

Destinee Salinas
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

September 28, 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 Destinee Salina -DS
3
- 4 AJ: So, good afternoon.
- 5 DS: Good afternoon.
- 6 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Tretter Collection Transgender
7 Oral History Project at the University of Minnesota and today is September 28, 2016. I am in the
8 confines of Hennepin County Medical Center in downtown Minneapolis and I'm here today with
9 Destinee Salinas. How are you?
- 10 DS: I'm good, how are you?
- 11 AJ: I'm great, Destinee. You know, just to make sure that we get your name spelled correctly and all
12 of that good stuff, can you state your name and spell it and state what your gender identity is
13 today, your gender assigned at birth, and your pronouns.
- 14 DS: So, my name is Destinee Salinas. I am . . .
- 15 AJ: Your gender today.
- 16 DS: My gender today is female. I was born male.
- 17 AJ: And your pronouns?
- 18 DS: My pronouns are she/her and . . . them?
- 19 AJ: Yeah, OK. Is that a question? You get to determine what your pronouns are.
- 20 DS: She and her are my pronouns.
- 21 AJ: All right, wow. Thank you so much, Destinee, for being willing to be a participant in this project
22 and just to get us kind of in a remembering mode, can you tell me what your earliest memory in
23 life is? What's the first thing you remember? And, it doesn't have to be about your transgender
24 identity, even though if it is that's OK, but it doesn't have to be.
- 25 DS: OK. My first earliest memory would be me playing with dolls and girl toys growing up.
- 26 AJ: Oh, really?
- 27 DS: Yes. I grew up with four brothers and I was the only one that wanted to have Barbies and
28 dresses and things like that.
- 29 AJ: Really? Where did you find these toys? If you had four brothers, I mean they didn't have Barbie
30 dolls that they were passing down to you, did they?
- 31 DS: My mom is very accepting and was very accepting and she would buy me these things.
- 32 AJ: Really?
- 33 DS: Yes.

- 1 AJ: As a baby?
- 2 DS: As a baby.
- 3 AJ: That is fascinating. Wow. Where did you grow up?
- 4 DS: I grew up in Elwood, Indiana, and then we had moved to Indianapolis, Indiana.
- 5 AJ: Oh, OK. So, Elwood, Indiana. What was that like? Was that a small town? Is that a big town?
- 6 DS: It is a very small town. We had lived there . . . I had lived there with them for 10 years before
7 we had moved to Indianapolis. It was different. We did grow up and have a lot of friends there
8 and being from Indiana, it was kind of racial because I'm Hispanic and being outside a lot in the
9 sun and everything, my skin was darker than everybody else.
- 10 AJ: It gets darker, yeah.
- 11 DS: And people would ask my mom if we were Black.
- 12 AJ: Oh, wow. So, your skin would get really dark.
- 13 DS: Yeah. So, we had moved from there – thank goodness.
- 14 AJ: You said it was racial, it was racist.
- 15 DS: Yes.
- 16 AJ: Wow. How long before you moved? You said about 10 years.
- 17 DS: Yes.
- 18 AJ: So, you went to grade school there for a little while. Were you guys harassed in school?
- 19 DS: No, we were never harassed in school. None of the kids . . .
- 20 AJ: Because of your race.
- 21 DS: Right, none of the kids had harassed us or anything like that. As far as my parents, I'm not sure.
- 22 AJ: OK. What about your gender identity? Did that create problems for you in school? You were
23 playing with Barbies and dresses and things when you were just a little baby.
- 24 DS: Right.
- 25 AJ: When you got to school, I'm pretty sure that didn't just go away.
- 26 DS: No, it didn't go away and I would dress in boy clothes.
- 27 AJ: Yeah, yeah. So, nobody really knew.
- 28 DS: No.
- 29 AJ: Well that's good. So, what kind of student were you?

- 1 DS: I was a good student, I got good grades until about high school and then just like everything fell
2 apart my freshman year and then I spent the rest of my high school having to catch up from my
3 freshman year. But, I did it, I graduated with my class, so that was good – that was a good thing.
- 4 AJ: What high school?
- 5 DS: I went to Lawrence North.
- 6 AJ: Lawrence North – but that was in Indianapolis.
- 7 DS: Yes.
- 8 AJ: What was life like in Indianapolis?
- 9 DS: It was good. We had a lot of friends in Indianapolis growing up, a lot of them I still keep in
10 contact with.
- 11 AJ: Really? Wow.
- 12 DS: Yes, from middle school and high school. Now, in middle school we had went to a Catholic
13 middle school, which was kind of interesting with me being out in middle school and high
14 school.
- 15 AJ: You were out as . . . ?
- 16 DS: Transgender.
- 17 AJ: As transgender.
- 18 DS: Yes.
- 19 AJ: In middle school?
- 20 DS: Yes, in a Catholic middle school.
- 21 AJ: In a Catholic middle school. How did that work? You told the teachers you were transgender?
22 Or, the students?
- 23 DS: I really didn't . . . we didn't . . .
- 24 AJ: You didn't tell people.
- 25 DS: I didn't tell people that I was transgender in middle school.
- 26 AJ: But you were presenting as a woman, or I mean as a little girl?
- 27 DS: No. I was still dressed in boy clothes. I think my mom was still kind of getting used to the fact
28 that I was transgender, so to please her and to please my younger brother who was in the same
29 middle school as I was, I would still dress as a boy because I didn't want him to be harassed. But
30 being a gay male in middle school, I guess, I did a lot of the things that the girls would do. I was
31 in choir; I was on the cheerleading squad in middle school.
- 32 AJ: OK, wow.

- 1 DS: I was in plays that we would have.
- 2 AJ: So, you were kind of gender ambiguous then?
- 3 DS: Yes.
- 4 AJ: Wow, that's . . . I don't think I would have ever had the nerve to do that when I was in middle
5 school. That's 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, right?
- 6 DS: Right.
- 7 AJ: Oh, my goodness. So, what is your position in your sibling family? Are you the oldest? Are you
8 in the middle?
- 9 DS: I'm in the middle.
- 10 AJ: OK, so you have some older brothers and some younger brothers.
- 11 DS: Yes.
- 12 AJ: Wow.
- 13 DS: And I do have a sister, she wasn't really . . . she didn't really claim us for a while because she was
14 upset with mom. But, eventually, she had came around and we had visited with her in Indiana
15 at my mom's house. It was a good reunion for us.
- 16 AJ: Well, good.
- 17 DS: But everybody has been accepting in my family.
- 18 AJ: That's beautiful, it's wonderful. And, you said you're Hispanic. What country did you family
19 originate from?
- 20 DS: My dad's side is originated from Mexico.
- 21 AJ: Mexico, OK.
- 22 DS: I'm not sure where. I had recently got back in touch with our father . . .
- 23 AJ: Oh, wonderful.
- 24 DS: Because being separated since I was two, I never really knew my dad until a few weeks ago
25 when he had hit me up on Facebook, which was funny.
- 26 AJ: You're kidding. Wow, so you re-connected with your dad on the Facebook?
- 27 DS: Yes.
- 28 AJ: Wow.
- 29 DS: I haven't really asked him where from Mexico they were from.
- 30 AJ: Well, you're still just trying to figure out who he is, right. Is your mother Latina?
- 31 DS: No, she's Caucasian. White.

- 1 AJ: So, you're kind of mixed race then.
- 2 DS: Yes.
- 3 AJ: Wow. Well, I'm really just thrilled to hear that you have a good relationship with your family.
4 That's so important for people who transition to have family support. I think it's reflected in the
5 fact that people are happier, they have jobs, you finished high school with your class.
6 Sometimes when people come out, they lose all of that and get kicked out of their families and
7 that kind of stuff. So, it's just really wonderful to hear that your family was accepting.
- 8 DS: Thank you.
- 9 AJ: Yeah, so Destinee, when is the first time you realized you were not the gender you were
10 assigned at birth?
- 11 DS: High school.
- 12 AJ: Yeah.
- 13 DS: I finally had came to terms with it when I had gotten into high school. I just wasn't comfortable,
14 I wasn't comfortable having to sit with the boys or to be in the boys locker room or to do things
15 that the boys would do – I wasn't comfortable with any of that. I wasn't comfortable with my
16 body that I was in and I didn't like myself. I wasn't comfortable with myself.
- 17 AJ: So, you were in high school . . . 14 or 15 years old or so. Did you take any steps to make physical
18 changes at that point in time?
- 19 DS: No, because at that time I was still under my mother and she couldn't afford it, but not only
20 that, she wasn't ready for that.
- 21 AJ: Wasn't ready, yeah. You were in a Catholic family, your family is pretty religious?
- 22 DS: Not my mom, so much, but my dad was pretty religious. Even my stepdads growing up, they
23 were pretty religious. They accepted the fact that I claimed to be gay, but as far as being
24 transgender and transitioning, I waited until after high school and I left the house.
- 25 AJ: When you were on your own, yeah. So, right after high school, is that when you started
26 transitioning?
- 27 DS: Yes.
- 28 AJ: Who was the first transgender person you ever met?
- 29 DS: The first trans person I'd ever met was . . . her name was Samantha, Samantha Sinclair. I had
30 went to . . . I was 21 and was able to go out and get into the club scene and stuff like that. I
31 really . . . I waited until I was 21 to do that because I was nervous about having fake IDs and
32 being caught in the club. But, yeah, her name was Samantha Sinclair. I didn't know how I felt, I
33 kind of had mixed feelings at that time, doing drag and meeting trans people – it just . . . I don't
34 know. I don't know how I felt, but I was comfortable being around her.
- 35 AJ: So, she was a drag performer?

- 1 DS: Yes.
- 2 AJ: So, what do you think the source of that discomfort was? Did you feel like the drag community
3 wasn't really your community or was it something else?
- 4 DS: I think it was something else, because being around family who wasn't quite comfortable with
5 that yet . . .
- 6 AJ: You were just experiencing some of that.
- 7 DS: Yeah.
- 8 AJ: So, it wasn't like you didn't think that drag performers were necessarily a part of the
9 transgender umbrella.
- 10 DS: No.
- 11 AJ: Yeah, it's like any new thing, particularly something that's "taboo".
- 12 DS: Right.
- 13 AJ: You feel a little ambivalent and it sounds like your family was fairly religious and, you know, I
14 know a lot of religious people condemn homosexuality, transgender, all of those kinds of things.
- 15 DS: Right.
- 16 AJ: So, it kind of makes sense that you might be a little ambivalent in those situations, to say the
17 least. How do you feel about the drag identity and its connection to trans-ness?
- 18 DS: Well, now I feel like it's a form of expression. Yeah, I feel like it's a form of expression, I feel like
19 it's a way to get trans people out in the world because I . . . I don't know about . . . I was a little
20 uncomfortable with the whole drag scene at first and then after I just started meeting people, I
21 started meeting more people, I would go to drag shows and I started to open up a little more. I
22 was actually adopted by one of the drag queens in a bar that I would go to and started doing
23 drag myself.
- 24 AJ: Really? So, did you call this person your drag . . .?
- 25 DS: My drag mother, yes.
- 26 AJ: Drag mother – wow. So, what was that relationship like? Are you guys still friends? Do you
27 ever communicate with her at all?
- 28 DS: We have a great relationship.
- 29 AJ: Was this Samantha?
- 30 DS: No, this is a different person. After a while, me and Samantha didn't really get along.
- 31 AJ: OK, she was just the first person that you met.
- 32 DS: Right.

- 1 AJ: She was not your lifelong friend, yeah. But, your drag mother, what's her name?
- 2 DS: Her name is Sinacion Moni.
- 3 AJ: Wow, how do you spell that?
- 4 DS: S-i-n-a-c-i-o-n
- 5 AJ: Oh, wow. Sinacion.
- 6 DS: Moni is M-o-n-i, but with the hyphen over the "I".
- 7 AJ: OK. And she was your drag mother.
- 8 DS: She helped me out a lot. She had introduced me to more drag queens, she had worked with me
9 during some drag shows and got my name out in Indiana.
- 10 AJ: Sure.
- 11 DS: So, there's a few places I performed. I had entered some pageants.
- 12 AJ: And I'm sure you won.
- 13 DS: One of them I had actually won. There is a girl, her name was Chablee. We had become really
14 good friends, practically sisters almost, and when we would perform together or do a pageant
15 together, I was always first runner-up to her.
- 16 AJ: Wow.
- 17 DS: So, I would try to avoid . . . if there was a pageant that she's doing, I would try to avoid doing a
18 pageant with her because I already knew that I was going to be first runner-up.
- 19 AJ: Right.
- 20 DS: But, it was fun – it was a lot of fun. I don't do it anymore because I work Monday-Friday now,
21 but I would really like to.
- 22 AJ: What work do you do?
- 23 DS: I'm an Eligibility and Retention Specialist for the Positive Care Center here at HCMC.
- 24 AJ: OK, wow. Do you like it?
- 25 DS: Yes, I do.
- 26 AJ: How long have you been doing this job?
- 27 DS: Three years. I started out as an In-Reach Coordinator and after a while, I would just start . . . I
28 would take trainings every time that they came up. I didn't miss an opportunity to take a
29 training because I wanted to learn more, I wanted to grow here at HCMC and I . . . the beginning
30 of this year I had got promoted to Eligibility and Retention Specialist.
- 31 AJ: Oh, wow. Congratulations.

- 1 DS: Thank you.
- 2 AJ: So, what's . . . you said In-Reach. What's the difference between In-Reach and Outreach?
- 3 DS: In-Reach is more in-house, working with the patients and stuff like that, calling them and
4 reminding them of appointments, tracking people if they've missed appointments and calling
5 them to reschedule, and working with those that have been out-of-care for more than a year.
- 6 AJ: Wow. I'm just sitting here noticing your make-up, Destinee. It's flawless.
- 7 DS: Thank you.
- 8 AJ: Yeah.
- 9 DS: It's a lot of practice.
- 10 AJ: Did you go to a make-up artist this morning or something?
- 11 DS: No, I do my own make-up.
- 12 AJ: You do your own make-up.
- 13 DS: Yes, ma'am.
- 14 AJ: Oh, my goodness. It's gorgeous. Yeah, wow. Is that one of the skills that came from sort of
15 being in the drag community, the drag world?
- 16 DS: Yes, having to wear a whole bunch of make-up and exaggerating it, learning how to exaggerate
17 the make-up and learning how to apply the make-up and the colors – getting them right.
- 18 AJ: Right.
- 19 DS: It was a lot of practice.
- 20 AJ: Well, practice makes perfect and I think you got it down.
- 21 DS: Thank you.
- 22 AJ: So, talk to me about being a trans Latina and what are some of the challenges that you have
23 faced whether it's around employment or housing or the criminal justice system? Have you had
24 any experiences? Or, even the medical system, which you actually work in?
- 25 DS: Right. I feel like I have experienced all of the above.
- 26 AJ: OK.
- 27 DS: Just being out in the world, not being discriminated against for being Latina, but for being
28 transgender. I've gone through the harassment, the name calling, people wanting to fight me
29 because I'm transgender and I had nothing . . . I don't even know this person. Nothing so much
30 as housing, but it is . . . I just feel like it's a lot harder for trans women to find employment
31 because we're transgender – especially for those who don't . . . who aren't as passable, if you
32 know what I mean.

- 1 AJ: Yeah – no, I know what you mean.
- 2 DS: For some, I feel like that has a lot to do with employment because when you go somewhere and
3 you apply for a job, it's like people are looking at you sideways, you get a lot of whispering, and
4 just uncomfortable looks when you hand somebody an application. Sometimes, you get those
5 jobs who will overlook you being transgender and will actually listen to you and listen to your
6 experience. I feel like we have to sell ourselves to an employer harder than a cis man or a cis
7 woman would.
- 8 AJ: Yeah, wow. Any specific issues that you can recall?
- 9 DS: As far as working?
- 10 AJ: Working or accessing health care or being harassed by police or anything like that?
- 11 DS: As far as being harassed by police, I have gone through that actually. I've never been physically
12 arrested for being in trouble or being out on the street or anything, but there is a part of
13 Indianapolis where I used to live that was known for prostitution and some of the trans women
14 walking up and down the street. I worked at a Latino bar right across the street from where I
15 lived, with a CVS being on the corner down the street. That was my store I would go to and
16 people would circle me, they would stop in the street and ask me if I needed a ride or
17 something. The police would also circle me because they'd think I'm out on the street and I
18 have been stopped and asked what I am doing out on the street – even with bags of CVS in my
19 hand, in my pajamas, I would be stopped and asked what I'm doing. A group of friends of mine,
20 I was riding around in their car one day and we had got stopped by the police and they had a
21 police officer on my side because I was in the passenger seat and a police officer on the other
22 side. The police officer on my side started talking to me about my breasts – if they were real, if I
23 was taking hormones, I'm like, "Why are you asking me?" I asked him, "Why are you asking me
24 this? Is this relevant to what you're doing?" He got quiet. He didn't apologize or anything, he
25 just got quiet and stepped to the side.
- 26 AJ: But he stopped.
- 27 DS: But he stopped.
- 28 AJ: Wow. What have been some of the positive aspects since you've decided to live your true
29 gender identity?
- 30 DS: Some of the positive aspects is that I can . . . I've used my transgender identity and certain
31 organizations to help me get a job, especially dealing with HIV and the gay community, the
32 LGBTQ community. I've done a lot of work working with the LGBTQ community.
- 33 AJ: Really? What kind of organizations?
- 34 DS: In Indiana, I was the transgender coordinator who helped start that program for an organization
35 called Brothers United in Indiana. And here, working at the Linus Project for a couple years.
- 36 AJ: Oh, really?
- 37 DS: And then here at HCMC.

- 1 AJ: Wow, that's pretty incredible. What do you think the relationship is between the L, the G, and
2 the B to the T. Do you think that the T, that the transgender community should be a part of this
3 broader gay, lesbian, bisexual or should the T go off on their own and just kind of do their own
4 organizing? What's your thoughts?
- 5 DS: I . . . growing up, LGBT has always been a part of my understanding and I mean, I don't have any
6 issues or qualms about being a part of the LGBTQ community. I feel like we could help each
7 other. I know that there are ups and downs with LGBTQ being together and some people have
8 their differences with that, but I really don't . . .
- 9 AJ: But your own personal opinion is . . . it's fine.
- 10 DS: It's fine. To me, it's fine.
- 11 AJ: I ask because there are different issues that face trans-identified people.
- 12 DS: Right.
- 13 AJ: But transgender people can be gay, they can be lesbian, they can be bisexual so it kind of makes
14 sense that there is a broad connection and that we work together for liberation for all people.
- 15 DS: Right.
- 16 AJ: Looking back over your decision to express your true gender identity, what have been some
17 pivotal moments that defines your new life and would you do anything differently?
- 18 DS: Some of the pivotal moments that I have is that I have a lot more confidence in myself being
19 transgender and going through my transition and being who I am than I used to. Just being
20 around people who are accepting of me, who I can call my friends and who understand what I
21 go through every day. Not very many people out in this world understand what trans women or
22 trans men go through within themselves to be who they are.
- 23 AJ: Right, absolutely. That's a very true statement. What are some of those things? Can you talk
24 about . . . ?
- 25 DS: Just fighting with themselves about being confident with themselves, being accepting of
26 yourself, being transgender and how you treat people in the world.
- 27 AJ: Because there's this self-acceptance that comes before actually coming out, right.
- 28 DS: Yes.
- 29 AJ: Which is probably the hardest part to get to for many people, not maybe for everybody but
30 certainly it was a challenge for me.
- 31 DS: Right.
- 32 AJ: And, like you said, I think a lot of trans-identified people can really relate to that whereas I think
33 a lot of other people think we just wake up one day and are like, "Hey, I'm trans."
- 34 DS: Right, they think it's a choice.

- 1 AJ: Right.
- 2 DS: That we want to go out there and get ridiculed or mocked because of who we are. It's not a
3 choice to be who we are, because who would want to go out in the world and be discriminated
4 against or to be called names or to be beat up for being who we are – or killed.
- 5 AJ: Or murdered, yes – absolutely. Nobody chooses that, that's not a choice – that is certainly not a
6 choice. Destinee, to the extent that you feel comfortable, talk to me about the medical
7 interventions you have undergone on your way to becoming your truest self.
- 8 DS: Well, so far the only thing I have actually accomplished was the hormone therapy. I have had
9 some silicone work in my hips and in my butt area, and a little in my cheekbones and to get a
10 cleft out of my chin.
- 11 AJ: Oh, to take the cleft away.
- 12 DS: But right now, that is all that I have had done. I do have . . .
- 13 AJ: Can I ask, the silicone work, did you do that in a hospital setting or did you have some friends to
14 do that for you?
- 15 DS: I knew a guy who has done work on other people. I couldn't afford to go out and pay for all that
16 in a hospital setting, so I had sought him out. We would do it in his house. He was very clean,
17 very professional, but regardless it's still not good.
- 18 AJ: I'm not judging, I'm just asking – please don't think I'm making any kind of judgment at all.
- 19 DS: Oh, no.
- 20 AJ: Are you satisfied with the work that he did?
- 21 DS: I am satisfied.
- 22 AJ: Yeah.
- 23 DS: I am satisfied. I kind of feel like I could use a little bit more, but I want to do this the right way. I
24 don't want . . . I don't want something to happen to where if some silicone had fallen or
25 something else, I know people who have been killed from having silicone work done – one of
26 them happened to be my really, really close sister.
- 27 AJ: Oh, wow, I'm so sorry. But yeah, it's dangerous.
- 28 DS: It is dangerous.
- 29 AJ: It's very, very tricky. But, as you know noted, resources are an issue – just access to jobs and . . .
- 30 DS: And the money and sometimes health insurance.
- 31 AJ: Yes, exactly. So, what other . . . so, a little silicone, some hormones, what else? Did the
32 hormones do some of the things that you were hoping that they would do?
- 33 DS: Yes, they did. I feel like I have a softer appearance, even though I have a strong jaw line. I've
34 never had any work done on my breasts, so that's just from being on hormones for so long.

- 1 AJ: So, no silicone or anything?
- 2 DS: No silicone or anything up here. I did not want that – just in my buttocks and my hip area.
- 3 AJ: Sure. Wow. Well, it looks like the hormones are doing their job – that’s a good thing. Any
4 future plans at all?
- 5 DS: I do have future plans to further my transition. I have an appointment in November for breast
6 augmentation and then after that I’m working on my SRS.
- 7 AJ: Wow, OK. Does your employer cover that?
- 8 DS: Yes. There is still a payout that I would have to pay, but it’s not the \$32,000 like it would be if
9 someone didn’t have insurance.
- 10 AJ: Sure, wow – well that’s pretty amazing.
- 11 DS: I know, right. I think the insurance companies have come a long way. There’s a lot more
12 insurance companies who are helping the trans community in getting the services that they
13 need, even though there is a little bit of a payout. Some insurance companies pay for different
14 things.
- 15 AJ: Right. Did you, as a part of your sort of medical transition, did you see a therapist or spend time
16 in that kind of a process?
- 17 DS: No, not when I started. I had a personal doctor who I had met down in Indiana who used to
18 work for a HIV and AIDS organization in Indiana and he would constantly ask me, “So, when are
19 we going to start taking your hormones?”
- 20 AJ: Oh, really.
- 21 DS: I had put it off a couple of times until I felt like I was ready and then I went to him and said, “OK,
22 let’s do this.”
- 23 AJ: Oh, wow. OK.
- 24 DS: So, he started me on my hormone therapy and gave me the instructions. I didn’t really feel
25 comfortable giving myself the shots.
- 26 AJ: So, you were taking injections, not pills?
- 27 DS: Yes. I had tried . . . after I had left and moved here, I had tried the pills and the patches and I
28 just felt like they weren’t as good as the injections.
- 29 AJ: Yeah, the injections are kind of the way to go, I think.
- 30 DS: Right.
- 31 AJ: Better results, faster results.
- 32 DS: Yes.

- 1 AJ: Yeah. Wow, well thank you for being willing to talk about your medical interventions – and
2 good luck with your upcoming surgeries.
- 3 DS: Thank you.
- 4 AJ: That is exciting.
- 5 DS: I am excited.
- 6 AJ: Absolutely.
- 7 DS: And, thank you for asking me to interview.
- 8 AJ: Oh, my goodness – no, it's my honor and my pleasure that I can sit and talk with you. Talk to
9 me, Destinee, about love and relationships and all that good stuff. Are you in a relationship
10 now?
- 11 DS: Yes, I am in a relationship now. We have been together for six years now and it's been one of
12 the best relationships I've had.
- 13 AJ: Well, six years – that's a long time.
- 14 DS: It is a long time. It's a long time for me.
- 15 AJ: It's a long time for anybody – for a lot of people. Some people call their longest relationship six
16 weeks or six months.
- 17 DS: Before I had gotten into this relationship, my longest relationship before this one was six weeks.
- 18 AJ: Oh, my God. OK. So, I hit the nail right on the head.
- 19 DS: Yes, you did. And that relationship was a little crazy. He had scared me a little bit, to the point
20 where I feared for my life.
- 21 AJ: Oh, my God. In just six weeks?
- 22 DS: Yes, in just six weeks. He, just out of nowhere just started acting funny and I had spent a week
23 over at his place and noticed him changing within that week and him being more paranoid and
24 we had gotten into an argument where he put his hands on me.
- 25 AJ: So, violence – domestic violence.
- 26 DS: Yeah. And he, at one point, he had a gun and carried the gun from his desk to the bathroom to
27 the kitchen to the bedroom, and I'm like, "OK, you have to take me home." So, after he had
28 dropped me off I had waited a few minutes until after he had left and called him and left him a
29 message on his voice mail being like, "I can't do this anymore." I'm like, "I'm scared of you
30 now." I told him that I was a little scared for my life because of the whole gun thing and this and
31 that. So, a couple of days went by and I hadn't heard from him until three days after, he called
32 me and asked me if we could talk. I invited him over to my house because I knew where
33 everything I had was just in case I needed to protect myself.
- 34 AJ: Sure.

- 1 DS: And we sat down and talked. I don't know if this is going to be on there, but he had mentioned
2 that he was spending \$1000/week a coke and so that kind of explained a lot.
- 3 AJ: Yeah, that will make you paranoid, I think.
- 4 DS: Right. But since then we have been . . . we just have kept in touch with each other and we're
5 friends.
- 6 AJ: Oh, OK. So, your honesty kind of calmed things down a little bit, huh.
- 7 DS: Yeah.
- 8 AJ: But, six years – I mean, is this a guy? A woman? What's your sexual identity?
- 9 DS: It's a guy. I identify as a straight female, I don't identify as gay.
- 10 AJ: So, heterosexual. OK.
- 11 DS: And some people look at me weird when I tell them that but then I'll explain it to them to where
12 they would understand.
- 13 AJ: And how is that? How would you explain that?
- 14 DS: How I would explain that would be is that I am not attracted to gay men.
- 15 AJ: Right.
- 16 DS: I date straight-acting men. I am a woman.
- 17 AJ: Absolutely.
- 18 DS: I am not a male by any aspect even though what's in between my legs. And, I don't identify as a
19 male. If anybody told me differently, I'd probably get offended.
- 20 AJ: Yeah.
- 21 DS: I would tell them that he doesn't consider him to be gay. He doesn't date gay men or anyone
22 that identifies as male.
- 23 AJ: Yeah, he's not into that.
- 24 DS: He's not into that.
- 25 AJ: He's not homophobic, I hope.
- 26 DS: No.
- 27 AJ: Yeah. So, six years you guys have lived together?
- 28 DS: Yes.
- 29 AJ: Marriage? Are you going to get married?
- 30 DS: We are eventually going to get married. I have kind of put that off for other reasons that we
31 have been working on. But, it's been a good relationship. We don't argue with each other. If

1 we are upset with each other, we'll go to separate rooms for a little while until we've calmed
2 down enough to sit down and talk because we don't like yelling at each other. It's been good. It
3 was hard in the beginning because neither one of us had actually lived with someone or . . .

4 AJ: Oh, so you had that whole adjustment period.

5 DS: Right, yeah. It was hard, but it's worked out.

6 AJ: Quite well. Well, I met your bae, he's a really nice guy.

7 DS: He is a very nice guy, and he's very respectful. He's never disrespectful.

8 AJ: Awesome. So, man, what do you think the relationship is . . . or, I'm sorry, what do you think
9 the agenda is for the transgender community? What are some of the things that people are
10 fighting for, in your opinion?

11 DS: Acceptance, just to be accepted and to be treated like equals. We're still human, we bleed, we
12 use the restrooms, we go shopping, we cook, we clean – nothing really different than a cis man
13 or woman, or anyone, would do.

14 AJ: Yeah. What about these bathroom laws that people are trying to impose?

15 DS: I think it's ridiculous. I think it's just something else to get our minds off of other things that are
16 going on in the United States.

17 AJ: The real issues.

18 DS: Yes.

19 AJ: Like unemployment and inequality and homelessness and all of these other things that really
20 deeply impact the transgender community – probably the hardest of any other community.

21 DS: Right.

22 AJ: But instead, we have to spend our time and energy talking about who and where we can use the
23 bathrooms.

24 DS: Which bathroom are we going to use.

25 AJ: Have you ever had any problems accessing any bathrooms?

26 DS: No, I haven't.

27 AJ: I didn't think so. I mean, you're absolutely gorgeous.

28 DS: I am actually . . . I shouldn't say this, but I'm actually waiting for that day to happen. I don't
29 know how I'm going to react, I don't know what I'm going to do or even say to somebody. I
30 know that I'll probably be shocked and be like, "I can't believe that you're doing this," and I
31 know that's how other people feel right now – especially in North Carolina.

32 AJ: Yeah. Well, I'm pretty confident that is never going to happen to you but, you know, you never
33 know.

- 1 DS: Right.
- 2 AJ: Where do you see the transgender community at in the next 50 years?
- 3 DS: I hope that we have more acceptance from other communities – being more accepted in this
4 world and looked at for who we are – men and women, and less discriminated against.
- 5 AJ: Yeah.
- 6 DS: And hopefully people will realize that this isn't just a mental condition that goes away.
- 7 AJ: Wow. Destinee, what's your favorite movie?
- 8 DS: My favorite movies are *The Conjuring* series.
- 9 AJ: Really? I don't know about *The Conjuring* series, tell me about it.
- 10 DS: They're scary movies about demons and ghosts and stuff like that.
- 11 AJ: Oh, so they're horror films?
- 12 DS: Yeah, they're horror films. I've always been into scary, horror films and the paranormal and
13 ghosts and stuff like that; all of that just fascinates me.
- 14 AJ: Wow. What do you do for recreation for yourself? How do you take care . . . like, what's your
15 self-care thing?
- 16 DS: Like what do you mean?
- 17 AJ: You know, you talked about sort of the pressure and stress that we all have in everyday life, but
18 I think as being transgender persons there is even more stress. What do you use to vent that?
19 Even if no one ever says anything . . .
- 20 DS: My mental health and stuff like that?
- 21 AJ: Yeah, your mental self-care.
- 22 DS: I do a lot of meditation and yoga. I feel like that helps me out a lot dealing with stress. I used to
23 be one who had high anxiety about everything and was always nervous going into drag shows or
24 job interviews and stuff like that. I feel like self-meditation has helped me control that anxiety.
- 25 AJ: Wow.
- 26 DS: Because I was nervous about this interview with meeting you.
- 27 AJ: I can't tell.
- 28 DS: But, I feel like I have more control over my anxiety because it used to be really bad – to where I
29 would have anxiety attacks and stuff like that.
- 30 AJ: Yeah, well it seems like that is helping quite a bit.
- 31 DS: It has, a lot.

- 1 AJ: So, lately we've been having just a lot of visibility around the transgender community, even just
2 last week here in the city of Minneapolis we had the 3rd Annual Minneapolis Transgender Equity
3 Summer. I met you there last year, the last Summit.
- 4 DS: Right.
- 5 AJ: So, I know you've been to the Summit. Talk to me a little bit about what do you think about
6 these Summits and why they are important for the community.
- 7 DS: I think the Summits are a great way of getting our voices out in the community. I feel like talking
8 about transgender issues at these Summits are really opening eyes to people who would have
9 never thought of actually going to a transgender summit and just putting us out there and
10 letting people know that we are human and we have these issues that we go through and
11 something needs to be done about these issues.
- 12 AJ: Wow.
- 13 DS: I feel like they're very informative, I feel like they're great to have, and that we should keep
14 having them.
- 15 AJ: You think we should keep having them?
- 16 DS: Yes, I do.
- 17 AJ: We might have to get you to volunteer on the next one.
- 18 DS: Of course, anytime.
- 19 AJ: Well, and you actually did volunteer on this past one. You actually did the registration table,
20 that was pretty amazing. What do you think about Caitlyn Jenner and her celebrity and all of
21 that good stuff?
- 22 DS: I'm happy for her.
- 23 AJ: So am I, just for the record.
- 24 DS: There are just . . . I don't feel like she has gone through half the stuff that we have gone through
25 being transgender. I don't think that she has struggled with any . . . she probably is now, but it's
26 a struggle for people who are not a celebrity to get the services that they need and surgeries
27 and stuff like that, when she can just go out and bam, she's a woman. I'm not really sure what
28 she has done for the transgender community, I haven't heard a lot and I just don't follow her.
- 29 AJ: Right.
- 30 DS: I followed her as Bruce and being on *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* and then after that it's
31 just like OK. And, the awards that she won . . . I don't know. I didn't feel like she was quite
32 deserving at that point because she had just came out as being transgender and went through
33 that process.
- 34 AJ: Yeah, whereas . . .
- 35 DS: But, I love her to death.

- 1 AJ: How old are you?
- 2 DS: I'm 35.
- 3 AJ: You're 35, and you've been out almost since you got out of high school.
- 4 DS: Right.
- 5 AJ: So, much longer than Ms. Jenner. Yeah, I think she's known as a baby trans right now.
- 6 DS: Yes, I agree. But, the thing that I could relate to Caitlyn was not feeling like herself and going
7 through that fight in her head about being who she really is.
- 8 AJ: Destinee, is there anything that I didn't ask you that you think is really important for people to
9 know? About you? About the world? About transgender identity? Black Lives Matter? I don't
10 know, whatever you want to say?
- 11 DS: Not that I can think of at this moment, but I am doing my own work here at HCMC. I have been
12 helping with a class about transgender care for HCMC.
- 13 AJ: Cool.
- 14 DS: Along with a doctor who also works here who is also trans-identified.
- 15 AJ: Really? Who's the doctor?
- 16 DS: Her name is Haylee Veazey.
- 17 AJ: OK, how do you spell her last name? Do you know?
- 18 DS: I want to say it's V-e-a-z-e-y. And with the work that I've been doing on trainings for people
19 who work here about transgender pronouns and how to approach someone who is trans and
20 what kind of services that we need and medical insurance and terminology, we have got other
21 people interested in this class. There is actually a clinic here called the Gender and Sexuality
22 Clinic where they have started hormone therapy for trans people at HCMC.
- 23 AJ: Really? And you helped to get that started?
- 24 DS: Yes.
- 25 AJ: Wow.
- 26 DS: I had a part in it.
- 27 AJ: Yeah, absolutely. But you're doing the training, you're using your voice to say these are issues
28 that matter and people need to be working on this.
- 29 DS: Yes.
- 30 AJ: That's awesome, wow. So proud of you.
- 31 DS: Thank you. Even here, I have gone through some good things and some bad things just working
32 here – from other co-workers, not specifically in my department but from other departments.

- 1 AJ: From other parts of the hospital, yeah. Wow. How have those things been addressed? I mean,
2 is it like just harassment that you can just talk to them and people's behavior changes? Or, do
3 you have to go to HR and say, "These people are really ruining my ability to do my job
4 effectively."
- 5 DS: A lot of it I would have to go to HR and talk to my supervisor about things that have happened.
- 6 AJ: Really? So, what kind of things are happening?
- 7 DS: For one incident, me and my husband were here having lunch together and we had went to the
8 cafeteria upstairs. This guy behind the counter had seen me coming and had ran back and
9 started talking to other people about me and us and I noticed that people were looking at us
10 and giggling. I am with my husband in a place where I work, so I couldn't let that go and spoke
11 up on it and let him know that I know that you're talking about me and I don't appreciate what
12 you're saying. He got . . . he also got offensive with me and started talking back to me, which we
13 grabbed our food and had went somewhere else and I have not been back up there ever since.
- 14 AJ: Wow, I'm sorry.
- 15 DS: It's OK. You have the occasional patients who walk by and make comments and stuff like that,
16 but sometimes you've just got to let it roll, you've got to let it roll off your back.
- 17 AJ: I've got a friend who wrote a book for transgender teenagers and one of his mottos is, "You've
18 got to grow alligator skin."
- 19 DS: Right. I think . . . so, Haylee's last name is V-e-a-z-e-y. And Haylee, her first name, is spelled H-a-
20 y-l-e-e.
- 21 AJ: Oh, l-e-e-. And she is trans-identified?
- 22 DS: Yes, ma'am.
- 23 AJ: Oh, wow. She didn't come to the Summit though, did she?
- 24 DS: No, I didn't see her.
- 25 AJ: I'd like to meet her one of these days.
- 26 DS: I'll have to introduce you.
- 27 AJ: Yeah, can you do an email introduction for us.
- 28 DS: Of course, yes.
- 29 AJ: That would be great. So, man, I'm loving your make-up. If you're ever interested in becoming a
30 make-up artist or at least having a client, let me know because I would let you get into my face
31 with the paints, honey. You are quite amazing.
- 32 DS: Thank you.
- 33 AJ: Yeah. So, thank you so much, Destinee. It's been a joy and a pleasure to spend this time with
34 you.

- 1 DS: Thank you for having me.
- 2 AJ: Until we meet again.
- 3 DS: Of course.
- 4 AJ: All right.