

Tamlyn Murray
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

December 27, 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 Tamlyn Murray -TM
3

4 AJ: So, hello. My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral
5 History Project at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries. Today is
6 December 27, 2016. We're actually on campus here at the University of Minnesota, and I am
7 here today with Tamlyn Murray. How are you, Tamlyn?

8 TM: I'm feeling very well.

9 AJ: Yeah, good. I'm glad to see you today. Can we start out with you just stating your name, spell
10 your name so we make sure we have the correct spelling?

11 TM: Sure.

12 AJ: And tell me what is your gender identity today, as you claim it, and what was your identity
13 assigned at birth, and the pronouns that you use?

14 TM: My name is Tamlyn Murray. It's not my legal name but that's going to change. T-a-m-l-y-n. The
15 last name is Murray, M-u-r-r-a-y. Let's see, the next question was?

16 AJ: Your gender . . .

17 TM: Assigned at birth?

18 AJ: Well, your gender assigned at birth and also your gender today.

19 TM: Oh, female but gender non-conforming.

20 AJ: OK.

21 TM: So we can talk more about that if you'd like.

22 AJ: Yeah, I would love to. So gender non-conforming female. And what was your gender assigned
23 at birth?

24 TM: Male.

25 AJ: And you said you use . . .?

26 TM: She/her pronouns.

27 AJ: She and her pronouns.

28 TM: Right.

29 AJ: Wow, that's cool. Tamlyn, one of the questions I use to just try to get our mind in sort of a
30 reminiscent kind of frame is tell me the first thing you remember in life. What's your first
31 memory?

32 TM: My very first memory was being in a tent and somebody opening up the tent and there was a lot
33 of bright sunlight coming in. It was very warm and this very pleasant smell coming in and my

- 1 mom's face. She was saying something to me and I was repeating it and she was laughing and
2 she kept saying it, and I was repeating it and she would laugh again. So I thought that we were
3 playing and the way I had it explained to me was we were in Miami and she was trying to teach
4 me how to say Miami. I kept saying, "Your-ami." And she said no, "It's Miami," and I would say,
5 "Your-ami."
- 6 AJ: Funny.
- 7 TM: So I don't know how old I was back then.
- 8 AJ: Yeah. So this was a family vacation?
- 9 TM: Yeah, we were visiting cousins back then.
- 10 AJ: Where did you grow up?
- 11 TM: I grew up in Centerville, which is kind of a town about 15 minutes north of St. Paul.
- 12 AJ: So it's in Minnesota?
- 13 TM: It is in Minnesota.
- 14 AJ: Centerville, Minnesota. I'm not sure if I've even ever heard of that town. What's it like?
- 15 TM: It's near Hugo, Circle Pines, Forest Lake. It's kind of a country town – a lot of farms, a couple of
16 bars downtown, and they're building strip malls now.
- 17 AJ: Wow.
- 18 TM: But I don't spend . . . if I do leave the house, I don't spend a lot of time there. But my goal, since
19 coming out, is to branch out and to move closer to my community.
- 20 AJ: And your community being . . .?
- 21 TM: The trans community, which seems to be located in the Twin Cities – Minneapolis area.
- 22 AJ: Yeah, there's a preponderance I think – at least in the region anyway. But I've been doing this
23 project, Tamlyn, and I can tell you that there are transgender people pretty much everywhere in
24 this state and all around the country. But I can certainly understand that there may not be the
25 kinds of resources available in the small towns across America and throughout the state of
26 Minnesota. What kind of resources are there in Centerville for trans-identified people?
- 27 TM: Zero.
- 28 AJ: Zero.
- 29 TM: Yeah, active antagonism.
- 30 AJ: Hmmm. So it's pretty . . . hostile to trans identity.
- 31 TM: It's pretty redneck – yeah.
- 32 AJ: You used the term redneck. What was growing up like in Centerville?

- 1 TM: I kept to myself. I stayed away from typical boy-related activities. Some people throw
2 themselves into some . . . AMAB people throw themselves into the male role and embrace it as
3 a way to . . . I never understood that so I can't really explain it. I, being a really shy person and
4 being uncomfortable in public – at least like in crowds and that sort of thing, just became a
5 hermit.
- 6 AJ: So even going to grade school and high school, you were pretty much a loner?
- 7 TM: Well, no – that's the interesting thing is I'm very creative and so I'm a writer and I was a painter
8 and an artist in grade school and so I did a lot of that, and I was also in theatre.
- 9 AJ: Oh wow.
- 10 TM: Wrote a lot of poetry, so I was reciting poetry as well. I can get up in front of people, but as long
11 as I have a role to play and I'm actively engaged with people, then I'm fine. But if I'm part of a
12 crowd and I'm just expected to be myself, it's very difficult for me. Now that has changed since
13 coming out.
- 14 AJ: Really?
- 15 TM: Yes.
- 16 AJ: How so?
- 17 TM: I don't feel that anxiety quite as much. There's a lot of other anxiety but the anxiety that I place
18 on myself for being me is lessened quite a bit because I now realize that that sense of otherness
19 was a result of gender dysphoria. I just didn't have a way of expressing it. A lot of people say
20 from birth that I knew I was a girl and . . .
- 21 AJ: Or a boy.
- 22 TM: Or a boy. I just knew that I wasn't a boy, I didn't know that I was a girl. I just knew that I didn't
23 fit the gender role and I wasn't going to play it. I didn't want to be socialized that way. But I
24 didn't have any words for it until recently. I started reading things and researching and came to
25 find out that I'm trans and then my life just flipped upside down – for the better. So here I am.
- 26 AJ: Wow. What was your family life like in Centerville? Did you have both parents around?
27 Siblings?
- 28 TM: My family life was good. Both my parents are alive and I do have siblings – I have two younger
29 sisters and two younger brothers.
- 30 AJ: Were they . . . you said you just came out or, I don't know, you've come out more recently in
31 your life. Was there any evidence of your gender confusion, maybe? You said you knew that
32 you were not a boy, but you didn't know exactly what you were.
- 33 TM: Right. Well they've suspected I was gay for a long time.
- 34 AJ: Were you harassed at all about that?
- 35 TM: Harassed? No.

- 1 AJ: Teased?
- 2 TM: Not by my family, no.
- 3 AJ: Not by your family – that’s good.
- 4 TM: No. And I lifted weights in school just as a way . . . and I took tae kwon do, just as a way to keep
5 those folks away – because I was harassed for a while in grade school and middle school. That
6 stopped happening after I learned how to take care of myself.
- 7 AJ: Do you think a part of that . . . at school, was a part of that related to your sort of gender
8 expression?
- 9 TM: Yeah, definitely. People who are more fluid in their gender expression, or more free or who
10 don’t conform to societal norms, are more susceptible to violence, more susceptible to sexual
11 predation and bullying.
- 12 AJ: Wow. When was the first time you realized that you were not a boy?
- 13 TM: I don’t know, maybe the fourth or fifth time I tried on my mom’s underwear. Aside from . . .
14 they were just really, really huge and I wished I had a pair of my own. But then I thought well I
15 can’t ask my mom my own pair because there’s an obvious boundary there. Yeah, I had been
16 corrected, shall we say . . . it had been reinforced . . . people who are assigned male at birth are
17 policed into conforming to that male role. I am very sensitive to those methods, especially as a
18 kid I was. I knew that that was what was going to happen. I just didn’t do that, didn’t bother
19 with it. But yeah, that was about it.
- 20 AJ: About how old were you at that point, do you think?
- 21 TM: We were still living in Brooklyn Center, before we moved to Centerville, so probably about four
22 or five.
- 23 AJ: When did you first realize you were trans?
- 24 TM: I came out to myself last year.
- 25 AJ: 2016 or 2015?
- 26 TM: 2015.
- 27 AJ: OK.
- 28 TM: I was on Tumblr and . . . at first I came out as non-binary because that seemed to be the closest
29 because I . . . the term woman didn’t resonate with me, there was a lot of societal implications
30 with the word woman and I’m still learning to own that. So for a while I was non-binary and
31 then I changed my name publicly to something else from what my dead name is. But being non-
32 binary didn’t quite fit and I felt that there was something else and so I tried some different
33 pronouns and then I tried she pronouns, and that felt right. So I explored that and here I am.
34 But going full binary didn’t feel right either, I don’t feel like being completely femme is right for
35 me either. So it puts me in kind of an odd situation because I don’t completely fit in with the
36 transgender narrative, at least as it was forwarded by the medical community some years ago –

- 1 the one that so many transgender people were forced to assimilate with in order to get their
2 medications and to be accepted by the trans community at large.
- 3 AJ: What is that narrative?
- 4 TM: That you have to be essentially seen as a gay male who wants to be a woman and that you have
5 to be a former cross dresser, that you have to have transitioned fully – meaning living as a
6 woman for this period of time and on hormones. That narrative has stuck and it's very
7 prevalent yet in the trans community, even though those medical standards have gone by the
8 wayside a lot of the trans timelines that are on the internet still follow that narrative.
- 9 AJ: Yeah.
- 10 TM: So, the people who are transitioning now who go online for resources are . . . first you go for
11 this, you start cross dressing and then you might do this, and then you might go for laser hair
12 removal if you've got the funds for it. That's another part of the narrative is having money and
13 privilege as well, is not everybody conforms to that standard narrative, not everybody has
14 access to health care.
- 15 AJ: Trans-specific health care you're referring to.
- 16 TM: Right.
- 17 AJ: Well, all health care but . . .
- 18 TM: All health care, but trans people in particular. I've got a few stories . . . most trans folks who
19 have been in the health care system have stories of being denied health care or being given the
20 runaround.
- 21 AJ: What about you? Have you experienced that when trying to access health care?
- 22 TM: Oh yeah. I can give you an example.
- 23 AJ: Yes, please.
- 24 TM: Well – and this person recently called me back to further embellish her story. I have been going
25 to a local clinic for bariatric weight loss. My insurance company approved the treatments and I
26 just have to be OK'd through this clinic's certification process so I have to see a nurse and a
27 doctor and a therapist.
- 28 AJ: Sure.
- 29 TM: So the nurse and the doctor were great, they used my pronouns, they addressed me as she. The
30 therapist dead named me, referred to me in the third person . . .
- 31 AJ: Not it.
- 32 TM: No, as Tom, which is my dead name. "Tom is this," or, "Tom will that."
- 33 AJ: Wow.

- 1 TM: As if I wasn't in the room. And, then she asked, "So do you feel like a woman in a man's body?"
2 Just out of nowhere, and this is an interview for bariatric surgery.
- 3 AJ: Right.
- 4 TM: And I just looked at her and I said, "You know, that's an odd question for bariatric surgery and
5 that's kind of an old-fashioned notion – that's not usually how it's described in the literature.
6 Gender dysphoria is this, this, and this." In the back of my head I'm thinking, "You're a trained
7 clinician, you should know this stuff."
- 8 AJ: Right.
- 9 TM: And she's in her early 30s.
- 10 AJ: So fresh out of school.
- 11 TM: Yeah. So anyway, I think OK – it's a mental slip-up, she's curious, she's got a trans person in
12 front of her, just dying to ask the question, it happens. So I just want to get the interview over
13 because she's the last person, the last link in the chain, and I have a disability and I need to
14 prove to her that I meet the criteria and that I'm not cuckoo and that she can't find fault in my
15 behavior or my being transgender in order to get this bariatric surgery. Well, she asked me
16 another invasive question – she says, "So do you plan on getting corrective surgery?" Again, just
17 out of the blue. And I said, "You know, that's a really inappropriate question." And I said it with
18 a straight face and tried to say it in a very forthright manner, but at the same time I was starting
19 to get mad because in the back of my head I'm thinking, "This is gatekeeping, something is going
20 on here – why is she asking me these questions?" Because she had . . . somehow, she was
21 asking me about the sexual abuse that I had experienced as a kid at the same time, and how she
22 had gotten a hold of those records, I have no idea. So she's asking about sex abuse, she's asking
23 about my being transgender and I'm wondering, "Is she equating these two?" A lot of anti-trans
24 people do. So I tell her, "That's a really inappropriate question." And she said, "I'm very sorry,
25 this is a quick interview and forgive me for asking an insensitive question. I just want to get
26 through this interview." And so forth.
- 27 AJ: Which was, again, insensitive.
- 28 TM: Yeah. And so I'm being a really meek and . . . I just didn't know what to say, I didn't know what
29 to do. She's got the power in the situation and if I act out, if I act like a crazy trans person . . .
- 30 AJ: Yeah, you don't get your surgery.
- 31 TM: Then I don't get my surgery – exactly. So I just let it slide and a couple days later I get a call
32 saying, "I'm sorry, but you're not right for surgery because you haven't been mentally stable for
33 X amount of time."
- 34 AJ: So they denied you?
- 35 TM: Yeah, they denied me. So I complained to their patient relations department and just gave them
36 a very detailed but objective blow-by-blow of what happened and tried to be as detail oriented,
37 and left out all of the emotional aspects. I talked it over with my therapist and tried to weed out

- 1 all of my emotional colorations of what had happened of the event. I thought I was being very
2 rational about it. And then I also went to my general practitioner and said, "Can we please take
3 a look at these notes by this therapist?" And so he opened up the notes and she had gone
4 through and wrote up psychotic and unstable and all of this other stuff, and I read the notes on
5 the screen.
- 6 AJ: Wow.
- 7 TM: So, she's clearly gatekeeping. I don't know what is going on there.
- 8 AJ: And all of this was related to your gender identity, you believe?
- 9 TM: She was fixated on my being trans. Yeah, I am certified disabled through the federal
10 government and through the state, but my disability is well controlled through meds and
11 therapy. So, the common place narrative of the crazy trans person is often times untrue. I think
12 the fact that trans people have mental illness is only correlated because trans people are more
13 likely to suffer abuse . . .
- 14 AJ: And trauma.
- 15 TM: And trauma, and they don't have mental illness because they're trans but because of the abuse
16 and the traumas that they suffer as a result of being trans.
- 17 AJ: Hmmm – that's very well stated. I just want to interject a little bit at this point that a really
18 significant reason for this project is to dispel the myths that there is one single story that all
19 transgender people relate to and there's multiple ways to express your gender and transgender
20 people are a multiplicity of ethnicities and sexual orientations and identities and so forth. So
21 that's a big part of this project, but I just wanted to hear your thoughts on what this single
22 narrative is.
- 23 TM: I can only speak about my experience . . .
- 24 AJ: Yeah, absolutely.
- 25 TM: My experience has been . . . the first thing I experienced was trans misogyny when I came out.
- 26 AJ: Can you define that for our . . . in your terms?
- 27 TM: It's mainly transphobia that is directed against trans women or people who are perceived to be
28 women. So it can happen to . . . primarily AMAB people, but also AFAB people. But . . .
- 29 AJ: And when you use those terms you mean assigned male at birth and assigned female at birth.
- 30 TM: Assigned female at birth, right. But, primarily trans women and trans feminine people. And, a
31 lot of policing from within the trans community? So that was discouraging, but I knew what my
32 identity was and so I wanted to explore that some more. So I started reaching out on social
33 media and found some avenues there and found some successes and some failures, but I did
34 make some good contacts. I've remained in contact with a lot of people from some early
35 experience there and so trans misogyny was the first part and the second part was the trans
36 narrative of the binary, the femme binary and going to various support groups you see differing

- 1 shades of that – some adhere to that very closely and some are more diverse as . . . let me just
2 speak about my passion.
- 3 AJ: OK.
- 4 TM: I think that's a better way to explain what the gist of the issue is. I'm passionate about all
5 transgender, non-conforming, gender queer people being represented. So when I publicly came
6 out and came into the public sphere and support groups and work and that sort of thing, I was
7 discouraged to see that not everybody was being equally represented. It was difficult for me
8 because I'm a shy person, but I also found a role to play. So being kind of an actor-type person,
9 when I have that role to play and I have the language, then I can advocate and so I've learned to
10 be more of an advocate and I'm not terribly good at it right now. But, I'm learning. So I've
11 made mistakes, but I've also heard the voices of people who are not being represented and
12 tried to bring those issues to the forefront – and it is difficult. Issues like people of color not
13 being heard or being turned away or being openly . . .
- 14 AJ: Discriminated against, maybe?
- 15 TM: Discriminated, or worse.
- 16 AJ: Harassed?
- 17 TM: Yeah, harassed. Non-binary people being . . . most of it is passive aggressive, but yeah – some of
18 it is open. I'm guilty of some of this too because I'm white, I grew up in a suburban environment
19 and came from a place of privilege, so a lot of this is engrained in the systemic white
20 supremacist environment that America has come to be.
- 21 AJ: Wow. Or yeah, I would argue that America has always been but . . .
- 22 TM: Well that's true, and that's something that I'm still learning and coming to terms with. But, it's
23 difficult for a lot of people to hear that, for a lot of white folks to hear that their actions may
24 have caused somebody to feel left out – or worse, that they may have cut someone off from
25 resources because of their own race and their reaction to the taboo against not talking about
26 race.
- 27 AJ: Wow – man, you're bringing up a lot of topics here. You mentioned internalized transphobia
28 when you talked about policing within the transgender community, I want to hear a little bit
29 more about that and what has been your experience. And then, I certainly want to get into this
30 issue around race and how that plays a role in gender expression and gender advocacy and
31 gender rights. And then, you also talked about being in this sort of sticky state by being sort of
32 gender non-conforming. So why don't we start there and then work our way back through
33 internalized transphobia and then sort of this race issue. How are you treated within the trans
34 community and within the broader LGBT community around your non-binary status? I know
35 there's some pretty strong arguments back and forth debate going on, particularly around issues
36 of the bathroom – that's kind of a big deal. Have you been experiencing challenges around that
37 or how are people within the community dealing with your gender non-conformity?

1 TM: Well, bathroom issues . . . I have my own bathroom issues. I'm agoraphobic, so I'm rarely out of
 2 the house so I have safe bathrooms that I go to. If I'm at work, I go to the bathroom when
 3 there's absolutely nobody there and I use the ladies room. The same with being at a coffee
 4 shop or a support group and those are really the only places I go . . . well, that's not entirely
 5 true, I go other places. I'll go to a movie, a matinee, but since coming out I've embraced the
 6 idea that I need to take more chances. But, getting back to being gender non-conforming, I
 7 haven't experienced a lot of push-back. Some people have asked questions. For example, one
 8 of my co-workers asked, "Do you prefer the men's or women's bathroom?" I said I prefer the
 9 women's bathroom and that was it. So, I'm out at work and I've only been mis-gendered a
 10 couple of times.

11 AJ: By staff or by patrons?

12 TM: By staff, patrons mis-gender me constantly because I don't have enough money to continue
 13 laser hair removal or electrolysis or facial feminization or anything like that. I have a wig but I'm
 14 not happy with it and I can't afford, really, to buy one. I have a beret that I liked to wear, but I
 15 dropped it, I think, on the driveway so I'm just kind of doing alfresco.

16 AJ: Alfresco. So there's this internalized transphobia that I think is a real thing. What about . . . you
 17 know, you talked about trans misogyny, what about Black trans women? Are they the sort of
 18 canary in the coal mine in your estimation?

19 TM: I'd say . . . yeah, Black, people of color, who are gender non-conforming, non-binary, trans
 20 women definitely experience the most marginalization. Again, I can only speak from the
 21 experience that I've had and witnessed the voices that I've heard, the people that have come to
 22 me and said, "I don't feel represented and is there anything that you can do for me?" And, it
 23 really comes down to a willingness on the part of the trans community to have the discussion
 24 and to break through the taboos about not talking about race and to take on an ownership
 25 about changing behaviors and . . . there's a lot of simple first steps that we can take, but there's
 26 a lot of hard work that needs to be done too. As far as being canaries in the coal mine, that's
 27 true in a lot of senses.

28 AJ: I want to turn a little bit, Tamlyn, to a little more personal . . . we've been talking about these
 29 broad issues, and I know you've said you haven't really had the resources to pursue electrolysis
 30 and facial feminization, have you . . . to the extent that you feel comfortable, have you
 31 undergone any other medical treatments towards your transition? And if not, do you plan to do
 32 some of those things?

33 TM: I have. I'm currently on estrogen and spiro and dutasteride, which is another kind of
 34 testosterone agones, and my results have been good. So no side effects really to speak of, side
 35 effects from the estrogen have mainly been kind of sexual dysfunction but my sexual desire was
 36 never really there to begin with. I was born with kind of a borderline intersexed condition so my
 37 drive was kind of not present. I identify as asexual on the asexual spectrum. I do plan to pursue
 38 more surgery whether or not that includes vaginoplasty, I'm not sure. I definitely want an
 39 orchiectomy because taking the T blockers . . . you know, I really don't want what's down there
 40 but, at the same time, I don't think I'm satisfied with the quality of the medical options that are
 41 out there – I think they're purely for cosmetic purposes at this point. I haven't come to an

- 1 emotional, psychological union at this point as to whether or not that's something that I really
2 want.
- 3 AJ: Sure – yeah, that's perfectly understandable. It's an irreversible decision to make, Tamlyn.
- 4 TM: That's another thing, another part of the narrative that doesn't get talked about, because, it's
5 something that anti-trans folks like to talk about, is the second guessing that people go through
6 gender confirmation is remorse or . . .
- 7 AJ: Regret.
- 8 TM: Regret. And it's not necessarily wishing that I hadn't done it or that they hadn't done it, but
9 maybe wishing for a different outcome or wishing things had been different or that they had
10 done something differently. I think the narrative is that you hear, "Oh, everything is great, it
11 couldn't be better, I'm happier than I ever have been." And you don't hear the outliers, you
12 don't hear the people, "Oh, I'm struggling with this because this part of my body is gone and I'm
13 dealing with this depression." "It's post-surgery, it's really rough on me." You're not allowed to
14 discuss those more constructive emotions because it's supposed to be this happy, wonderful
15 time that you've built up in your head as being so affirming.
- 16 AJ: Right.
- 17 TM: So, yeah, they're just part of the trans narrative that people adhere to that don't have to be that
18 way. I think by having non-binary, gender queer, agender – people who don't identify with a
19 gender, having those people part of the conversation enriches everyone's understanding of
20 what gender is all about. If it means that there isn't any one way to view a transition, it means
21 that you don't have to transition if you don't want to, it means that there are different ways to
22 navigate gender.
- 23 AJ: Sure.
- 24 TM: And that you're not locked into just this one narrow path.
- 25 AJ: Agreed. How did you come to the name Tamlyn?
- 26 TM: Good question. I wanted to stick with something that was vaguely Celtic because my name is
27 Irish and . . .
- 28 AJ: Is your cultural background Irish as well?
- 29 TM: Yeah, half Irish, half eastern European.
- 30 AJ: OK.
- 31 TM: So, when I was identifying as non-binary, I switched it to Tomas thinking it would be more
32 gender neutral. But Tomas means Thomas in most non-English languages.
- 33 AJ: Yeah, it's pretty gender specific.
- 34 TM: It's pretty gender specific. I soon came to regret that, but I liked the Tam part of it, people were
35 calling me Tam and that felt right. So I was looking through an old . . . kind of a surname

- 1 etymology thing that I found, and in a Scottish name guide I found the name Tamlyn, which it
- 2 turns out is the medieval diminutive of the name Thomas, which is my dead name. So it's . . .
- 3 Tamlyn, strictly speaking, is a boy's name, but it hasn't been used as a boy's name in centuries.
- 4 It's more commonly, these days, used as a girl's name and I just like it, so I'm claiming it as a
- 5 girl's name.
- 6 AJ: There you go – thank you.
- 7 TM: So that's how I got it. It's Scottish/English – kind of British, and I think I'll keep my last name.
- 8 AJ: And you're saying that you're going to pursue a legal name change?
- 9 TM: Yes.
- 10 AJ: Are you in the process of doing that now?
- 11 TM: I am – yeah. Talking to my doctor, I thought I had my letter but apparently they never wrote it.
- 12 So I'm in the process of getting that from them.
- 13 AJ: So you need a letter to go to the courts and judges?
- 14 TM: Well, I want to change my name and my gender marker at the same time.
- 15 AJ: OK.
- 16 TM: Because I need that change in order to change my passport, which I want to have changed
- 17 before the 20th of January, and I don't know if I can get all that done and through the courts
- 18 before the screaming orange Cheeto can sign his pen . . . take his pen to paper and sign all of our
- 19 rights away.
- 20 AJ: Right. Well, if you get it in the pipeline, if you get some appointments set up you may be able to
- 21 get it done. It might not be done by the 20th, but it's in process . . . do you think? Or, no?
- 22 TM: Yeah. I'm going to celebrate the remainder of the holidays in Wisconsin with my family and
- 23 then come back home and do the legal name change.
- 24 AJ: Wow. I know there's a number of clinics around that are helping people do that. Are you
- 25 accessing any of that at all?
- 26 TM: No. That would be good to learn about some of that.
- 27 AJ: Yeah. I've seen a few notices on my Facebook page that people are . . . I think OutFront
- 28 Minnesota is helping . . .
- 29 TM: Yeah, well those places I know about. Roxanne, who worked with OutFront, probably has some
- 30 resources so I can always contact them.
- 31 AJ: Wow, you say you identify as asexual. Have you . . . so that means necessarily not having sex.
- 32 TM: Yeah, there are a lot of misconceptions about being asexual.
- 33 AJ: OK.

- 1 TM: In my case it means that I enjoy sex but really only after I've formed kind of an emotional bond
2 with somebody.
- 3 AJ: Is that a demisexual?
- 4 TM: It might be demisexual – yeah. Or gray sexual or . . . I think it's demisexual. I'm not entirely sure
5 but yeah, there's a lot of misconceptions surrounding asexuality. Yeah, asexuals are not
6 included in the conversations on sexuality.
- 7 AJ: Yeah, because I think a lot of people just assume there's no sex.
- 8 TM: There's no sex, so why bother including us.
- 9 AJ: I was going to follow up and just . . . maybe it means no to little sex, but it doesn't mean that
10 you don't have relationships, I don't think. You can have relationships without them being
11 sexual and so, Tamlyn, who are you attracted to sexually? What's your sexual orientation in
12 terms of gender?
- 13 TM: I'm bisexual so I'm attracted to women and non-binary people and some men, some straight
14 men.
- 15 AJ: Sure.
- 16 TM: But mainly females, trans feminine, femme people, and some men.
- 17 AJ: Are you in a relationship now?
- 18 TM: No. I'm not in a relationship phase right now, but that's usually when something happens.
- 19 AJ: Have you ever been married?
- 20 TM: I have not. I've had relationships in the past but because I thought I was straight cis male, things
21 didn't go real well. I was trying to fit into a relationship where I was expected to act a certain
22 way and I wasn't acting that way. Like I told you before, I've never really conformed to those
23 roles.
- 24 AJ: Sure.
- 25 TM: And I've never expected myself to do that. So, yeah – the relationships break down after a while
26 and the conversation usually ends up like, "It's not you, it's me," or, "I've found somebody else,"
27 or, "It seems like you're not interested anymore." That sort of thing. But that's the case, most
28 relationships that a person goes through are total and utter heartbreaks until it's not.
- 29 AJ: Yeah, I guess I would say that's true for some people but we . . . is that your experience?
- 30 TM: My really limited experience – yeah. I've had a handful of relationships and . . .
- 31 AJ: And most of them have ended in heartbreak.
- 32 TM: Yeah.
- 33 AJ: Do you think that's related to your gender identity?

- 1 TM: It's more related to how much I invest in my relationships. I have a tendency to idealize, to kind
2 of fall in love with love and to really romanticize the relationship.
- 3 AJ: Not the person.
- 4 TM: Yeah, probably not as much. And when the person doesn't live up to those expectations then I
5 get really super let down.
- 6 AJ: Yeah. Have you ever been involved in any LGBT organizations or . . . as a volunteer or as work?
- 7 TM: I have not.
- 8 AJ: Haven't you? I thought you were a facilitator for the transgender project at . . .
- 9 TM: Oh yeah. I've facilitated for the Minnesota Trans Health Coalition.
- 10 AJ: I think that's an LGBT organization.
- 11 TM: Well, now that you mention it – yeah.
- 12 AJ: It's . . . trans is a part of that acronym, but transgender people can be bi as you are, and lesbian
13 or gay or heterosexual.
- 14 TM: Yeah, that's how I met Roxanne and a lot of . . . most of my contacts.
- 15 AJ: Who was the first transgender person you ever met?
- 16 TM: That I remember? That I knew was trans?
- 17 AJ: That you knew was trans, yeah.
- 18 TM: I'm trying to remember her name – she's got fantastic strawberry red hair and I could pull up
19 her name on Facebook, but she's got wonderful blue eyes and she's a great dresser. I'm going
20 to have to look her up.
- 21 AJ: Not Morgan?
- 22 TM: No, not Morgan – and her hair is black now.
- 23 AJ: Morgan O'Sullivan?
- 24 TM: No, no – I'm thinking . . . this is going to bug me.
- 25 AJ: Yeah, Morgan O'Sullivan is a pretty much a redhead, strawberry redhead. I don't think she's
26 going to change to black so we're probably thinking of a different person.
- 27 TM: I have a Facebook friend, Morgan, who has black hair.
- 28 AJ: Well, while you're looking that up, are you out to your family and friends?
- 29 TM: Well, I'm not out to my family. I'm out to everybody else.
- 30 AJ: So you said you're going to Wisconsin to celebrate Christmas in a couple of days.
- 31 TM: It could be my last Christmas with my family – yeah.

- 1 AJ: Do you plan to come out?
- 2 TM: Yes. Yeah, I've reached that place, and I've talked this through with my therapist, that place in
3 the valley where going back to the place of comfort has no reward and approaching that
4 uncomfortableness is a lot less scary and the danger of not doing so is greater than the damage
5 for staying in the closet.
- 6 AJ: So you're at that point, have you thought through what you're going to say?
- 7 TM: Yeah, I've got a letter drafted. So I'm going to submit a letter to my mom and I'm going to give it
8 to her and then wait however long it takes . . . it could take a week, it could take months until
9 she decides this is what I'm going to do. They're very conservative Catholic people. My mom
10 could be very understanding and say, "I love you, this is how it is and I've seen your panties and
11 your lady clothes in the laundry and I've known for months." Or she could say something
12 completely different, which I'm not going to think about.
- 13 AJ: How has it been . . . have you had any challenges with . . . you talked about the medical
14 institution and some of the challenges that you've had there, but other . . . like the police,
15 looking for employment or colleges, school institutions? Any negative experiences in that
16 regard?
- 17 TM: Related to being trans?
- 18 AJ: Yes.
- 19 TM: I'm sorry, I'm dividing my attention here.
- 20 AJ: I know, it's kind of hard to compete with Facebook – there's a lot more people out there than I
21 am.
- 22 TM: I'm just going to close this because my ability to pay attention to more than one thing is
23 somewhat limited. OK, so the question was have I experienced anything in relation to school
24 and . . . was it work?
- 25 AJ: Work, the criminal justice system, police departments . . . any of our societal institutions that we
26 interact with on a daily basis. Have you had any negative and/or positive experiences since
27 you've come out?
- 28 TM: I've kept myself in that safety bubble so I'm really only in queer safe spaces.
- 29 AJ: Makes sense.
- 30 TM: So I've elected to be in the negative places that I've put myself in and I've really only grown from
31 that, and I've gained a lot more positive out of it – like the people that I've met and the
32 experience that I've gained. So yeah, I'd have to say that I've gained a lot more positive than
33 I've experienced negative.
- 34 AJ: That's beautiful. What do you think the relationship is between the LGB and the T?

- 1 TM: I think that the T just kind of got lumped in there somehow. It's fortuitous for the trans
2 community that we're part of a larger marginalized community because we have, ostensibly,
3 advocates to speak on our behalf, right?
- 4 AJ: Theoretically.
- 5 TM: Theoretically. However, Gay, Inc., is throwing it's money into legislation that openly
6 discriminates against us, that encourages bathroom bills that overlook or openly discriminates
7 against our rights. So what are we supposed to do? We're openly derided for not advocating
8 for ourselves but we're such a small portion of the population that we need help, and we are, in
9 large part – as is most of America if you want to go to those lengths, part of the LGB spectrum.
10 I'd say most of America, that's being overly optimistic, but I think more people in America are
11 sexually fluid and just have never been open to do a little exploring.
- 12 AJ: Wow, that's a little optimistic, I would say – but yeah. Last question, Tamlyn. Where do you see
13 the transgender movement in 50 years from now?
- 14 TM: Fifty years? Wow. Fifteen years . . . well 50 years, I can just throw anything out there for 50
15 years, but trying to keep it in a realistic vein, I'd just like to see a world where the trans
16 experience is just part of the fabric of everyday life, or even celebrated – I mean, wouldn't that
17 be great.
- 18 AJ: That would be amazing. I think it should be.
- 19 TM: If it's up to me, the trans experience would be celebrated but I would settle for just being left
20 alone - but that's me. I'm learning to advocate for myself and to advocate for my rights and to
21 get out of my shell and not be under the heel of people who say, "You've got to conform to this,
22 you've got to be male, you've got to conform to this narrative, you've got to do it this way," and
23 to advocate for people who don't have a place. So, I'm learning to come out of my shell in a lot
24 of ways.
- 25 AJ: Wow. Well this has been a fascinating conversation, Tamlyn.
- 26 TM: Thanks for talking to me. I never in a million years would have thought I'd get to talk to you.
27 This has been great.
- 28 AJ: Yeah, this has been fantastic. I appreciate you coming out on this cold winter day. You say you
29 don't go out very much so it's an honor to have you here.
- 30 TM: This was too good an opportunity to pass up.
- 31 AJ: All right. Well, until we meet again, my friend. Bye-bye.