeing beautiful, young, brown non-
26 conforming . . . brown, black, whatever color, non-conforming people out living their lives, that's
27 what it was about to me. So nobody had to travel that path that I had to travel. My work was to
28 make the path easier so they didn't have to travel this path. And that is where it's at for me and
29 that's what charges me. It's so beautiful to see and I always tell all young trans, "I love you, you
30 are beautiful," because they need to hear that and know that because they're not getting that
31 everywhere.
- 32 AJ: So much passion. You talked about this a little bit, Kylar, but I want to dig into it a little bit more.
33 You said testosterone helped.
- 34 KB: Yes.
- 35 AJ: When did you start testosterone, have you undergone any other medical interventions, do you
36 plan to? And you can answer this question or not, to the extent that you are comfortable
37 please.

- 1 KB: I've done . . . there are no stupid questions, I've done tons of free education across the country,
2 so we could be at this moment just like you have and many other good advocates have done
3 that, we used to pay to go do the education at these conferences and pay to get in. That's what
4 young people need to understand because we beat our way in. But, to that end, yes it helped in
5 the sense of making me feel more comfortable in my body. I'm not a huge guy, I bulked up but
6 I'm naturally toned that way so it was easier for me to bulk up before even without the
7 testosterone. But the facial hair and the secondary characteristics were helpful, because
8 nobody ever mistook me for a girl honestly, before transition. And the funny thing was then I
9 started to become softer and I started to question . . . because people would be like, "Ma'am,"
10 and I'd be like, "What is going on here?" Now I'm actually transitioning and people are calling
11 me, "Ma'am" and they were never calling me ma'am before. So it was confusing – but it's like
12 my friend said, that I'm such a gentle gentlemen. I am passionate about the work, I'm going to
13 make sure nobody – nobody is stepped on. I work for all human rights. Dr. King, you know, and
14 the paraphrase of that – the atrocity and abuse to one community, it affects us all. That's a bad
15 paraphrase of what he said but that's what it is.
- 16 AJ: Injustice somewhere is an injustice everywhere. We're paraphrasing what's her name right
17 now, but that's the truth.
- 18 KB: It is. An injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere and that people don't get that. What
19 we've lost also is . . . so yes, I did start on hormones, late 20s because I had to go through the
20 rigid HBIDGA standards, the Harry Benjamin standards, which now those of us that advocated
21 for those to be lessened, I honestly question, because what happens is I don't think our
22 community is getting enough mental health work and that's sort of what the HBIGDA standards
23 put in. We do have WPATH now, the World Professional Association of Trans Health, and I do
24 think there needs to be some . . . there's damage, we're damaged as people period. And then to
25 add these layers on that and to think that you don't need somebody to talk to or hash it out
26 with is just not it. I don't think our movement will propel until we get folks together like that.
- 27 AJ: I'm so glad you interjected that thought into this conversation. Where did you do your
28 transition?
- 29 KB: The University of Minnesota.
- 30 AJ: The Program on Human Sexuality?
- 31 KB: Yes, there were only two in the country at the time I transitioned – only two. So you could . . .
- 32 AJ: Johns . . .
- 33 KB: Johns Hopkins and the University of Minnesota and that was it. There was nobody else giving
34 hormones, doing all this stuff they have now. They have all this stuff going on, there wasn't
35 none of that. And then I had to go before a huge roundtable of people after doing this two-year
36 process, which I crunched into one because I walked in and said, "Look at me, do we really need
37 to go through all of this? I don't think so – and we're not." That's the only way you could get
38 the hormones then. So I would drive to Kansas City, two and a half to three hours to the airport,
39 fly in and fly back in one day.

- 1 AJ: No airport in Fayette, huh?
- 2 KB: I lived in Columbia, Missouri.
- 3 AJ: Oh you lived in Columbia.
- 4 KB: Which is only . . . it's the big city in the middle of the state of Missouri and where the main
5 University of Missouri campus is. And so I lived there, so no. There is a small airport there but
6 that's much more expensive and I was on my own.
- 7 AJ: So you'd drive to Kansas City.
- 8 KB: Yes. And then I would . . .
- 9 AJ: Fly to Minneapolis.
- 10 KB: Minneapolis . . . and then most times, turn back around on the same day and then come back.
- 11 AJ: What?
- 12 KB: And drive back to my home in Columbia.
- 13 AJ: Like you were going to get specialized cancer treatments or something.
- 14 KB: Yes, to do gender transition the way that it was done at that time.
- 15 AJ: Set up and gate keep.
- 16 KB: It was totally gate keep. I couldn't get Hormone 1, and it's like, "I don't think we have any
17 questions here." "Fine." So we were able to some compromise and they moved me through
18 the program a lot quicker because I'm like there have never been any questions over on this side
19 from me. Other people come to themselves in different ways but I've known forever.
- 20 AJ: You were very clear.
- 21 KB: I've known forever. That other thing didn't work. People would see me, and I remember when I
22 started corporate America and my dear friend died, actually the same week my mother was
23 being buried, and he called me two days to check on me before and I wish I had seen him. He
24 was such an ally. Republican, white male – which is how you should never mark people by their
25 monikers. He was my road dog and had my back 1000% and to this day would. So it's a very
26 hard loss.
- 27 AJ: I'm sorry, sorry for your loss.
- 28 KB: He was great. When he said, "You need to stop wearing that shit," which was female drag,
29 "because it looks horrible." And I'm like, "Thank you." Because I pick friends that are real.
- 30 AJ: I'm sorry, I'm laughing but that's . . .
- 31 KB: No it's funny, and I tell this story all the time.
- 32 AJ: So you didn't know how to be a girl is basically what he was telling you.

- 1 KB: No, and then he would carry the purse for me, "You're supposed to be carrying it like this," and
2 then I'd leave it in the desk and he's like, "Go back and get it."
- 3 AJ: Where's your purse?
- 4 KB: And then I'd carry it like a lunch . . . and he'd go, "You're carrying it like a lunch bucket, you're
5 not carrying it . . ." And this is a macho man trying to help me be . . . and I'm like, "This ain't
6 working." And that was when workplaces were very sexist too.
- 7 AJ: Absolutely.
- 8 KB: So I had to move to a different department where I could kind of shift my dress and get out of
9 the main office. And he goes, "Oh, thank God." And it is, the only person I was fooling . . .
- 10 AJ: Was yourself.
- 11 KB: Yes. Because kids would come up all the time and they would be like, "Sir, why are you in that
12 dress? Why are you in that dress?" And I'd be like, "Oh God, get away from me." And I'd be
13 like, "Turn around, turn around." This happened to me all the time and they were like, "Why do
14 you have a dress on, sir?" And I'm like, "OK, I've got to get out of here."
- 15 AJ: I'm sorry, Kylar. We're laughing together.
- 16 KB: It's horrible, girl. I'm going to find a picture, they're all in storage, but I'll show you. It was . . .
- 17 AJ: You know what? If we can't laugh about this, we would be jumping in the . . .
- 18 KB: Insane.
- 19 AJ: . . . in the middle of Lake Michigan like so many of our people are doing.
- 20 KB: And killing ourselves. I had that support from people . . . that's where, "Don't judge a book by
21 its cover." He was an ally to the end of his life. He had me – and his wife and kids and family are
22 still my friends to this day.
- 23 AJ: How wonderful.
- 24 KB: And he was going to take out people if they had anything to say to me.
- 25 AJ: Talk to me about love and relationships.
- 26 KB: Ahhh, that's not an area we need to spend long on. Just let me finish the gender transition stuff
27 . . .
- 28 AJ: I'm sorry – yes, yes please.
- 29 KB: Just back in the day, really quickly, surgeries really weren't good for trans masculine people.
30 They're much better, and they've always been, for trans feminine people.
- 31 AJ: Yes.
- 32 KB: So a lot of guy's chests were mutilated. I have an OK chest, it's not a great one. But we were
33 treated the way women were treated, so they would just sew the chest up like they had had

- 1 breast cancer rather than contouring a male chest, which they can do. But they would not do
2 that because they would disrespect trans masculinity. But yeah, when women come in, trans
3 women with boobs, and the neovagina looks just like a vagina.
- 4 AJ: Oh yeah, they're beautiful.
- 5 KB: And the penises they had back then were nothing you'd want because it was like Play Doh and
6 was it going to stay on or not. So they were horrible and still it was questionable to me . . . I
7 have not done any lower anything. I will say, and I'm going to share this on tape, that I went to
8 a doctor and I had an exam and my regular nurse wasn't there, and this was inappropriate for
9 her but I had eaten dinner with the only two lesbians that supported me through the time, and
10 then luckily the gay men and drag queens were very supportive for transition, but long story
11 short, she asked if I had lower surgery to my friends because she was subbing in the doctor's
12 office that I was in and that my penis was bigger than her husband's and I've had no lower
13 surgery. I had the hysto stuff removed and the chest contour.
- 14 AJ: And the testosterone.
- 15 KB: And testosterone.
- 16 AJ: So your penis is now bigger than her husband's?
- 17 KB: Yeah, but I was well endowed prior to testosterone also. Hey, I take my Black privilege . . .
- 18 AJ: Your Black male privilege – there you go.
- 19 KB: Yeah. And I just was large before. But there are some other things I'd like to do – you always
20 have got to get . . . I didn't have the best chest surgery. Things are so state of the art now, we
21 just wanted the shit lopped off because it didn't belong there.
- 22 AJ: So it leaves you with this concave kind of chest.
- 23 KB: Right versus . . .
- 24 AJ: Versus contoured.
- 25 KB: Exactly. And if people want breasts, that's fine for me. I fight for everybody in this movement
26 and all I'm asking you to do also is to just let me be me. I'm going to let you be you, that's what
27 I'm fighting for and you just need to let me be me. So not to take away from that, but I had to
28 go back.
- 29 AJ: I apologize for interrupting.
- 30 KB: No, you didn't. I wanted to talk to that because people assume that the trans feminine
31 surgeries are so much better and so much safer and so much less complicated. You can't tell
32 me, and again to me that tracks with how we do things in society about tracking with only doing
33 experiments on males and then da-da-da-da. I feel like the same thing has transcended into our
34 community with surgeons then only focusing on trans women's surgeries. You can't tell . . . with
35 Caitlyn's money or whoever's money to get all that done, whereas us guys it's a different story.
36 And the surgeries are astronomically more expensive than the trans female surgeries.

- 1 AJ: And not covered by most insurance companies.
- 2 KB: Not – although that’s changing, there are several corporate . . . lots of corporations, honestly,
3 are ahead of the government because they figured out we want the smartest work for there.
- 4 AJ: Right.
- 5 KB: And so now they know diversity is an important thing and a good thing.
- 6 AJ: So some movement is happening.
- 7 KB: Some movement is happening, now we need the government to move.
- 8 AJ: No, thank you. That’s a really important . . . because trans masculinity is still deeply impacted by
9 sexism.
- 10 KB: It is, and then when we’re being called . . .
- 11 AJ: That’s what I heard you saying.
- 12 KB: Yes. And then to have somebody come and call me a misogynist, who doesn’t know that I’ve
13 lived through the feminist separatist movement, done all that stuff on the land, all that da-da-
14 da-da and then accuse me of that. It was even hard because I was in the grocery store once and
15 a friend of mine, she didn’t recognize me – because my face really hasn’t changed that much,
16 but from trauma, and she was just a non-trans woman, because I hate that word cis – I feel like
17 that just others us more, and that’s my opinion on that – I continue to say that, it just others
18 trans people more, it doesn’t empower us, then we have to teach straight people that’s what
19 they are – that’s just something else that’s unnecessary in my opinion, let’s get some right. But
20 back to that, she looked at me just in such fear as I was going to talk to her in the grocery store
21 and I realized she didn’t recognize me and was reacting to just a man. And so to have those
22 sorts of experiences where you’re just floored – because now I’m being subjugated for what
23 other men have done just because I’ve transitioned, but you don’t know me. And the sad part is
24 that there is more love in the straight community once you explain that and do trainings with
25 them, then there is in the LGBTQ or whatever else we want to call it movement – because we
26 beat each other down, we tear each other apart. I’m not Black enough, you’re not Black
27 enough, you’re not a trans woman enough. Da-da-da-da-da-da. And the lack of connectivity to
28 elders, because now they do have elders. We didn’t have elders that were visible because the
29 approach before was for people to hide into society and now that we have been out and proud,
30 it’s sad that if our youth can’t get behind that then it’s . . . I’ve always said this, and other people
31 say it better – I’m going to do a bad paraphrase here, but if you don’t know where you’ve been
32 how the hell are you going to know where you’re going?
- 33 AJ: So true.
- 34 KB: And so I always respect my elders, and again other people who have been before me. But I
35 didn’t mean to interrupt you – I just wanted to talk about that because there are these
36 disparities. And then people are going to say, “Well economically trans men make more.”
37 Actually they don’t. People need the facts – they need the facts and that’s all I’m saying. Do
38 your homework and do the facts because once we crunch all those numbers, sadly our POC

1 communities, whether we're masculine or feminine are getting low-paying jobs and getting
 2 screwed. But when we add all those other people in, the inequities are balanced the other way
 3 around because, of course, you've had a lot of white trans sisters who transitioned in high tech
 4 jobs, six figures or waited later, and they have all the money. So honestly, we work as trans
 5 masculine people – we have been in the movements, we've been in movements for a long time
 6 and we've been working and we've been there for pittance of pay and we still get that pittance
 7 of pay. And honestly, a lack of respect a lot of times for being male from some of our sisters
 8 who don't . . . I talked to one guy, a couple of guys, and they were working at clinics and they
 9 said, "Well why is my gender identity invalidated by these women when they refuse to call me
 10 he, but then want to fight if I don't call her her." So you guys who are around, one of my interns
 11 – now he works at another organization, when he did the law clinic, he had to write on there,
 12 "Mr. Sandy," just for them to respect him. So yeah, there's a lot of that that goes on and it's like
 13 if these people would Audrey Lorde, Barbara Smith, da-da-da, which none of the people that
 14 need to hear that were there or do any of that reading, then they would get feminist theory.
 15 And then the way you take over space and how you're using male privilege to do it and that you
 16 don't even know what that is.

17 AJ: Wow . . . wow. Teach.

18 KB: Yes. I'm sorry if I'm just rambling.

19 AJ: No, you are right on point. So the relationship, love thing – are you not going to answer that
 20 question?

21 KB: I'm avoiding that question. Yes, that is the worst question to ever ask me. I am an old school,
 22 country boy. I want to make sure I say this right – a one-woman man. Is that the right way?

23 AJ: A one-woman man – yeah. You want one woman and you're a man – so yes.

24 KB: Yes, I usually get that confused – I get that backwards sometimes. I just don't – I'm very
 25 conservative, I grew up in the Bible Belt and I'm also OCD, I'm a Virgo – so, you know. People . .
 26 . I believe in sexual liberation, people can do what they want to do, but I have . . . it's difficult
 27 being trans and dating, no matter what side of the spectrum you're on. I'm attracted to straight
 28 women. Most of the work I do now doesn't bring me now around any straight women and then
 29 the disclosure comes out, but I don't even have to disclose because they just Google – because
 30 everybody Googles who they go out with beforehand. So it limits my dating possibilities. So I
 31 have pretty much not . . . I just pretty much keep to myself. I've dated lightly, I really was in a
 32 significant relationship with my ex-wife, and I never share my personal business in the LGBT
 33 community but I am because . . . particularly since people seem to be so interested and want to
 34 make up narratives about it that they don't know anything about, that we were together for five
 35 years and I have a beautiful daughter who has children. I have several sons and several children
 36 that I parent, I co-parent, and I do not mix that with my activism because I don't want them to
 37 be hurt or attacked by people that are being ugly to me, which I knew they would and they are –
 38 and it happens on both sides of the fence, wherever I am. But it won't stop me. The only way
 39 it's going to stop me is when I'm lying in a casket. And so I mentor my kids and make sure
 40 they're on the right path, praying this last one gets through college real soon – like in the next
 41 year. They're all over and those are the most important priorities besides my activism. My ex

- 1 and I, we're still good friends and we had a long journey together is how I'll put that – for a little
2 over 20 years, but we still co-parent and take care of our kids and that's it. So I really just have
3 not left much room and space or time for that in my life. Because of the difficult challenges of
4 navigating being trans and attracted to the people that I am, but also then you're entrenched in
5 doing LGBT work and then it's like you're not necessarily going to meet those people.
- 6 AJ: So you don't necessarily date lesbian-identified women?
- 7 KB: I've never dated a lesbian-identified woman. There is one now that is still with a woman that
8 was straight when I was with her but then she went to a woman after, and she was extremely
9 homophobic. But really everybody I've ever dated has really been . . . they may have thought,
10 "Oh, I'm trying this lesbian thing out," which they were but they were dating men before and
11 they dated me.
- 12 AJ: And you're a man.
- 13 KB: Right – bingo. And they've always been with men – every single one of my exes is with a man
14 except the one woman that is with a woman.
- 15 AJ: OK.
- 16 KB: And there aren't that many. I am a very conservative boy. It's been hard for me to realize how
17 conservative I am as I'm doing all this activism and then it's like I'm just very conservative and
18 discreet about that. I don't sleep around at conferences and I don't do that on purpose because
19 that's not why I'm here. People that do that, that's fine, but I'm on a mission for human rights
20 and equal rights and the detractors and the haters will take those things away, or try to, because
21 I have kept my personal life compartmentalized and I won't show my babies so they are
22 protected – only two friends. And that's why none of my personal life is really on my Facebook
23 pages and that's purposeful. So that's it. Of course I would love to find somebody but it will be
24 what it is – so that's love.
- 25 AJ: Relationships can be challenging for all of us on the planet, no matter who or what we love or
26 how we identify. So that's a challenge.
- 27 KB: Plus I've been stalked so many times by so many people that that has added to that element of .
28 . . . so I'm just a real recluse and a real zen person. I'm actually an introvert even though people
29 just see me. I've been doing this, because I've been active in engagement from junior high
30 student government on to being in college . . . a student body president, even as gender non-
31 confirming as I was at a religious institution. I've always been politically minded and active, that
32 I was going to make change. So that is where . . . it's a little hard if a person dates me, my
33 priorities are really skewed because I'm a workaholic and sex does not entice me. It's like, "No
34 girl, I've got to get this done because we've got to get some rights." And then I didn't date in
35 the community for a long time. I always kept my life outside and, of course . . . well, you know,
36 who I've dated and I don't want to name people.
- 37 AJ: Trans women or . . . ?
- 38 KB: A trans woman. And so . . . that was a short relationship but there's still love there.

- 1 AJ: Oh good. But it is a challenge, I think what I hear you saying, of dating people who are sort of
2 visible or engaged in the movement where you kind of think it might be easier because people
3 understand this, “We’ve got to get rights” kind of thing.
- 4 KB: But they don’t. And I’m very bad at work balance – mostly I’m working. It takes illness to take
5 me down. I’ve had two major ones and I hid a long time from the community, my illness,
6 because it was hidden. And then it came out with the hip and the back stuff going on the last
7 couple of years so I’m a little less healthy than I have ever been, because I was charging like a
8 trojan doing work for the last umpteen years – and yeah, doing what needed to be done. So
9 yeah, I don’t know how I’m going to do that – it amazes me that I’m this age and haven’t figured
10 that out. And part of me is kind of like I wonder if I’ll ever figure out that personal relationship
11 thing. So honestly, I’m risk averse. I used to come to conferences . . . and still it takes people to
12 get me through the lobby because everybody wants to talk to me, everybody wants to take a
13 picture. That’s why you should see the posse of guys – they would just do that for me, because I
14 could never get . . .
- 15 AJ: Get through.
- 16 KB: The earlier conferences were horrible because it was being stalked, like you were – like a Rod
17 Stewart or somebody. Literally they’re like grabbing and ripping. Oh yeah, I could never come
18 to these . . . I would hide. I still do – you’ll see me go do the things but then I separate myself
19 immediately because it’s over-stimulating. And then there’s LaVerne and Janet and other
20 people out now that they can go chase and run after. I never understood – it’s like why are you
21 chasing me? If I had money and was a real rock star then perhaps I could see that, but I’m a
22 broke trans Black man in America, let’s get real about that.
- 23 AJ: Wow. Who was the first transgender person you ever met?
- 24 KB: A friend of mine who I met through another friend. We were at a women’s space, which was
25 going to be the last year women were going to let me in.
- 26 AJ: They kicked you out of the women’s space, huh?
- 27 KB: Yeah, and then I met . . . he was there and I had known his lover for a long time. She was a great
28 therapist in Philly, and they’re still together thank goodness. I need to hit them an email,
29 they’re living in Arkansas now. We just communed that whole night, like talking – and it was
30 like, wow, you know, this is cool. But the first time I ever learned and really got a connection,
31 for me, as a child was through the *National Enquirer*, Billy Tipton had died and that was . . .
- 32 AJ: Was Billy Tipton a jazz musician?
- 33 KB: Bingo. So musician and he grew up an hour and 15 minutes away from where I had originally
34 grew up – he grew up in Sedalia, Missouri and he catapulted to skyrocketing fame in the 1950s
35 and just disappeared. He was a trans man and didn’t want anybody to know that. He had a very
36 successful career because he was hot and had excellent skills. He ended up dying, again from
37 lack of health care and fear of disclosing even being trans. He died of a bleeding ulcer that could
38 have been taken care of.

- 1 AJ: Absolutely.
- 2 KB: That's how it was back in those days, people couldn't disclose. That's why it amazes me, and I
3 see the parallel in the Black movement as well – we get some rights, the younger generation
4 comes along and they think, "We got it all boom, boom, boom." Or, "We didn't get enough
5 boom, boom, boom." And it's like, "No, you have to look at this in the whole context and
6 analyze it." I find that that is what we don't do. I'm really getting offended by the phrases,
7 "Throwing shade" and "T" and all that because the truth is the truth. A fact is a fact so I'm not
8 throwing shade if you did X, Y & Z, you did X, Y, and Z.
- 9 AJ: Yes.
- 10 KB: And that's it – and that's the way I've always been, that's the way my family is. They're going to
11 tell you the truth and it's not in the name of argument, it's just being real. So the culture I come
12 from, also being a middle American and so people, regardless, they're just straight it. We don't
13 play games in the way that other people do. Midwesterners are pretty much straight shooters.
- 14 AJ: So Billy Tipton sort of was the person for you.
- 15 KB: That was it, and I was like . . . I was in junior high or early high school, I can't remember. And
16 then it was like ding-ding-ding. And that gave me hope. I hid this *National Enquirer* in the house
17 like it was a *Playboy* magazine. I'd come home every day after school, once I'd found that, and
18 be like . . . I used to come home and just pray to God to fix me every day, because I was
19 miserable every single day of my life not being the person that I would think in my head and
20 look in the mirror. So I'd look internally most of the time, which is why I didn't talk much or
21 interact much with people at all. So it's allowed me to do my activism, to be a happier person,
22 and yeah . . . but Billy Tipton, because most people are going to think it's some Black person.
23 And then the person was Caucasian as well. But then it was like, "OK." And then I just got to
24 the point where I was digging for any information possible. In those days you had to get things
25 by mail, there wasn't any downloading, and they would come in a brown paper wrapper
26 because nobody wanted to disclose their identities. That's the way we used to get into gay
27 clubs, nobody knew your last name or first name because it was important for just lack of
28 disclosure. And then you had to know where to go, the knock to have, and whatever. Where
29 these kids got gay clubs everywhere – in the city, whatever. We had to have hidden, like in
30 prohibition, spaces just to even come out and be ourselves and hang out and affirm ourselves –
31 just to dance, and say woo, we just wanted to dance and have a drink.
- 32 AJ: Even Stonewall had the windows covered over, blackout kind of thing.
- 33 KB: Yeah, because we all had to be secretive. If you got too vocal, you got kicked out of the little
34 square because then they would be like, "Oh, they're going to tell my business to somebody,"
35 and it was people's lives being killed. It happens in rural America just as much as it does in
36 metropolitan America, which people don't realize – as well as compassion. I got a lot of
37 compassion in rural areas that you wouldn't think of. As I continue to do the work, I'm finding
38 that the smaller rural communities are more accepting than large cities. I go back to . . . I was an
39 attorney and I'd do court in the county that I grew up in, judges know me, they respect me. I'm

- 1 a good lawyer. I even had one of my former colleagues from when I had done a case in St.
2 Charles, and he leaned over and told the client, "You've got a good attorney."
- 3 AJ: Oh wow, nice.
- 4 KB: So my legal reputation, I probably work on that more because that's gotten sidetracked also by
5 activism. I feel like I've been an outsider, and most of us would say there are not enough people
6 of color making these decisions about "the movement" and how it impacts people realistically
7 because the people making those decisions, to me, live in protected areas and gay alcoves
8 where they can be married, where they have domestic benefits and rights and all these things,
9 but then the other 88% of the country where I come from, it's a real struggle. People will say,
10 "Well, have you suffered physical abuse?" Because they also only want to relegate that to male
11 to females being abused.
- 12 AJ: Right.
- 13 KB: And it's like, "No, trans men are raped, trans men do sex work to live and survive too." So it's
14 just like . . . we made the case that trans women were dying and we were hoping then to build
15 on that to make the case that really, it's really any gender non-conforming person that's being
16 killed and nobody's oppression is greater than anybody else's oppression. We have to get away
17 from that attitude of, "I'm more down than you and so, Andrea, I'm just going to take you out
18 because you've got more rights than me because you're this beautiful big Black tall woman and
19 you've got it all going on. It just came easy to you." And that's me making a judgment of you
20 and not even dialoging with you and talking.
- 21 AJ: Right, and understanding what happens and what happens every day.
- 22 KB: Yup. And I realized that two years ago we needed to have more of those discussions. I think
23 they are safer in POC space when it's not influenced by other entities.
- 24 AJ: Oh, OK. What is the relationship between the L, the G, the B, and the T? I know you've talked
25 about it a little bit. You've sort of . . . just did into it.
- 26 KB: Well, you know, we're at a very interesting place, I think, with the LGBT, because I think there
27 were commonalities in that we were all discriminated against because we were lumped into one
28 group by people that didn't understand us and then the commonality because we had very few
29 trans people working. Ten years ago there were five of us and we did every trans panel possible
30 and we would run from room to room. "OK, you've got this – OK, OK." "Now this is the panel
31 on this." And the idea is that we have all these great people hopefully doing great work to move
32 us forward, but my opinion on . . . job my memory again because I have . . .
- 33 AJ: The relationship between the L, the G . . .
- 34 KB: . . . the B and the T.
- 35 AJ: Yeah. Should it continue to exist? I'll even be a little more pointed – as you know, so well, trans
36 identity is a gender identity, LG and B is a sexual orientation.

1 KB: Yeah. I am agreeing with you, I was just trying to figure out how to set this up gracefully. I think
2 at a point we needed to be added on because that gave us number and strength and power, but
3 I honestly am at the point where there needs to be separation. Our issues are different and
4 they don't understand the issues and they want to lead the issues and then they don't pick the
5 right people because they're not out getting the activists that have been doing this for 30 years,
6 they're only listening to a certain sect of people and that's bad. So I do think, because our issues
7 are different, I think we are at a moment where I see us splitting off.

8 AJ: Oh, wow.

9 KB: I always advocate for trans leadership because I have been tired of being on gay boards and
10 entities and being disrespected as a person of color and a trans person, but you want to
11 represent me? So there is something wrong here. I really do, and I am at that phase of the
12 analysis, while there are interlaps and some of us, because we're trans, it was all about gender
13 presentation because, you know, lesbians broke the barrier with presentation and would burn
14 the bra – which came from the women's movement, which we never want to connect to
15 although we should be doing that a little bit better. And so there was a certain lesbian uniform
16 and then a certain gay uniform that people wore, and I'm a maverick so I like to do my own
17 thing. And so, I think that gender bending part transcends or connects but what doesn't
18 connect are the rest of the needs of trans people. I think that if we don't get up and get our
19 community together to get that, then we're going to be sailing down the wrong river. Nobody
20 understands our issues but us, we can only represent ourselves well if we do it strategically and
21 cohesively. I feel that we're at the point of a split and I do think it's time.

22 AJ: OK. That's powerful. Oh man, so what would be the agenda if a trans . . . sort of separate
23 movement were to . . . what would be the issues?

24 KB: Immediately employment. We have . . . yeah, through the EEOC, we were covered until Title VII.
25 But here's what that means. If I'm fired, I've still got to go find an attorney to take my case and I
26 have to go through the process. It's great that the EEOC picks it up, that's great – then you're
27 not out-of-pocket anything. But a lot of times they . . .

28 AJ: They don't have the capacity to take every case, right?

29 KB: There you go. And so that's the problem. And even once you get to a court, a court can defer to
30 what an administrative body says, but it is not bound by it and so there is the problem. So
31 you're going to have judges interpreting different ways and this, that, and the other. So while
32 it's helpful to be covered and say Title VII covers us, for me then after I've been fired and have
33 no job, have to find money to hire the attorney to take that case to take it to court. I've been
34 there, done that, and that was in the days they didn't want to ever represent us. And now it's
35 funny, when I have colleagues calling to ask for my expertise because they have a gender client,
36 I'm like, "Really? You wouldn't even talk to me when I transitioned." Or tried to go on the other
37 side of the courtroom or whatever. I don't let people do that either because I'll challenge that
38 and I'll just follow you over there too and you can get some Black cooties and some trans
39 cooties. That's the way they act – like it's going to rub off on them or something. I've had
40 legislators run too – once they've shaken my hind, they're like, "Oh, and he's trans too." And
41 then they literally run. What does that say about what you think about trans people? I was the

1 same guy you met two seconds ago and you were just talking to me and now you've found out
2 I'm trans and you really run.

3 AJ: Wow. Last question Kylar.

4 KB: OK.

5 AJ: Where do you see this movement, trans people . . . the reality of transgender lives, in the next
6 50 years?

7 KB: That's a deep question. Right now as we're interviewing, I'm a little disheartened because I
8 don't feel like that . . . and it's generational, it's not just trans people, it's not just gay people
9 because I was a college professor for almost 20 years, but I saw the separation and how there
10 was no connection to history because people are too busy playing video games, doing this, that
11 or the other, and they don't want to hear – and that's the way we live in this country. We're all
12 spread out, your family is spread out, so you don't get the oral history and you don't know the
13 things that you need to know. So I think there are lots of problems that are created by that –
14 the whole way we live and everybody in your family is spread all over where we used to be in
15 communities. I think that if we don't defeat ourselves we can make lots of movement because
16 lots of changes have happened in my lifetime that I never, ever, ever expected or thought would
17 happen. I think that's great and I think we can do lots more and even more expeditious if we
18 would learn to put our harm, hurt, and hate in the right places. When you come to places for
19 advocacy you come and do that work but otherwise go see your therapist and take your pills.
20 What I mean by that, just to be a little clearer, is there came a moment in the gay movement
21 when I was a part of that, and it was called the gay movement then, where people started doing
22 that – because there was the same dysfunction then in the LG community. The only way it
23 stopped was everybody held everybody accountable. If people came in with their personal
24 drama, because we can't keep replaying the same tape over and over when we know what it is,
25 we've got to get to the fixes. We're not moving and so when people would come in, that would
26 be the ground rules and if you couldn't do that, then everybody in that room held them
27 accountable. It's like, "You need to leave because obviously you're not well and we're trying to
28 support you so the best support is therapy and medication." That, I see, is our biggest danger
29 because everybody wants to be . . . and then the whole, "I want to be a star," era because
30 everybody has got Facebook, Twitter and whatever, and that's great – it's a new way to
31 communicate, but at the same time you need to stay in your lane. If you don't know the
32 knowledge, don't fake it because this is not a point of time in the movement where we need
33 people messing up. This is a crucial time that I think will be a crucial change that will set up
34 what the movement looks like for trans people. And hopefully we won't have to be having
35 these discussions about divisiveness. I think it will change the way society looks at bodies and
36 we really are doing that, I think that we see that in the mainstream seeping over to there. So I
37 think we'll have more respect and we have kids growing up as trans at the appropriate ages.
38 They'll have issues but they still will not be the issues that were tackled before they came along.
39 We still have lots to give to help make that support and those life changes positive for them
40 where they're not having missed half their life by pretending to be somebody else and not
41 themselves.

- 1 AJ: Beautiful. Kylar, I just want to say thank you for all of the advocacy and work that you've done
2 on behalf of the transgender community. I'm going to venture and wholeheartedly state, and
3 based on some of the comments that you've made today and other times I've heard you talk, on
4 behalf of all of humanity.
- 5 KB: Yes, sister.
- 6 AJ: I just want to thank you for sharing a little bit of your life today with this project but on this
7 journey that we call life.
- 8 KB: Thank you. Because it is hard for me to share my personal life, so thank you very much. I felt
9 very comfortable with you. Thank you.
- 10 AJ: Ashay.
- 11 KB: Ashay.