

June Taylor and
Isabelle Wedin
Narrators

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

October 31, 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.

Andrea Jenkins
jenki120@umn.edu
(612) 625-4379

1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 June Taylor -JT
3 Isabelle Wedin -IW

4

5 AJ: So, good morning. My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender
6 Oral History Project at the University of Minnesota. Today is October 31st, it's Halloween.

7 JT: Yeah.

8 IW: So it is.

9 AJ: And I am here today on the campus of the University of Minnesota with June Taylor, wave June.

10 JT: Hello.

11 AJ: And, Isabella . . .

12 IW: Isabelle.

13 AJ: Isabelle Wedin.

14 IW: That's correct, Isabelle Wedin. Hi.

15 AJ: Yeah, so how are you ladies this morning?

16 JT: We're doing great. We had a wonderful weekend.

17 IW: Yeah, it's been really great. I'm really happy to be here.

18 JT: Yes.

19 AJ: Cool. So, before we dive deep into the interview, I'm going to ask you, June, if you would
20 introduce yourself, state your name and spell your name just so we make sure we get it all
21 correct, your gender identity today, your gender identity assigned at birth, and the pronouns
22 that you use. And then, Isabelle, I'm going to ask you to do the same thing afterwards.

23 IW: Sounds good.

24 JT: My name is June Taylor, spelled J-u-n-e T-a-y-l-o-r. My gender identity is female or trans
25 woman, depending on context. I was assigned male at birth and I use she and her pronouns
26 today.

27 AJ: Perfect, thank you. Isabelle.

28 IW: I've been misspelling your name, I've been doing it e-r.

29 JT: I don't know that you've ever spelled my last name for any reason. Anyway, it's o-r.

- 1 IW: Anyway, I am Isabelle Wedin, that is I-s-a-b-e-l-l-e W-e-d-i-n, as in Nancy. I was assigned male at
2 birth but I am a woman and my pronouns are she and her and etc . . . you know, I'm kind of
3 nervous.
- 4 JT: She and hers.
- 5 IW: Yes.
- 6 AJ: Wow, well thank you both. So, one of the things that I like to do just to kind of get us in sort of
7 recollection mode is to start with a question about your earliest memory. So, June, why don't I
8 start with you. What is your earliest memory in life? It doesn't have to be related to your
9 transgender identity, although if it is, that's perfectly fine. I just want to know what's the
10 earliest thing you remember in your life.
- 11 JT: I was actually telling Ibby this story because I was . . . my earliest memory is of my dad throwing
12 me up in the air and catching me.
- 13 AJ: Wow, you remember that.
- 14 JT: I do. I was like two, I guess. It's weird. It's not that I remember everything from then forward,
15 it's just that that's my earliest impression.
- 16 AJ: Right, but you remember that – yeah.
- 17 JT: Yeah. It came up this weekend because I was playing with our kids and similar age right now for
18 my youngest.
- 19 AJ: So, you guys have children?
- 20 JT: I have three kids and they're 1, 3, and 5 years old, so it's a good spread.
- 21 IW: I don't have any kids, but after hanging out with your kids for a weekend . . . yeah, I have to have
22 a conversation with my wife when I get home.
- 23 AJ: No, you said you were hanging out with our kids, you made it seem . . . so I just want to clarify
24 that for the camera.
- 25 IW: I wish they were my kids.
- 26 JT: You're like an aunt.
- 27 IW: Sure.
- 28 AJ: Isabelle, what's your earliest memory?
- 29 IW: Gosh, I don't know. I remember . . . I think I was sitting on my mother's lap in the kitchen, at our
30 dining table. She was wearing her robe, which she always wore in the morning . . . I must have
31 been like two, maybe a little bit older. I'm trying to remember . . . I was very, very jealous of my
32 younger brother at that age, he's almost two years younger. I don't remember if he was around

- 1 yet, but I would have been very young . . . something like that. That's the rough outline – sitting
2 on my mom's lap.
- 3 AJ: Sitting on your mom's lap.
- 4 IW: Yes.
- 5 AJ: Where did you grow up, Isabelle? And, I should say . . . because you are referring to Isabelle as
6 lbby . . .
- 7 JT: Oh, sorry.
- 8 AJ: That's fine, I just want to clarify for our transcriptionist, lbby is l-b-b-y.
- 9 IW: That's correct.
- 10 AJ: So, you told me about your earliest memory, sitting on your mom's lap. Where are you from?
- 11 IW: New York, Long Island . . . Brentwood, specifically, which is like a really un-important town in the
12 middle of the island. Yeah, I was there, we lived in the same house and I stayed there until I was
13 18 and then I moved away to college and right after college, got out of that house and moved
14 into an apartment with my wife in Queens. She wasn't quite my wife yet.
- 15 AJ: But, you guys have been together . . .
- 16 IW: We've been together . . . 13 years. Something like that? And married for a little over eight.
- 17 AJ: Wow.
- 18 JT: My wife and I had our ninth wedding anniversary just earlier this month.
- 19 AJ: And, that's June and her wife.
- 20 JT: June and my wife, Mary.
- 21 AJ: All right, wow. Long-term relationships. I want to get into all those a little bit.
- 22 JT: It's kind of awesome.
- 23 IW: It really is.
- 24 JT: But, just back to you, Isabelle, were you out before you . . . out as a trans person before you met
25 your current wife?
- 26 IW: Yeah. That's actually a bit of a complicated story. So, I went away to college, that's where I met
27 my wife – freshman year. I'd been crossdressing since I was like 12 or 13, and maybe a little
28 younger, but it was always a really private thing. I didn't feel comfortable sharing it with
29 anybody. And then I got to college and I was out of the house and I was fairly open with all of
30 my friends there, so she knew and that was a thing we did together once in a while, not often. I
31 would get all dressed up and she liked that, she's always been really accepting.

- 1 AJ: So, yes, and she knew.
- 2 IW: Yeah, I guess I didn't know . . . I thought that this wasn't possible. I thought I was just a
3 crossdresser and I would grow up to be a miserable old man.
- 4 AJ: Wow.
- 5 IW: And then just . . . this happened. I guess we'll talk about that later.
- 6 AJ: OK. Where did you grow up, June?
- 7 JT: I grew up in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Do you need me to spell that or is that OK?
- 8 AJ: I think we can probably figure out Winston-Salem, North Carolina.
- 9 JT: I don't know, yeah – just a fairly normal childhood. I don't know.
- 10 AJ: Yeah, what kind of town is Winston-Salem?
- 11 JT: It's kind of small.
- 12 AJ: Tobacco . . . is that Tobacco Road?
- 13 JT: RJ Reynolds Tobacco is the main thing there, or it was at some point. That kind of is a dying
14 industry, it's a lot of biotech now. It's very southern, very conservative. There's pockets of
15 liberal things, but mostly conservative.
- 16 AJ: So, what was school like for you there? You grew up there your entire childhood?
- 17 JT: Yeah, I went to high school there and I did go away for college, but school was . . . I had nothing
18 as far as . . . like Ibby was saying about crossdressing, it was just kind of . . . just getting through
19 things.
- 20 AJ: Just normal – yeah, that's cool.
- 21 JT: In retrospect, it seems like there was a lot of depressive stuff, but at the time it didn't seem that
22 way. Now, I can look back on it and kind of reflect on it as not so great.
- 23 AJ: OK. You've got to say more now, you kind of opened up a can here.
- 24 JT: Sure.
- 25 AJ: What made it not so great?
- 26 JT: Well, the experience of learning about trans people and gender as a thing later in life was
27 something that was useful for looking back on how was gender described and imposed in family
28 and school and all those things where it was really discouraged to not be cis and heterosexual in
29 a lot of little ways and big ways, I guess. But, those were so not apparent, it was just the way it
30 was. So, weirdly, nobody in my family was gay and nobody in my family was . . . that's just
31 improbable to just think that through all of the social interaction that you never have experience

- 1 with queer people is not normal. So, looking back on it, that seems really weird, but it didn't
2 seem weird at the time.
- 3 AJ: I would say the majority of people in this country identify as heteronormative, cis gender . . .
4 you kind of have to be lucky to run into a queer person . . . not necessarily but . . .
- 5 IW: I would say lucky.
- 6 JT: Yeah, definitely – let's go with lucky.
- 7 AJ: It's not the norm.
- 8 JT: No, it's not, but it was so far out of acceptance.
- 9 AJ: So, you weren't out, June, as a young person?
- 10 JT: No.
- 11 AJ: When did you first realize that you may not be the gender you were assigned at birth?
- 12 JT: That's such of a kind of . . . it's such a long span, because there are moments of recognition of
13 different experiences, but they don't all fit from a single point in time. I can point to as early as
14 maybe 13 or something, where it's like something is weird, something is different and what is it
15 and trying to find anything that's like that in the world is really difficult in the 1990s. So, I guess I
16 come to coming out around two years ago from now, but it was a long process of internal
17 exploration and thinking and reading and learning and trying to figure it out.
- 18 AJ: So, yeah, I understand that it's a process and a journey, but was there . . . there was never a day
19 where, even prior to coming out, said, "Wow, I think I may be different from other little boys."
- 20 JT: Yeah, I guess . . . I mean, it goes way back to 13 or 14, but I didn't have words for
21 it. Like Ibby was saying, if you don't even know that trans people exist, as a concept, then what
22 are you going to . . . you have nothing to attach to.
- 23 AJ: Absolutely, yeah.
- 24 JT: It's just this weird feeling of not fitting in.
- 25 IW: Yeah, we've talked a lot about this. My experience was actually really similar where I can
26 remember from a very young age wanting to be a girl but I never . . . it seemed absurd to say,
27 "Well, if I want to, then I am."
- 28 JT: Yeah, that was just so not acceptable.
- 29 IW: People told me I was a boy and I believed what adults said, so I believed them. And so, I just
30 thought every boy, every young man, hated it. I was just like this whole masculinity thing is God
31 awful and it's transparently obvious to me, so everybody else must be feeling the same thing
32 and we just must all be scared to even bring that up to say, "Yeah, actually, being a dude is

- 1 horrible, it feels bad.” Now, I realize that actually for some people they really like it and it feels
2 really good. I didn’t like it because it wasn’t, at all, the right thing for me.
- 3 AJ: So, Ibby, were you ever ostracized or bullied in school? What was school like for you on Long
4 Island?
- 5 IW: Yeah, that’s what they said – it’s on, it is an island. Yeah, no, it’s so weird because I didn’t really
6 understand that I was different. I kept all this secret, I didn’t tell anybody how I really felt about
7 my gender, but all the other boys could tell and I was a target. It’s so weird – even into
8 adulthood when I tried to assert myself in masculine ways, I would just get slapped down. They
9 could tell, “No, you’re faking this, that’s not going to work.”
- 10 AJ: Wow.
- 11 IW: Yeah, but trying to not be masculine also gets you punished. Yeah, it was a bind, there’s no
12 winning, you can’t be masculine because you don’t do it right and you can’t be feminine
13 because that’s not allowed. So, yeah, I got picked on a lot as a kid. It didn’t really change until
14 about high school when I got into the drama club and that was full of queer people and it was
15 really great. I was starting to figure things out about myself and I could tell something about
16 this feels really good and I don’t know what. I thought for a while maybe . . . I knew I liked
17 women, but I also couldn’t really identify with this queer thing in this really deep way that I
18 didn’t understand. I thought maybe I’m bisexual, turns out I’m not. And so, yeah. I didn’t really
19 figure it out then – it took me a long time after high school to figure it out but that’s when I
20 really started to come into my own a little bit and started to feel comfortable with myself.
- 21 AJ: So, you said you don’t identify as bisexual. What is your sexual orientation?
- 22 IW: Women only, please. I’m just not . . .
- 23 AJ: OK. So, do you identify as lesbian?
- 24 IW: Yes – yeah, definitely. I guess in abstract, men are . . . I find some men attractive, I guess, and
25 then they go and talk and then it’s like . . . yeah, not for me.
- 26 AJ: OK. Well, you’ve been married, you said, for . . .
- 27 IW: Eight years – just over eight years.
- 28 AJ: Eight years . . . but you guys have been together longer than that, right?
- 29 IW: Yeah, we were engaged for a year and a half and together for two and a half years before that,
30 so that comes up to . . . I thought it was 13 but . . . anyway, I could do the math, since 2004.
- 31 AJ: It’s 2016, so you’re going on 13 years.
- 32 IW: 12. It was September 2004 – the start of sophomore year, so about 12 years.
- 33 AJ: Wow. That’s awesome. It is a challenge for a lot of transgender-identified people to find love in
34 their lives and I’m happy to hear that you’ve been able to find that. And you, as well, June.

- 1 JT: Yeah, we've both been very lucky.
- 2 AJ: You've been married for nine years?
- 3 JT: Nine years, yes. And, I mean that was definitely one of the most stressful parts, for me, of
4 coming out – was just knowing that that experience existed as far as trans people coming out to
5 their family and friends and spouses and just being completely rejected. That was my prime
6 fear and it took me a long time to come out to my spouse. And, it's awesome. She's been
7 amazing and it's been great.
- 8 AJ: There was no indication prior to . . . you hadn't had any kind of conversation with her before
9 marriage or . . .?
- 10 JT: No.
- 11 AJ: It was kind of a big surprise . . . because you guys were clearly in the middle of your marriage.
- 12 JT: Yeah.
- 13 IW: Well, you're forgetting some stuff though.
- 14 JT: I am forgetting some stuff.
- 15 AJ: You're leaving out a lot of stuff here.
- 16 JT: I am.
- 17 IW: You told me you used to wear nail polish.
- 18 JT: I did. I did a lot of feminine-coated things, in retrospect. I don't know, it just . . . it wasn't
19 something that we really talked about that much. It was just, "Yeah, some guys do that, and
20 whatever." Which is not totally true.
- 21 IW: It's a little true.
- 22 JT: A little true, obviously. But, we did not have a big conversation about it until it was imminent as
23 far as, "I'm going to come out and do this thing and I don't even know how to do that, but that's
24 what we're doing, I guess."
- 25 AJ: How did you come out?
- 26 JT: I wrote my wife a note because I had tried for about a week to tell her in person and it was just
27 so anxiety ridden that it was easier to hand her a letter that told her that I felt like I was trans
28 and I wanted to go to a therapist and work on this with her and I don't know what it means, but
29 I want to figure it out with her.
- 30 AJ: So, you weren't in therapy at that point in time.
- 31 JT: No.

- 1 AJ: But, you knew you were trans. Did you do research on the internet? How did you come to that .
2 . . ? Because first you told me that there's no way, you never saw anybody that was trans and
3 then you came to this conclusion that you're trans . . . like you left out a lot in-between.
- 4 JT: I did, I'm sorry . . . sorry. So, for years . . . from years prior, reading books by trans people, a lot
5 of stuff on the internet as far as YouTube and discussion boards and groups, to see is this . . .
6 does this fit? Is this what I'm feeling? And it ends up to be a pretty good match, but it took a
7 long time to really believe that of myself because everything you deal with tells you that it's not
8 OK but that that's really hard to get over.
- 9 AJ: Yeah, society is pretty oppressive around gender identity and gender policing.
- 10 JT: Yeah.
- 11 AJ: How did your wife take it when you handed her the note?
- 12 JT: She hugged me and said it was OK and the next day gave me an orchid and a beautiful note and
13 then we set up appointments to do therapy together. I mean, it was a lot of . . .
- 14 AJ: And then you guys started making babies.
- 15 JT: We had already had our oldest . . . I guess we had two.
- 16 IW: You already had Jade.
- 17 JT: Yeah, Jade . . . I think so. Yeah, we must have. Yeah, our oldest two. So, I mean, yeah, we had a
18 lot of hard conversations and a lot of late nights and just going over things and figuring stuff out
19 and going to therapy together. But, we worked it out and it's just amazing and I'm really
20 impressed by her.
- 21 AJ: That's incredible, that sounds really sweet and lovely.
- 22 JT: Yeah. I mean, I kind of feel guilty about it in some respects because we know so many people
23 who don't have that experience and it's really sad.
- 24 AJ: Sort of like survivor's guilt, is it?
- 25 JT: Yes.
- 26 IW: Yes. Definitely, I would say for me – yes, absolutely.
- 27 AJ: Isabelle. Wow. Say more about that, Isabelle. What does that feel like?
- 28 IW: Sure. It's actually . . . maybe I'll work this in reverse. I'll jump around . . . so, my wife, Maria, she
29 is bisexual although definitely leans towards women. So, that's obviously working in my favor –
30 that was hugely advantageous to me in the end. To the extent that . . . so, there's this format of
31 essay which is the cis wife of a trans woman basically complaining about how horrible it is to be
32 married to a trans woman and, "This happens and it destroyed our marriage and I had to do all
33 this work to be a decent person to my wife." And, Maria and I both find that particular attitude

- 1 very . . . let's say, grating – it's very grating. So, she wrote one basically from the other
2 perspective which is actually . . . her perspective was, "My wife came out to me and it wasn't a
3 big deal – yeah, there was stuff to do and certain things were a little bit hard, but actually I'm
4 still the same person and we're still the same couple and it's still really good. In fact, my
5 marriage is better than it's ever been."
- 6 JT: I would say the same thing – absolutely. This is June. Because we had to have so many really
7 deep conversations, we've been able to work on communicating way better. It makes it much
8 easier to get through other things in our life. I absolutely think it has improved our marriage a
9 lot since I came out.
- 10 AJ: Yeah – I mean, I can only speculate but from my own experience, coming out you become a
11 happier person.
- 12 JT: For sure.
- 13 IW: Yes – yes.
- 14 AJ: Which, potentially, can make a relationship a little happier.
- 15 JT: It was so much more work to make a good relationship good while also carrying all this weight
16 and depression about gender. So, that being gone, and better, is much easier to focus on other
17 stuff.
- 18 IW: Yeah, Maria said the same exact thing. She said, "Well, yeah, our relationship is better – you're
19 happier now and that makes the relationship better." So, yeah, I do feel really lucky to be
20 married to someone who is so open and so kind. Maria is one of the kindest people you could
21 ever meet, she's so emotionally brilliant.
- 22 JT: She's awesome.
- 23 IW: She really is. She's a psychologist. So, yeah, I do feel like I lucked out – I picked a good one.
24 Actually, my wife picked me but we also have all these friends whose marriages are getting torn
25 apart and they're going through expensive divorces and their parents are . . . yeah, basically
26 they're losing their whole family. Keeping the kids . . . you know, 50/50.
- 27 AJ: When you say, "We have friends," are you referring to other transgender people?
- 28 IW: Yes, exactly – other trans women coming out right now or some who have been out for a while.
- 29 AJ: I couldn't tell you whether you were talking about you and Maria's friends who have . . .
- 30 IW: Yeah, Maria is friends with most of my trans friends. She gets along . . .
- 31 JT: She's like an ambassador.
- 32 IW: A little bit, yeah. She's like the good cis person.

- 1 AJ: But, specifically, though we're talking about transgender people who come out and then their
2 families get torn apart.
- 3 IW: Exactly, yeah – so many people.
- 4 JT: It's upsettingly common.
- 5 IW: Yeah.
- 6 AJ: Yes.
- 7 JT: That was a really hard thing for Mary when I did come out to her and she was looking for
8 support in the role of a spouse who is working on this topic. A lot of what's available is either
9 you find somebody who is a spouse of a trans person and went through something like this, and
10 then suddenly their blog stops because they got divorced and things did not work out and it's
11 really depressing. Or, you find support groups that are kind of hyper focused on this terrible
12 thing that's happening to you and let's help you get through this terrible thing, but also is
13 terrible. Rather than . . . there aren't a lot of . . .
- 14 AJ: Let's help you figure out a way to be in this relationship.
- 15 JT: Yes, exactly.
- 16 AJ: And, to focus on the positives.
- 17 JT: The relationship takes a back seat to the support and that seems backwards.
- 18 IW: Yeah.
- 19 AJ: Yeah. It is sort of a trauma for people to work through in many, many cases. In your case,
20 Isabelle, your partner, your wife already had some inklings so it wasn't like a big huge surprise;
21 whereas, you, June, said your wife had no idea and then was able to hear and see you for the
22 person that you really are. That's wonderful.
- 23 JT: Yes, it is.
- 24 AJ: Do you still have the note that you . . .?
- 25 JT: Somewhere. It's actually . . . I gave it to her, so it's her note.
- 26 AJ: It's her note.
- 27 JT: I'm sure it is in some box at home.
- 28 AJ: Wow. So, what terms, and this is for you, June, and ultimately for both of you guys, but what
29 terms have you used to describe yourself over time and how has that changed?
- 30 JT: Do you mean gender terms?
- 31 AJ: Gender, sexuality. I mean, when I ask this question, some people say, "I came out as gay and
32 then I realized that that wasn't really who I was."

- 1 JT: Yeah, OK. So, being assigned male at birth and having people tell me that this is what guys do
2 and this is what being a man is, I identified that way in however that works in a non-committal
3 kind of, "OK, this is the default, I guess, that's great." So, that was the first part of my life. I
4 identified as straight and attracted to women, and I'm still attracted to women. I identify as a
5 woman now and as a trans person, as a queer person, as a lesbian, and that's kind of really
6 comfortable for me.
- 7 AJ: Yeah, there are no right or wrong answers here, so please don't . . .
- 8 JT: I mean to say that in the sense that the primary identifications were not correct, they didn't
9 totally feel like my own and now it does and that's great.
- 10 AJ: No – yeah, that's the whole point of the question is to try to get at that. You said you kind of
11 thought about, "Maybe I'm bi, but not really." What terms have you used to describe yourself
12 over time, Isabelle?
- 13 IW: Sure. Yeah, so going back to middle school or so when I first started having sexual feelings and
14 also crossdressing. I was 12 or whatever, everything I did was sexual, so, of course,
15 crossdressing was sexual. So, just inside a cultural fog – my word for myself was . . . I didn't dare
16 use a word for myself. It would have been pervert or something; I really internalized that.
- 17 AJ: Wow.
- 18 IW: Then high school came around and I came out to some people as bi before realizing that didn't
19 really fit. Sometime in college, when I was a little more free to express my gender and go out on
20 campus in weird halfway . . . slacks and heels or a skirt over my jeans, I was . . . I dressed pretty
21 openly queer in high school too, but always in terms of details – like hair accessories and things,
22 but boy clothes. So, in college I started playing around with describing an experience of gender
23 fluidity even though I didn't have the word for that all the time. And then I got out of college
24 and I got a job and I got busy, and then I guess my word for myself, at that point, was just
25 crossdresser. And then we moved to Miami for a year for my wife's post-doctoral fellowship at
26 the Miami VA.
- 27 AJ: Ooh-la-la.
- 28 IW: Yeah, it was part of the whole Ph.D. process.
- 29 AJ: So, does that mean no laying on the beach, no fun on the beach.
- 30 IW: No, actually Miami was pretty crazy – that was a really crazy year in my life where I was . . . I
31 kept the same job so I was working from home a lot, working remotely from Miami for a
32 company mostly in New York. So, I would just dress however I wanted, all day.
- 33 JT: That's really cool.
- 34 IW: And then it came to a point where I said to Maria, it was like three in the morning, and I'm trying
35 to work the courage to tell her this. I'm holding her in bed and my heart is pounding – it was
36 pounding so hard it wakes her up and she turns around and she looks at me and she says, "What

1 is it?' I'm like . . . what I said was, "Sometimes isn't enough," meaning I can't just . . . I can't only
2 express my true gender, my true self at home, this needs to be me forever. I'm a woman, I need
3 to do this. And what she said to me, "I know, can I go back to bed." She just . . . she figured it
4 out before I did, basically. So, yeah, that was sort of the last shift. That was a couple years ago
5 where it was like, "Yeah, I'm trans, I'm a chick, I'm a lady, this is cool." And then, I bought a
6 bathing suit and we went down to the pool. Finding a bathing suit that takes breast forms is
7 actually really hard when that will take the forms and the cover up down to here. So, yeah, it
8 was a really crazy experience. Everything was just so sudden – just one day she was like, "OK,
9 put on this dress, we're going to go shopping." And I'm like, "Holy shit." And I got three hours
10 getting myself together and then we went shopping and nothing bad happened. And then a
11 couple weeks later, it was Thanksgiving, we had some of Maria's work friends over who I wasn't
12 out to and I was dressed as a guy and trying to enjoy my turkey and I was so miserable. So then
13 that night I told my wife, "Yeah, tomorrow I'm going full-time." And I just did it. It took me a
14 while to come out at work, but socially I spent that entire year in Miami very nearly . . . just,
15 yeah – it was really wild. I was not on HRT yet and I was getting done up and going out – not
16 even done up, jeans and a t-shirt and going to board game socials.

17 JT: You kind of dove right in.

18 IW: I kind of dove right in, I can't believe I did that.

19 JT: It's really intensive.

20 IW: So, that's . . . yeah, that's the entire arc of my identity, I guess.

21 AJ: Wow. What has been some of the more positive aspects of expressing your true gender
22 identity, Isabelle?

23 IW: Wow, OK. I mean, just in general trying to operate within the bounds of masculinity, I felt
24 diminished. One of the biggest freedoms that I found is the freedom to be expressive, to
25 express myself, to have facial expressions, to not have to tuck my hands under my legs, to really
26 engage with people. It's really hard to keep this huge secret and actively misrepresent yourself
27 and still be close to people. It was really fraught.

28 JT: Yeah.

29 IW: I would say that's it – the social comfort of just being able to relax in front of the people that I
30 love and just be myself. It's just so emotionally freeing.

31 JT: Yeah.

32 AJ: June, what would you say have been some of the biggest challenges since you've decided to
33 express your true gender identity?

34 JT: I guess . . . I mean, there's a large amount of time spent on bureaucratic and red-tape things
35 right now for me. I've been out for two years now, but I'm still working on legal stuff like name
36 changes on different records and systems and interacting with medical systems is kind of

- 1 annoying sometimes – even in the best cases, it’s just kind of weird. I guess the biggest thing
2 that’s been a challenge for me has been my family where I grew up has been just awkward and
3 strange and strained since coming out. And there have been points when it seemed like it was
4 getting better and then it kind of rolls back. So, that’s been really emotionally hard to come to
5 terms with. Otherwise, before, having this really close relationship with family and feeling like
6 that’s solid, and then that’s just not there anymore. Even though I’ve got great people here in
7 Minnesota and have built a network of friends and chosen family that are awesome, it’s still
8 really hard to kind of reflect on that birth family kind of thing that’s just not the same as it was.
- 9 AJ: Yeah. So, are your parents still alive, both your parents?
- 10 JT: Yeah, they are.
- 11 AJ: Do they want to have a relationship with the children?
- 12 JT: They do, on their terms, which often doesn’t include recognizing me as me. So, that makes it
13 kind of difficult for us to do normal stuff – like have regular visits or consider holiday things since
14 it’s been so weird and so not normal and not loving for a long time.
- 15 AJ: Oh, wow – I’m really sorry.
- 16 JT: It’s OK, thank you.
- 17 AJ: But, it sounds like you have found support in chosen family.
- 18 JT: Oh, my gosh – yes.
- 19 IW: I can vouch for her chosen family. I’ve been meeting all of them this weekend and they’re
20 amazing people. They’re the best – some of the best people I’ve ever met. They’re so warm
21 and just really brilliant and . . . yeah, they’re great.
- 22 AJ: So, tell me about you guy’s friendship. How did you meet? How long have you been friends?
- 23 IW: Do you want to do it?
- 24 JT: You should probably do it.
- 25 IW: OK.
- 26 AJ: OK, so you’ve got to say a name.
- 27 IW: OK, this is Isabelle, and I’m going to at least start off this story. So, there’s a website called
28 MetaFilter, it’s basically a discussion . . .
- 29 AJ: MetaFilter?
- 30 IW: MetaFilter, yes. It’s basically a discussion board, but it’s one of the better places on the internet
31 because it’s moderated so you’re able to . . . at least I felt . . . I discovered it a couple years ago
32 while I was starting to figure out my gender, before we moved to Miami.

- 1 JT: That was one of the first places, this is June speaking, that was one of the first places I came out
2 online.
- 3 IW: Yeah, me too.
- 4 JT: And was interacting as me.
- 5 AJ: OK.
- 6 IW: So, one time there was this discussion about men wearing make-up. It was a video or
7 something of men getting make-up put on them. And, I chimed in to be like, "Yeah, I've been
8 doing that at work sometimes." At the time, I'd been going to work in make-up and it's really
9 weird, because people don't notice, they just compliment you – they're not like, "Hey, are you
10 wearing make-up?" They're like, "Hey, did you get some sun?" It was a wild experience and so I
11 posted about it there on the discussion . . . this big three paragraph ramble and June sends me a
12 message to be like, "Oh, my God, can you tell me more about this? I want to do this." We
13 exchanged a few messages a couple times a month maybe and it was always me going, "Hey, did
14 you go buy make-up yet?" And she was always like, "No, I'm too scared."
- 15 JT: I wasn't out and it was just this thing that I kind of maybe wanted to do, but I couldn't figure out
16 a way to do it and be safe or possible. It just felt like this huge thing that was impossible and
17 you had done it and it was just so impressive and I was really interested in how you
18 accomplished that, fit it into your life and were OK with it. So, not just the practice of wearing
19 make-up, that's kind of trivial in itself, but this sense of ownership that you had over who you
20 were and asserting that publicly was really inspiring to me.
- 21 IW: So, Isabelle again in finishing the next part of the story, I contacted you around Thanksgiving of
22 last year because your mom was visiting and I wanted to make sure you were OK. We weren't
23 really friends yet, we were acquaintances, so you thanked me and said that you would tell me
24 how things went after Thanksgiving – and then you didn't.
- 25 JT: I'm so sorry.
- 26 IW: You didn't follow-up, that's OK.
- 27 JT: That's because it was a terrible week.
- 28 IW: Yeah, I know, but you should have told me about it.
- 29 JT: I should have.
- 30 IW: Yeah, well – you didn't know. So, then in February, just this past February . . . what, eight
31 months ago? Yeah, I sent you another message and then we started talking and chatting online
32 in Google Hangouts.
- 33 JT: Instead of doing the message board thing where you kind of have an inbox, I was like, "We
34 should just chat on our phones, that would be cooler." And we did, and it was just amazing
35 because we had so much in common to share and talk about and explore. It was my first

- 1 experience talking with another trans woman in a really deep sense and kind of bouncing ideas
2 off each other and talking about stuff that I didn't know – whether it was just me in my history
3 that I was experiencing and was totally foreign, or was it something that was more normal. And,
4 at the time that I had messaged you, I had come out and I had sent letters to my family and all
5 that stuff; I had checked off all the coming out stuff, but I still felt really not great. I felt like I
6 didn't really know what to do and how to do this and Ibbby was just really inspiring to help that
7 feel OK.
- 8 AJ: Oh, wow. So, you've been sort of like a big sister . . . ?
- 9 JT: A huge mentor. Yes, absolutely a mentor.
- 10 IW: You've helped me too, you really have. That first week, when we first started chatting, and we
11 couldn't stop.
- 12 JT: I know it was all day.
- 13 IW: All day, every day, to where it got to be sort of a problem with our wives.
- 14 AJ: Yeah.
- 15 JT: Yeah, "Come to bed, it's 2am."
- 16 IW: Yes. We just burned so bright and it's never really stopped. I just really feel like I've really come
17 up with you. Those first conversations on MetaFilter where I was like just starting to dip my toe
18 in and you were there, I thought you were too cool for me.
- 19 JT: I don't know why.
- 20 IW: Because you're so cool.
- 21 JT: Whatever.
- 22 IW: Oh, my God, you're so brilliant, you amaze me – you really do. I felt like, "Oh, I'm not cool
23 enough to talk to this person." And now that's all we do. You've been like an inspiration to me,
24 you've helped me so much. Yeah.
- 25 AJ: Wow, OK. Lovefest 2016 going on here. All right, to the extent that you're comfortable and this
26 question is for both of you but maybe we'll start with you, June, and then Isabelle you can chime
27 in. What medical interventions have you undergone on your journey towards expressing your
28 full female identity?
- 29 JT: HRT, so testosterone suppressant and estra.
- 30 AJ: OK.
- 31 IW: Yeah, same for me.
- 32 JT: Oh, and laser hair removal.

- 1 AJ: OK. Oh, and . . . just kidding.
- 2 JT: Yeah, I don't know why I forget that sometimes.
- 3 AJ: It's certainly is a medical treatment.
- 4 JT: Yeah.
- 5 AJ: So, what's that experience been like for you? How has hormones been for you?
- 6 JT: Really interesting. It's been a fascinating experience. There's not enough that's written about it
7 from the perspective of emotions and outlook on life . . . it's just . . . it's very medicalized right
8 now. There's the sense of here's the physical changes that happen and all that stuff is kind of
9 what you have from a doctor's office, but there's so much more to it in terms of feeling better
10 and feeling normal, for me at least. So, that's been a big part of it for me. And until meeting
11 you, there was no one to talk about that with or explore that with.
- 12 AJ: What about you, Isabelle? What medical interventions have you undergone?
- 13 IW: Similar. I didn't do laser hair removal, I did IPL at home.
- 14 AJ: IPL?
- 15 IW: Intense pulsed light. It's the same basic principle – use light to get the hair follicle really hot and
16 hope it dies. So, yeah, I got a home machine because I needed to do it on the cheap and it turns
17 out that's a much cheaper way to do it. It's been pretty effective for me. I actually started with
18 IPL well before I started on HRT . . . like seven months or so before. I was just like, "Get this shit
19 off me." I had always been really . . . my body hair has bothered me since it started growing in
20 and my facial hair was constant discomfort and there was no way that I ever got it to work until I
21 just zapped it off. So, yeah, after about seven months of that, I started on spiro and estrogen.
- 22 AJ: Spiro . . . like spironolactone.
- 23 IW: Sorry, yes – should I be more explicit?
- 24 AJ: You know, I'm just helping out . . . just keep talking.
- 25 IW: Spironolactone, sublingual 17 beta estradiol, finasteride, progesterone. I'm a very . . .
26 everything and the kitchen sink, just try it all. It's been really good.
- 27 AJ: Injections? Pills?
- 28 IW: Oh, yeah, pills – sublingual.
- 29 AJ: Pills, OK.
- 30 IW: You tried patches for a while.

- 1 JT: I did try patches, they were OK. It was hard to get stable blood levels so I did switch to
2 sublingual, oral, estradiol and that seems to be better. But, maybe I'll try injections if somebody
3 figures out how to make enough so that people can have a supply of it.
- 4 AJ: Ahh, yes. Speak about that – what's going on?
- 5 JT: So, there is . . . right now there is an issue with . . . a supply issue with the people who
6 manufacture the ingredients that go into the injectables. I'm not really sure where it stands
7 right now, last I checked there was an FDA approval awaiting a second supplier so that there
8 could be more in the U.S. I don't think it's like a global thing, it's just a U.S. thing. So, injectables
9 are not really available widely right now.
- 10 IW: Although, this is Isabelle, the shortage has been specific to estradiol valerate, right?
- 11 JT: Yes.
- 12 IW: I know some people . . .
- 13 AJ: Estradiol . . .?
- 14 IW: Valerate.
- 15 AJ: Valerate.
- 16 IW: Is that right? Yeah. But, there is another form that's actually available and Georgia just started
17 on it, she was telling me about it . . . I forget what it's called, but it's better in some ways – and
18 you can actually get it, which is really important.
- 19 AJ: I know there's a lot of concern because of . . . a lot of people feel like the injectable hormones
20 are more effective in terms of . . .
- 21 JT: Yeah, I mean, there's not a lot of . . . this is June speaking. There's not a lot of data about the
22 different forms that is like well-respected in medical communities, but anecdotally, certainly,
23 there's a lot of experience that the injectables are better. Maybe not even with effectiveness
24 but, for instance, if you're in a situation where you're on a dose that's going to require you to
25 take a lot of pills per day, that can feel kind of weird as well as potentially out you, so people
26 who are on injectables can take them less frequently and it's just less of a burden in their life
27 than other forms. So, it does kind of . . . it is feeling for a lot of different reasons than just that
28 it's more effective.
- 29 AJ: Any plans for any additional medical interventions.
- 30 IW: This is Isabelle – and yes.
- 31 AJ: And yes, she says.
- 32 IW: We've talked a lot about this. I went back and forth for a long time about genital surgery,
33 vaginoplasty, and for a while I'm like, "Well that just seems like a huge pain in the ass."

- 1 AJ: No pun intended.
- 2 IW: Oh, yeah.
- 3 AJ: A pain just below the ass, I would say.
- 4 IW: This is true. Bowel prep also doesn't seem super fun. So, yeah, but I've just kind of . . . I don't
5 know, I've just sort of had this shift with that where I'm like, "OK." But tucking also really sucks
6 and spiro also really sucks and so worst case, I have to dilate 15 minutes every day. I spend at
7 least 15 minutes waiting to finish peeing because I need 300 milligrams of spiro every day and . .
8 . yeah.
- 9 AJ: So, it makes you urinate a lot?
- 10 IW: A lot, and it takes a long time. Yeah, it's a real pain. And honestly, for a while, I'm like . . . I've
11 been on HRT for shit . . . for a while, like over a year. And honestly, it's cute . . . my junk is cute,
12 but objectively I think OK, something that cute should exist in the world but it doesn't really
13 need to be attached to me, I don't have . . . no, no. I remember, as a child, just wondering like,
14 "Hey, what is this and where is the real thing? Where's my fucking vagina? When is that going
15 to grow in?" So, why fuck around with what I have when I can have something better. So, yeah,
16 I've come around and I've discovered that there is a capable surgeon not far away from my
17 home in New York City and I've been meaning to give the office a call, I just haven't yet but I will.
- 18 AJ: Yeah. Will your insurance at your job cover that?
- 19 IW: Yes. I mean that's basically required now – even if policies say they don't cover it, they all pretty
20 much do.
- 21 AJ: Well, you have to go through some legal haggling to make it happen.
- 22 JT: Yes, a lot.
- 23 AJ: But, for the most part, many will cover it.
- 24 JT: It's getting better, for sure.
- 25 AJ: How about you, June? What's your plans for the future if you don't mind discussing?
- 26 JT: I'm not as sure, but we'll see. I don't know – I'm not sure yet.
- 27 AJ: OK. Have either of you experienced any challenges with institutions, the criminal justice system,
28 schools . . . I don't know, at the restaurant? Have you experienced street harassment or
29 violence or anything like that?
- 30 IW: Do you want to go first?
- 31 JT: This is June speaking. I wasn't out publicly until I moved here to Minneapolis and . . .
- 32 AJ: When did you move to Minneapolis?

- 1 JT: I moved here in July of 2015.
- 2 AJ: Where did you move from?
- 3 JT: I moved from North Carolina.
- 4 AJ: OK, so you're a very new Twin Citian?
- 5 JT: Yeah, a fairly new resident. I don't have that much experience with street harassment, in
6 general, but certainly it seems like Minneapolis has been a pretty good spot for queer people, so
7 far. Or, I've just found pockets that are good. I work with amazing people and it was my first
8 job interview out and it was really hard to get through, but it was amazing. They're awesome,
9 and the university has been awesome.
- 10 AJ: So, where do you work?
- 11 JT: I work at the Minnesota Population Center with the University of Minnesota.
- 12 AJ: OK. What's your job?
- 13 JT: I work as a systems administrator in the IT, Information Technology, group. Keep the servers
14 running.
- 15 IW: You do more than that.
- 16 JT: I do.
- 17 AJ: For the University or just for MPC?
- 18 JT: Just for MPC.
- 19 AJ: That's awesome.
- 20 JT: And your help with policies and what not has been hugely and personally helpful with the
21 University system.
- 22 AJ: Well, I'm glad that I could help, that's what we're here for. Any challenges at all in your life,
23 Isabelle, around institutions?
- 24 IW: Sure. I mean, I'm pretty lucky in that most people mistake me for a cis woman.
- 25 AJ: You have very much what we call passing privilege.
- 26 IW: It's true. It's true. That's definitely a thing. I don't know, it's weird because it is a very
27 conditional privilege and I do feel kind of uncomfortable about keeping that a secret, but in sort
28 of casual situations, obviously I'm not going to out myself to every stranger. But, yeah, so most
29 of the shock, most of the problems that I've encountered have been as a woman rather than as
30 a trans woman, including street harassment and . . . you know, many different forms of street
31 harassment – cat calling and men leering and leaning and getting very close and not knowing
32 when to leave me alone. I've had drunk men walk up to my wife and I having brunch and try to

- 1 hit on us and we're like, "Well, actually we're married." And he was like, "Oh, so both of you
2 then." And I'm like, "Dude, go away." And, of course, that doesn't work. Institutionally, I've
3 had some borderline shitty experiences with the Post Office trying to get my passport changed.
4 Nothing that put me at risk, but just ridiculous. I walked up to hand the guy my application and
5 he's like, "Oh, so you're transgender." And I'm like, "Yes," and he says, "Good job." And I'm
6 like, "Good job at what? Not being too tall?"
- 7 AJ: Right, yeah.
- 8 IW: But, for the most part I've been really, really lucky with that.
- 9 JT: Yeah, I would say the same.
- 10 AJ: No negative police interactions, no negative medical doctor interactions?
- 11 IW: I've had doctors say dumb things, but I always get the care that I need. And we're white, so
12 being white kind of makes it a lot easier with the police, in particular.
- 13 AJ: Ahh, yeah. Speaking as a Black trans woman, I think I can say that it's a different challenge for
14 women of color . . . trans women of color.
- 15 IW: Definitely.
- 16 AJ: Wow. Speaking of that, what do you think some of the challenges for the broader transgender
17 community are? And maybe we'll start with June.
- 18 JT: I have been really impressed with younger trans people, like now teens and early 20s age kids
19 now have so much more as far as information and access to other queer people. So, trans
20 people today have just been so impressive to me and the stuff that they are able to talk about
21 openly with each other. That makes me feel really hopeful for the future of transness, at least in
22 America. I'm cautiously optimistic about policy and legal improvements, but it seems like it's
23 always on a knife's edge and there's always this constant throwback to public referendums on,
24 "Should trans people even be trans? What do we think about that?" That's just really
25 exhausting. But, I'm really, really hopeful that that's getting better and there's just so much
26 more as far as groups working on stuff and political action committees and advocacy groups
27 working for trans people and working with trans people that were just not even remotely
28 possible when I was looking for this stuff early on. I feel really hopeful about it, yeah.
- 29 AJ: Cool. How about you, Isabelle?
- 30 IW: Sure – all of that basically, but also, I do think . . . we've talked about this a lot, we've been really
31 frustrated by the medical situation where there's no real data, it's all anecdotes, there's more
32 information in the community than there is in the medical literature. And, nobody is bothering
33 to really study it and, when they do, it's tiny sample sizes.
- 34 AJ: Study what exactly?

- 1 IW: Particularly drug effects. Like progesterone is a great example of where every doctor will tell
2 you, “Oh, it doesn’t help with your breasts, it doesn’t help breast development.” But the study
3 that they’re referring to had a sample size of what? Seventeen across both the positive and the
4 control group – like really, really tiny studies and they’re extrapolating that into care for millions
5 of people. It’s just really weird how nobody seems to care or like with the injectable estrogen
6 shortage where it’s like actually . . . that shouldn’t have gone on for as long as it did, we’re
7 insignificant to the broader medical community and that carries over into research.
- 8 AJ: Do you think that has anything to do with sexism?
- 9 IW: Possibly. That’s really complicated, right? Because to analyze whether or not there is an
10 element of sexism in there, or at least certain forms of sexism, you’d have to look at the
11 corresponding situation for trans men. But, actually, injectable testosterone hasn’t had a
12 shortage, its effects are pretty clear, its not like . . . it’s sort of a medically simpler situation and
13 there are other issues there, obviously, like surgical coverage for mastectomies and that’s
14 complete bullshit that that’s not . . . that they’re still fighting against that, that they’re still trying
15 to police our bodies.
- 16 JT: This is June. At a previous job, I worked with groups doing clinical research and I would
17 absolutely say that sexism plays a huge role – sexism and heteronormativity, in the way that
18 research is designed and funded and supported and published is huge in terms of
19 disadvantaging research towards minority populations, but specifically women as a group, as a
20 whole, aren’t studied. Research is done on men and backfilled with assumptions about how it
21 would affect women. The idea that there are participants who are not cis and heteronormative
22 is still very often edge, in the special projects kind of area, instead of as a core part of any kind of
23 normal research at all. And, the groups that do this work, there’s a lot of implicit bias stuff that
24 happens with groups of cis het people, because that’s the norm doing this research and not
25 really even thinking about it, not as an intentional thing necessarily, but it’s just the matter of
26 the fact that they don’t believe that that’s a thing that they have to study.
- 27 AJ: Wow. Have there been times when someone has been really super helpful in terms of helping
28 you to become more sure-footed on this journey, this transgender journey?
- 29 JT: Oh, my gosh – so many people. I have so many great people in my life that have helped me,
30 given me space and helped me figure this out. I couldn’t even name them all, but it’s been huge
31 to have that sense of friendship that I can rely on for that. Absolutely.
- 32 AJ: June, who was the first trans person you ever met?
- 33 JT: Met in person? Was it you?
- 34 IW: That can’t be.
- 35 JT: That I was aware of . . . it can’t be. That’s an excellent question that I haven’t really thought
36 about. I’m not sure. I’m not sure . . . it seems weird that that would be Isabelle, but it might be.

- 1 IW: You're definitely the person that I spent the most time with. We live what . . . 1500 miles apart,
2 and yet . . . yeah.
- 3 AJ: Isabelle, you don't have very many transgender friends?
- 4 IW: Actually, I do. The trans community in New York City is not bad.
- 5 AJ: It's pretty big. I've been in New York quite a bit and there's a lot of trans activism going on and
6 trans community.
- 7 IW: It's a little geographically defused because New York City pulls people from long distances in
8 every direction. But, yeah, no – I have some really great friends. Emma, who you met when you
9 visited New York.
- 10 JT: She's awesome.
- 11 IW: Yeah, that's been a really great experience. My wife and I got to take her out on her first day
12 out as herself shopping.
- 13 AJ: Wow.
- 14 IW: Yeah, it was really fun. There are a bunch of local people.
- 15 JT: You know a ton on Twitter.
- 16 IW: That's true.
- 17 JT: You're like an ambassador for trans people – a huge mentor.
- 18 IW: I guess, maybe. I don't know. I do try to help as many people as I can. I've been offering voice
19 training to people over Skype and that's been really rewarding. It's something that when I was
20 teaching myself, I was really invested in it and it's something I really, really enjoyed. I put so
21 much time and so much effort into it, and I loved the work and the process of learning. I'm
22 discovering things and figuring out . . . I had no idea. It seemed impossible, it feels like magic
23 that you can practice and change the way you speak and I've just been trying to share that with
24 people.
- 25 AJ: Give us some tips.
- 26 IW: Oh, sure. Wow, OK – there's a lot. First things first, most people don't really breathe as
27 efficiently as they could when they speak and if you're going to be pushing the limits of your
28 voice, you have to breathe like a singer. So, you have to take your breath from your diaphragm,
29 not your chest. When most people breathe they puff all this up and it makes everything really
30 tight and it's exhausting and it's not that efficient. So, proper breath . . . like, if I just kind of . . .
31 this isn't even right . . . somewhere down, so you can get this resonance . . . that's not even low
32 enough. I have a hard time doing my own voice. So, you have to pull . . . literally put your hands
33 on your body and make weird sounds until you figure out what it feels like to have your
34 vibration come from here and not from here. And also, just listening and trying weird . . . you

- 1 have to sound bad. This is the thing that one of my singing teachers told me – practice is about
2 sounding bad so that you can sound good. So, you just have to be willing to make bad weird
3 noises that you don't like and just get used to that.
- 4 AJ: Bad . . . which kind of noises?
- 5 IW: Weird noises.
- 6 AJ: Oh, weird.
- 7 IW: So, just recording yourself and getting used to the way you sound and being able to map a
8 sound to what other people hear to what you hear in your own skull, and what it feels like
9 experientially, physically, muscular stuff and being able to understand if it feels like this so it will
10 sound like that. That takes a lot of practice. Most people, when they hear a recording of
11 themselves, they are like, "Oh, that's not my voice." I don't have that because I've listened to
12 recordings of myself so much.
- 13 JT: You spent a lot of time on it, though.
- 14 IW: I did. I loved it, I love doing it, I love doing it for other people.
- 15 AJ: So, do you charge a fee for your services?
- 16 IW: No. I thought briefly about . . . I love it so much and was like, "This would be great if this could
17 be my job," but I don't know . . . so many trans women, the community in general, there's a
18 poverty problem and I'm like why would I be taking money out of the community when I am
19 personally fully capable of getting steady work and putting money into the community instead.
20 I would be very hesitant to take money for helping another trans woman, that just doesn't feel
21 right to me.
- 22 AJ: OK, very good. What do you guys think the relationship is between the G, the L, and the B to the
23 T?
- 24 IW: Oh, God. You should go first.
- 25 JT: It's been very . . .
- 26 AJ: This is June.
- 27 JT: Yes, this is June speaking. It's been very difficult for me to feel a part of the GLB part of the
28 community, even though I identify as lesbian, because there is just this huge historical animosity
29 or . . . I don't even know what the right word is. It's just like this constant sense of being thrown
30 under the bus all the time. Often you'll see GLBT or LGBT on some marketing or some group's
31 identity, and the T is just . . . they don't have any idea why it's there, it's just they heard the
32 letters and they just added it. It's very infrequent that I've come across groups that are GLBT or
33 LGBT and they actually mean T. And it seems like it might be getting better, I don't know . . . I'm
34 kind of really worried about legislation right now as far as bills prohibiting trans people from

- 1 using public accommodations or clarifying a lack of regulations as excluding trans people from
2 public accommodations.
- 3 AJ: Yeah, that's a big deal in the state you just moved from – what the hell is going on in North
4 Carolina?
- 5 JT: It's a huge deal. North Carolina's HB2 is awful, of course, but it's concerted and it's part of this
6 very planned effort by conservative groups . . .
- 7 IW: ADF.
- 8 JT: ADF, specifically – Alliance Defense Fund.
- 9 IW: Americans Defending Freedom – some bullshit.
- 10 JT: Some eagle and American flag logo. Anyway, it's a group that basically plans the eradication of
11 trans people and gay people and pushes legislation into favorable legislatures and gets it passed
12 and gets ordinances in place and astroturfs local people, like up here in Minnesota, that farmer
13 dude who went to a bunch of house committee meetings and freaked out about trans people
14 and made it this big issue. So, they're pushing all this stuff and trans people, being a small
15 percentage of the population are relying on allies in the truest sense of the word to help them
16 with this stuff. So, political action and lobby groups and people who are oriented towards
17 justice, we're relying on them to stand up for us because there aren't enough of us to do it
18 ourselves. Right now, it's really touch and go with LGBT groups, considering whether it's
19 politically advantageous to push for public accommodation laws as a line in the sand, or is it
20 going to be something they want to kick further down the road.
- 21 AJ: Where do you stand on that in terms of . . .? Because the argument is we can get some
22 protections now and then we'll come back and fight for transgender people later.
- 23 JT: Yeah, I do understand the political calculus that's going on and why people would want to do
24 that from a tactical perspective. Me personally, I am way on the side of no, that's not
25 acceptable, because, to me, public accommodation is everything – that's more important than
26 protecting me on the job. If I can't get to my job, if I can't be in public, then it's . . .
- 27 AJ: Yeah, right – it's useless for me to have a job.
- 28 JT: I have a lot of appreciation for people who do feel like that's the right tactical move – like maybe
29 they've really done the test and they've decided that this is the best move to make. I don't
30 think it is. I think it gives the conservative groups too much ammunition to circle back and take
31 things away. A lot of the stuff that we enjoy as trans rights right now are executive actions as a
32 result of the Obama Administration and that could be easily wiped out if there's not actual
33 federal legislation that protects trans people. So, I'm really not interested in teaming up with
34 groups that are going to play that game rather than wholeheartedly support us right now. I
35 don't feel like that is safe right now.

- 1 IW: Yeah, this is Isabelle. Yeah, I do find . . . like the politics have been, honestly, really baffling.
2 Human Rights Campaign on our side on this.
- 3 AJ: I know, this is weird.
- 4 JT: So weird.
- 5 IW: Trans Equality being an incrementalist organization when the last time we passed any legislation
6 like this was what - 2004? So, they're saying we can wait a decade on public accommodations
7 and for 10 years you can have a job, but if you're a trans woman at your job, you have to use the
8 men's room. It's like, "What? Who is that actually serving?"
- 9 AJ: And I just want to clarify, NCTE is the National Center for Transgender Equality.
- 10 JT: Correct, yes.
- 11 IW: It's just so bizarre how the politics are playing out and they're basically retreating and protecting
12 housing and jobs which are, of course, profoundly important, but notably cover . . . if you look at
13 who is affected by public accommodations, it's dominantly trans people. If you look at who is
14 affected by employment and housing, well that's any queer person. They're currently not
15 protected in most states. It's kind of suspicious that they're doing the thing that helps gay and
16 lesbian and bisexual people and skipping the thing that's specific to transgender people.
- 17 JT: This is June speaking again. It reminds me of when I was watching a documentary about trans
18 women, mostly trans women, doing on-the-ground work in Washington to go to legislator's
19 offices and push for the passage of . . . was it called the Equality Act at the time or was it
20 something else?
- 21 AJ: ENDA.
- 22 JT: Yeah, ENDA.
- 23 AJ: Employment Non-Discrimination Act.
- 24 JT: Yes, thank you. Do you remember the name of the movie, lbby?
- 25 IW: I don't – no, I don't.
- 26 JT: Citizen Lobbyist or something like that.
- 27 IW: Something like that; it was something very generic.
- 28 JT: Yeah, I apologize.
- 29 AJ: That's fine.
- 30 JT: It was like 2002 . . . 2004.
- 31 IW: Something like that.

- 1 JT: Yeah. I remember watching this group of women do this work and go to the HRC offices and
2 protest outside of them and make them talk to them and just how familiar it seems to now was
3 kind of terrifying. If I could have shouted backwards in time, it would be like, "Be more angry."
4 Oh, my gosh – thank you for doing the work but oh, my gosh, I am so, so sorry that it's not
5 better than it is now. It just feels like this huge boulder.
- 6 AJ: Wow, yeah. Well, that is going to be a big issue in the coming weeks and months and years,
7 unfortunately.
- 8 JT: Yes, it will.
- 9 IW: Can I take a sec to take that original question from a different angle?
- 10 AJ: Yeah, Isabelle – go ahead.
- 11 IW: So, politically the community is kind of shitty, obviously. It's a very mixed bag but I found
12 interpersonally, locally actual relationships with . . . I mean, a good chunk of my friends are cis
13 gender queer women and they are so good to me and I can talk to them. There is a great queer
14 tango scene in New York City that my wife and I were involved in for a long time . . . a while ago.
- 15 AJ: Tango, like with the rose and the . . .
- 16 IW: Well, no – nobody does the rose.
- 17 AJ: OK.
- 18 IW: That's very showey – we did Argentine tango, it's decidedly very simple and small and perfect –
19 and I loved it. The community there was great and it was . . . I might have been the only trans
20 person in our group, but they were all very accepting and I could be open with them. There's
21 this really weird contrast for me where every single person that I meet is great and then,
22 somehow, collectively, the community is not as good. Even within the trans community, things
23 get ugly.
- 24 JT: Really ugly.
- 25 IW: Really ugly.
- 26 AJ: Like what, for example?
- 27 IW: I think our favorite pastime is tearing each other down, basically, on the internet. Go ahead,
28 June.
- 29 JT: Speaking about the legislation thing, the tactics like I remember getting into several really
30 heated discussions with other trans women about whether that's a good idea or a bad idea. It
31 just feels really gross and not fruitful. So, yeah, the dreaded discourse, whenever that comes
32 up, as far as what does trans mean in terms of what words we use to describe it and who we
33 involve in our advocacy seems to quickly get heated.
- 34 IW: Yeah.

- 1 AJ: Who do you think belongs under the transgender umbrella? That seems to be changing a lot
2 lately so I'm interested in both of your guy's opinion.
- 3 IW: Do you want to go first?
- 4 JT: I don't feel like there's a limit. I'm excited to . . . like I was saying earlier about the younger
5 people now and what gender means to them and gender fluidity and how they embrace that. I
6 mean, it's really inspiring so I'm hopeful that it's a broad umbrella and is less like gatekeeper-y,
7 personally.
- 8 IW: This is Isabelle. I think I broadly agree and there are some weird corner cases of people who
9 frankly do fall under the umbrella of people who are served by transgender activism, but
10 personally don't want to be under that umbrella. I mean, Julia Serano talked a lot about the
11 division between an identity label and an umbrella term and I do feel like people often . . .
- 12 AJ: What is the difference?
- 13 IW: Sure. I mean, OK. Sure . . . so, somebody who falls under an umbrella is essentially served by
14 that community so if you . . .
- 15 JT: And works to improve that community.
- 16 IW: Exactly, but you don't necessarily have to take that label for yourself.
- 17 JT: Sure.
- 18 IW: So, unlike Julia Serano who also has opinions about this . . .
- 19 AJ: Who would that apply to?
- 20 IW: There are lots of bisexual people who don't feel comfortable using that word for themselves –
21 lots of bisexual and pansexual women calling themselves queer women because there's
22 sometimes a stigma attached to that within the community. So, sometimes, even though
23 somebody falls under an umbrella, they don't want to use the word for themselves. So, within
24 the trans community, there is . . . I don't know, the intersex community seems, in my
25 experience, split about 50/50 on whether they want to be under the umbrella. And maybe that
26 50% split is the intersex people who are also trans, whose birth assignment or whatever . . .
- 27 AJ: Because that's a possibility, right?
- 28 JT: Absolutely.
- 29 IW: Plenty of people, sure. Avery Edison, Cat Graffam, the painter.
- 30 AJ: I'm sorry . . . because my transcriptionist is going to be like, "What did she say?" I'll be like, "I
31 don't know." So, somebody . . . Addison, you said.
- 32 IW: Oh, gosh. Avery Edison and
- 33 AJ: Avery Edison.

- 1 IW: Yeah, she's a comedian. Intersex, androgen insensitivity, but assigned male and she is a
2 transgender woman. I personally think she's hilarious. Her humor isn't for everybody but I think
3 she's really smart and . . . her humor is pretty dark but she's very brilliant. She was sort of one
4 of my early inspirations, one of my role models and one of the people that I looked up to when I
5 was trying to figure myself out at first.
- 6 AJ: Cool.
- 7 JT: And the second name you mentioned was Catherine Graffam G-r-a-f-f-a-m. She's a trans
8 woman artist but also intersex and really inspiring.
- 9 IW: Yeah.
- 10 AJ: So, what about drag queens. That is being slowly being pushed out of the umbrella.
- 11 IW: Yeah. This is Isabelle . . . I'm just going to say it's complicated. Plenty of drag queens are also
12 trans, but plenty aren't. I feel like maybe in this case, to the extent that somebody performs
13 drag, there are not really affected by the same issues that affect the transgender community at
14 large, like when you have the option of switching back – of saying, "Well, I'm not a woman so
15 public accommodations don't really affect me." Like, you can take the costume off, right,
16 because that really changes things. I can't ever go back to the safety of being a man, I just
17 couldn't – it would destroy me. So, I do think that that is a substantially different situation; the
18 fact that it is explicitly . . . the people for whom it is explicitly just performative, I do think they
19 do fall in sort of a separate category, but I understand that can be a controversial opinion.
- 20 JT: My experience with drag only is fairly small in terms of direct experience, but I remember pretty
21 starkly one of the first times that I went out as me with my wife. We went to a club and there
22 was a drag performer there, a drag queen, and it was very notable because this is like this thing
23 that was very show-y for people who were participating as audience and there was absolute,
24 complete agreement from the audience and the place that was putting on the show that she's
25 doing a show and pronouns are she and everything is great – no problems . . . except that I was
26 harassed in the bathroom downstairs – because, "There's some guy in the bathroom." That
27 makes no . . . it's right there, it's right in the same space as this thing going on and people were
28 like, "Yeah, great." I don't know – it felt like a microcosm of how drag kind of can be damaging
29 for trans women who are just trying to live their lives and not perform this show for everybody.
30 But, of course, everything Isabelle said as well, I would say.
- 31 AJ: Have either of you either worked for or volunteered for a trans or LGBT organization?
- 32 JT: I'm on the Trans Commission here at the U.
- 33 AJ: This is . . . June.
- 34 JT: June speaking, yes.
- 35 AJ: You're on the Trans Commission?
- 36 JT: I am.

- 1 AJ: What is that like?
- 2 JT: It's pretty cool. It's like coming back from apparently some rough times so we're trying . . .
- 3 AJ: A bit of a hiatus or . . .
- 4 JT: Get more organized. We have a lot of new members that are excited, so we're hoping to
5 capitalize on that and use it for some good stuff.
- 6 AJ: Is it mostly U of M staff or students? What's the make-up nowadays?
- 7 JT: I think most of it is staff right now, though there was one student at the last meeting that I went
8 to and there was a specific agenda item about trying to increase student involvement. I'm not
9 sure how that's going to go, that's like right now – so, we'll see. I'm totally new to it, so I'm just
10 excited to be a part of it. And, I've had some initial talks with different groups here – like
11 OutFront Minnesota. Having just moved here, I don't really know much about the queer groups,
12 but I'm trying to learn. I've done some work with a local clinic to kind of help their doctors learn
13 more about trans people and help with some policy decisions with Allina Health Systems to
14 improve guidelines for care.
- 15 AJ: That's pretty awesome – sort of as a solo artist.
- 16 JT: Yeah, me and a friend who works with the clinic have been working on policies and procedures
17 and updating them to modern terms and being more sensitive and aware of being respectful.
- 18 AJ: That's incredible. What about you, Isabelle?
- 19 IW: Yeah, I'm not as awesome as June – she's incredible. I'm just . . . I mostly just work directly,
20 interpersonally. I'm very into trans mom-ing for people. That's something that I get a lot of joy
21 out of, so mostly that's what I do. I don't think I've . . . have I ever gotten at all politically
22 involved? I've been meaning to, but it's also a really big imposing subject with all this
23 bureaucracy and all these structures that I don't understand or really know anything about.
- 24 AJ: Yeah, it's work.
- 25 IW: You've done a great job of navigating that, June.
- 26 JT: I read a lot of angry letters.
- 27 IW: I've been too scared to even try, really. It's just so intimidating. But also, I'm just already very
28 busy just doing all the one-on-one stuff – it's hard to make time after work and four hours of
29 voice lessons a week and seeing if I can squeeze in more. And, just supporting people when
30 they're feeling really shitty about things.
- 31 JT: That's hugely important.
- 32 AJ: Yeah, that's huge – it absolutely is. What do you guys think the agenda should be for the
33 transgender community moving forward? You kind of talked about this a little bit, but I just
34 want to get a little more specific.

- 1 IW: Yeah, this is Isabelle. I do think . . . yeah, so there's the immediate stuff where people are
2 actively suffering and it's the stuff that's politically hot right now . . . bathrooms and housing and
3 employment. Those need to be fixed, all of them, as soon as possible.
- 4 AJ: I'm just going to throw in transgender women of color getting murdered, which is kind of a big
5 deal.
- 6 IW: Yeah, I was going to touch on that. I do think . . . that's a really hard issue to solve because it
7 intersects with race and that's a massive problem in this country in a lot of ways. There are so
8 many things that dominantly affect women of color – like imprisonment and trans women being
9 thrown in men's prisons, sometimes for just defending themselves. It's atrocious.
- 10 AJ: Yeah, I just saw *Free CeCe*, the movie, this past weekend – one of those women who was
11 defending herself and subsequently incarcerated.
- 12 IW: Yeah, it's heartbreaking, but what . . .
- 13 JT: And even beyond just defending, but surviving – like so much about surviving is criminalized for
14 trans people, trans women of color specifically.
- 15 IW: Sure. I mean, are you talking . . . this is Isabelle, specifically about sex work?
- 16 JT: Yeah, specifically.
- 17 IW: Yeah. It's just . . . I don't know, these are huge problems that have been part of this country's
18 history from the very beginning and dismantling them . . . it doesn't feel impossible, but it feels
19 like the work of a generation. It's work of now so many generations . . . it feels almost arrogant
20 to think that this generation, however great we are, however aware we think we are, I think
21 we're up against this massive engrained hatred and I don't know. People have theories about
22 how you undo that and there's the whole Harvey Milk narrative where you just come out and
23 now your friends and family know a gay person so maybe they'll be less shitty. But that only
24 takes you so far, especially with race where . . . OK, there are parts of the country where
25 nobody, where everybody only ever sees white people. But, I don't think merely introducing
26 yourself to those people as a person of color, I don't know how far that would get you honestly.
- 27 AJ: Changes their hearts and minds – yeah, it really doesn't.
- 28 IW: No. there's a part of me that just feels like America is broken and we just need to . . . to solve it
29 and start over, there's no way to pay back the legacy, the damage that we've done, and
30 relatedly, indigenous communities and the destruction of two-spirit identities is another
31 important intersection where, yeah . . .
- 32 JT: Well, gender as a whole thing is like this colonial legacy of oppression that's just . . . I mean, the
33 gender binary. It's just awful.
- 34 IW: Yeah, like white supremacists and so-called white nationalists and whatever bullshit they call
35 themselves to make themselves feel good about it – or even white genocide. I'm like, "Sure,

- 1 let's do that, let them fix things." Yeah, just like, "Let's breed ourselves out of existence, that
2 would be OK, everybody would be better off."
- 3 JT: I mean, yeah, we've pretty much fucked everything up.
- 4 IW: OK, so that's the white guilt portion.
- 5 AJ: I'm not saying that.
- 6 JT: I said it.
- 7 AJ: I just want to be clear here.
- 8 IW: Yeah . . . no, whatever.
- 9 AJ: Even though it's hard to disagree, but I don't think white genocide is the answer, personally.
- 10 IW: Well, white genocide and the way that white supremacists mean it which is like calling diversity
11 white genocide and worrying about miscegenation and I'm like, "No, that's kind of OK – diversity
12 is really great."
- 13 JT: Yeah, this whole sense that equality is somehow oppressive to white people is insane.
- 14 AJ: Sure.
- 15 JT: That's ridiculous.
- 16 AJ: Well, where do you see the trans community in 50 years from now?
- 17 JT: I have . . .
- 18 IW: June, that's June.
- 19 JT: Yes, sorry, that's June speaking. I've mentioned to Isabelle that I see larger and larger
20 percentages of trans people being self-identified and recognized in a census sense as where
21 we're going 50 years from now. I think there's way more trans people than even trans people
22 now would say there are because of that legacy of oppression from a whole society suppressing
23 this idea that you can be trans. So, I am very hopeful that there will be a lot of trans people in
24 50 years and that will be an OK thing to be and that it will be weird in the same way that it's
25 weird for kids now to learn about slavery as a real thing – that their not very distant
26 relationships experienced. I'm hoping that people 50 years from now will be similarly
27 embarrassed about and feel disgraced by the idea that that was OK to oppress trans people in
28 the way that they have been.
- 29 AJ: OK. What about you, Isabelle?
- 30 IW: Sure. Wow, I don't know. I do think you're right in terms of the percentage of the population.
31 The best study we had was about one-third of a percent, and now it's about two-thirds of a
32 percent, and I'm like my guess would probably be closer to 2% altogether, if people would just
33 feel comfortable coming out of the shadows.

- 1 AJ: Minimally, right?
- 2 JT: Yeah. I'm very optimistic.
- 3 IW: You said 5%, I think that's probably shooting a little higher but somewhere in the low single
4 digits. I'm like that's a real political force . . . that extra, there's a threshold politically where I
5 think if we can get across the threshold where people say a third of a percent, or they did, and
6 now that gets translated into point-zero three of a percent, because people don't understand
7 percentages. If we can just cross that threshold into a whole number, it worked for gay men.
8 Maybe that's overly optimistic, maybe we . . . I don't know. Fifty years is a really long time.
- 9 JT: That's a really long time.
- 10 IW: But I do think so many trans people are around now and they're transitioning pretty young
11 some of them, and that's really going to change people's perceptions – I hope.
- 12 AJ: Yes, very young.
- 13 IW: We made a promise to each other, we're going to grow old.
- 14 JT: Seriously, that's huge.
- 15 IW: Yeah, the trans elders that are so hard to find . . . yeah. So, I think starting to amplify those
16 generational affects . . . there being enough of us to start passing things down, I think can really
17 make the difference.
- 18 JT: Yeah, stop being the pioneers.
- 19 IW: Yeah, right. If people don't have to feel like pioneers.
- 20 JT: We're still in that stage of everybody figuring it out for the first time themselves only – in
21 isolation.
- 22 AJ: Yeah.
- 23 JT: I hope that's better.
- 24 AJ: Well, I want to thank you both for being willing to be a part of this project. My sincere
25 appreciation to June Taylor and Isabelle Wedin.
- 26 IW: Correct.
- 27 AJ: Thank you so much for coming in. Until we meet again.
- 28 JT: Thank you.
- 29 AJ: Bye-bye.
- 30 IW: Thank you. Bye.