

Daye Pope  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

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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     Daye Pope                     -DP  
3  
4     AJ:        So, hello.  
5     DP:        Hi.  
6     AJ:        My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project  
7                at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries. Today is May 20, 2017. I am  
8                in the nation's capital, Washington, DC. I'm here this evening with Ms. Daye Pope. How are you  
9                doing tonight, Daye?  
10    DP:        I'm good. I'm excited to finally do this.  
11    AJ:        I know, we've been trying to get it done for a little while, so thank you for putting up with my  
12                persistence. I persisted because I really want to hear your story and include your voice in this  
13                project. So, just to get us started, can you state your name, spell your name so we make sure  
14                we have the correct spelling and everything. Also, tell me your gender as you define it today,  
15                your gender assigned at birth, and your pronouns. I feel like I labeled you with a pronoun and I  
16                should apologize – when I said Ms.  
17    DP:        No, that's OK.  
18    AJ:        It could have been Mz. or Mx. – you never know.  
19    DP:        No, that is what I prefer though. But yeah, my name is Daye Pope. D-a-y-e P-o-p-e. I'm a  
20                woman.  
21    AJ:        As in Olivia.  
22    DP:        Yes, obviously we're related. Identity, woman, and sex assigned at birth was male.  
23                She/her/hers pronouns.  
24    AJ:        Cool. So, Ms. is OK?  
25    DP:        Definitely.  
26    AJ:        Ms. or Mx. or . . . ?  
27    DP:        I think Ms. Like the magazine, the feminist magazine.  
28    AJ:        Yeah, Gloria Steinem.  
29    DP:        Exactly.  
30    AJ:        I said Olivia Pope, a little jokingly, but you are kind of a political fixer. What do you do?  
31    DP:        I'm the organizing director with Trans United. I don't know about fixing scandals, hopefully just  
32                avoiding scandals.  
33    AJ:        I didn't say scandals, per se, but fixing things.

- 1 DP: True. I like to think of it as harnessing people power, organizing just so many . . . one of our  
2 greatest resources is people and the effort that they can extend together. I just try to bring  
3 people together to do that and give people a good direction for their energy to go that can  
4 actually make a difference.
- 5 AJ: And what is Trans United?
- 6 DP: We're an advocacy start-up working to achieve trans equality and equity through building up the  
7 grass roots political power of trans communities and gender-expansive communities to elect  
8 candidates, to change policy at the local level, and to get trans folks and gender-expansive folks  
9 to a place where we can thrive instead of just fight to survive.
- 10 AJ: I love that term gender expansive. What does that mean to you?
- 11 DP: I think folks that don't fit into the binary understanding of gender. That can be non-binary,  
12 gender queer, a-gender, gender non-conforming, just anyone who's kind of exploring the gray  
13 space or other part of the spectrum other than the two poles.
- 14 AJ: Wow, that's awesome. So, Daye, let's pull back a little bit before we go way down the political,  
15 theoretical gender discussion, which is interesting and fascinating. But, I just want to know a  
16 little bit more about you. So, to just kind of get our juices flowing, what is your earliest memory  
17 in life? What is the first thing you remember?
- 18 DP: Wow, that's a good question. I have a very early memory, I'm not sure how old I was . . .  
19 probably three. But, I remember being rocked in a rocking chair by my mom. I don't remember  
20 much else other than it was just I remember I was being held and rocked. I think this was in . . .  
21 my family moved around a lot, all within Iowa where I'm from, but I think this was in the first  
22 house that they had me in, but I'm not completely sure.
- 23 AJ: So, you grew up in Iowa.
- 24 DP: Yes.
- 25 AJ: Where, what part?
- 26 DP: I was born in Centerville, Iowa, which was in the southern part of Iowa.
- 27 AJ: Centerville?
- 28 DP: Centerville, yes. But, my family moved around Iowa for work so I spent part of my childhood in  
29 Nashua, Iowa, or on a farm outside of Nashua, Iowa.
- 30 AJ: OK.
- 31 DP: Which is a very small town, and then spent kind of the bulk of my school years in Clear Lake,  
32 Iowa, which is north central, which is a small lake town.
- 33 AJ: What was it like growing up there? And school, was there any sort of challenge or opposition to  
34 your being while you were in school? Were you bullied or were you teased?

- 1 DP: Yeah, absolutely. From kindergarten on there were just ways in which we lined up in  
2 kindergarten class and I went over with my friends who were all girls. People were like, "Why  
3 are you standing on that side of the room for show and tell?"
- 4 AJ: Really?
- 5 DP: And I was like, "What? I'm just hanging out with my friends." But, it was an interesting moment  
6 and I feel like I've always been very, very feminine. I remember back to in kindergarten, that  
7 started bullying from boys who were just like, "Oh, you're like a girl." I wasn't out as trans  
8 throughout my K-12 years, I didn't really know that that was a thing. But people would bully me  
9 for my gender expression that I wasn't even completely attempting to do.
- 10 AJ: Right, exactly. It was just being Daye.
- 11 DP: Yeah, feminism mannerisms. My voice was always kind of high and so it was just like . . . you  
12 know, people would read that as queer of some kind.
- 13 AJ: Or gender non-conforming, which really seems to either anger people or confuse people or they  
14 just can't . . . I remember a couple years ago when Caitlyn Jenner came out, all the newscasters  
15 were just like, "Ahhhh, I can't handle it, I don't know what to do."
- 16 DP: It's really, it's real . . . I feel like it is the gray space that people are so uncomfortable with. For  
17 the majority of my life, I sort of existed in that space because I didn't really stake a claim to a  
18 feminine identity because I didn't know that trans was a thing.
- 19 AJ: Right, right.
- 20 DP: Being in rural Iowa, it's very beautiful and very loving, but it's also very sheltered so I didn't  
21 really have access to knowledge about these things.
- 22 AJ: I have this sort of pre-conception that it's sort of conservative.
- 23 DP: In a way. It's not really politically conservative, it's just a . . .
- 24 AJ: Kind of a way of life, small town.
- 25 DP: . . . a traditional way of life. Yeah. My family, for instance, always vote Democrat, but we also  
26 had family dinner at the table every night after school and that was an expectation. So, there  
27 were just ways in which, culturally, it's kind of more conservative. But, I think it is a really loving  
28 place. It's not like some parts of the rural south where some queer and trans friends I know feel  
29 very at risk.
- 30 AJ: Persecuted and at risk, yeah.
- 31 DP: In Iowa, it's more like true ignorance of just not having been around these types of groups or  
32 not really having just the way of life where you know about certain things. But once people are  
33 educated, or once they meet someone in Iowa, usually they're totally cool with it.
- 34 AJ: Is that right?
- 35 DP: Yeah, I've not lost any friends or anything even from my high school friends.

- 1 AJ: Really? Since you've come out?
- 2 DP: Yeah, there were some awkward moments or conversations where people didn't understand.  
3 I'm sure some people from back home might vote for people who have regressive policies for  
4 trans folks, but at the same time I'm still invited to their weddings and we still get together  
5 when I'm back in Iowa for the holidays.
- 6 AJ: Wow, that's awesome.
- 7 DP: Yeah.
- 8 AJ: But growing up there was some bullying that was kind of around your gender expression. Did  
9 you have siblings?
- 10 DP: I have an older sister.
- 11 AJ: Really.
- 12 DP: Yeah, she's five years older so we weren't really in school together.
- 13 AJ: Yeah, so you were kind of winging it on your own.
- 14 DP: Yeah. I feel really lucky, though. There was a lot of bullying, but I always had a core group of  
15 friends.
- 16 AJ: Friends that would stand up.
- 17 DP: Yeah, I was blessed to not have ever been like truly alone. Even when a lot of people were  
18 mean, I would have my core group that were kind and didn't care and have always been cool.
- 19 AJ: What about your home life? Was your family intact? Did your mom and dad live together?
- 20 DP: Yeah, my parents have been married for 30-some years.
- 21 AJ: Wow.
- 22 DP: There's still together, it's their first and only marriage. They're still back in Iowa and so is my  
23 older sister, living in a town not too far from them.
- 24 AJ: And you struck out on your own.
- 25 DP: Yeah.
- 26 AJ: After high school or . . .?
- 27 DP: I stayed in Iowa for college too. It was only after college that I moved out.
- 28 AJ: Where did you go to college?
- 29 DP: The University of Northern Iowa, one of the state schools in Iowa.
- 30 AJ: So, when did you first realize that you were not the gender you were assigned at birth?

- 1 DP: I feel like when I was very young I sort of . . . it wasn't even that I thought I was a girl and not a  
2 boy, I think I literally just didn't realize that other people didn't know I was a girl. So, my parents  
3 are very . . . just like they don't feel the need to overly . . .
- 4 AJ: Genderize . . .
- 5 DP: Yeah, they would be like, "Kids will be kids." They didn't think, "Oh, my child is queer," because  
6 I would play with my older sister and play Barbies. It wasn't like . . . I didn't feel very restricted.  
7 I just kind of did whatever I wanted and I wanted to have kind of long hair, so they let me have  
8 shaggy hair up until a certain point and made me cut it. I played on the farm with our dogs and  
9 with my older sister and . . . we grew up fairly poor so my sister and I would both wear just  
10 whatever hand-me-downs from our cousins and what not, so it wasn't like . . . choosing clothes  
11 wasn't really the place where gender came out. It was just like, "Oh, we have these big t-shirts  
12 and jean shorts because it's the 1990s and these are what our cousins passed on." But, when I  
13 was 10, I kind of . . . probably a little younger than that, but I was realizing how much other  
14 people's idea of who I was differed from mine. I remember for a few nights in a row when I was  
15 10, I prayed that I would wake up a girl because I didn't really realize . . . at that time, I wasn't  
16 like, "Oh, I am a girl," because it didn't seem like a possibility because everyone around me was  
17 acting like that was not the case, so instead I was like, "Oh, please make me one, God, if that's  
18 possible." So, it's kind of interesting because obviously later when I knew what trans is and I  
19 was like, "OK, you are a girl, you don't have to pray to become one." But, that was where I was  
20 at.
- 21 AJ: Right, yeah. No, that's real. What sort of terms have you used to describe yourself over time?
- 22 DP: Oh, my gosh – a lot, I feel like in my journey of kind of figuring myself out. I came out to my  
23 parents as liking boys when I was 13. I didn't really understand the gender piece, but I knew that  
24 people could be gay and I knew that I was . . . like had a crush on a boy in my class and I wasn't  
25 interested in dating girls.
- 26 AJ: And you weren't interested in dating girls, you said – right?
- 27 DP: No. So, I told my parents, I was like, "I think I'm gay. I don't really like girls like that and I have a  
28 crush on a boy at school." They were just over the top supportive, it wasn't really a big deal.  
29 They were also operating in a small-town framework where they kind of advised me not to  
30 come out fully and that was kind of where I was too. I didn't really want to go through that in  
31 this tiny small town school.
- 32 AJ: Yeah, I mean, there's a lot about safety and . . .
- 33 DP: Yeah, and people already gave me shit for being very feminine so I felt like if I confirmed  
34 suspicions . . . but, when I was 18 and went to college and started learning more about gender  
35 identity, I identified as gender queer for a few years.
- 36 AJ: OK.
- 37 DP: Yeah, so I kind of wanted that space to explore gender expression and just explore myself. So,  
38 throughout all of college I was very androgynous in my presentation and my self-concept. But

- 1           then, towards the end of college I was starting to come to the realization – you know,  
2           remembering things like that story about when I was 10 and just kind of reflecting on things I  
3           hadn't thought about in many years, and being like, "No, I really think I'm a woman, I don't think  
4           I'm just non-binary." But, I feel like for me personally I needed the space to explore and letting  
5           people know I'm gender queer gave me that space.
- 6   AJ:     Sort of some breathing room – yeah.
- 7   DP:     Yeah, so that people at least knew for a while, "OK, I'm not a man, but I'm kind of on a journey  
8           and figuring this out."
- 9   AJ:     Right. Wow. And then . . . then you came to trans or . . .?
- 10 DP:     Yeah. No, then I was realizing like, "OK, I definitely feel like I'm a woman."
- 11 AJ:     Or, do you use trans? That's what I maybe . . . because when you initially talked about gender  
12           you said, "I identify as a woman." Which is perfectly fine.
- 13 DP:     I see trans as an adjective, not for me, necessary, an identity.
- 14 AJ:     Sure.
- 15 DP:     So, yeah, I see it kind of as a description of my journey to finding my own womanhood. But, if  
16           you ask me, "What's your gender identity?", then I'm a woman.
- 17 AJ:     Wow. No, I mean I think that's super, super, super cool. So, what sort of challenges have you  
18           experienced since expressing your true identity? If any, maybe you haven't experienced any.
- 19 DP:     If only that were the world we lived in, right. I think . . . I think, definitely, a sense . . . like a  
20           worry, an anxiety about being read or being clocked or however you want to call it and just the  
21           violent ways people can react if they find out. I never felt particularly safe being so sort of  
22           naturally gender non-conforming, but, you know, it sort of brought it into focus for me just how  
23           vulnerable I was, I guess, when I came to the realization. Growing up with a family that was  
24           pretty working class and not having a lot of money and not being able to go to them to ask for a  
25           loan if I were to need one, there have been times when I have been in-between work and not  
26           had health care and had to go without hormones for a few months until I got a job again.
- 27 AJ:     Were you out of work because of gender identity, do you think?
- 28 DP:     No, no – it was other things.
- 29 AJ:     So, what impact has your gender expression/identity, who you are, played a role in your  
30           professional life? Or has played a role in your professional life? Because now you're  
31           professionally working for a trans organization, but up until this point, what role would you say  
32           it has played?
- 33 DP:     I think I've always wanted to . . . I've always been ambitious in a career sense in wanting to work  
34           in politics and just do work that I felt like was doing a service to people. I was really worried,  
35           actually, that being trans meant that that was no longer an option for me because there's a lot  
36           of spaces and places in advocacy and in politics where you have to fit this very narrow mold.



- 1 AJ: Sure.
- 2 DP: But I think it's just re-directed me from maybe . . . I've worked for the Iowa Democratic Party as  
3 a field organizer, that was my first job out of college on a mid-term campaign there.
- 4 AJ: First which kind of job?
- 5 DP: My first job out of college that actually utilized my new degree.
- 6 AJ: Right.
- 7 DP: I think it's just re-directed my career in some ways. If I were cis, I might not be pushed by  
8 necessity to work for very progressive organizations.
- 9 AJ: OK.
- 10 DP: I'm already very progressive so it kind of works out, but I think I would have a wider array of  
11 issues and groups that I could work for where I would feel safe and where I would be accepted.
- 12 AJ: So, you feel like it's kind of limited some of your choices?
- 13 DP: Yeah, absolutely.
- 14 AJ: Which is huge, right? It has an impact.
- 15 DP: I definitely feel like I can work for LGBTQ organizations or the Democratic Party in Iowa is  
16 actually very, very cool about everything. But, I feel like most of the men in my family are  
17 veterans and I care a lot about veteran's issues, but I don't necessarily know if I would feel  
18 completely safe or I would be in a good environment if I went to work for an organization that  
19 works with veterans that isn't specifically LGBT. Or, climate change is another thing that I'm  
20 really passionate about, but I don't know, in that space, if it would be an uphill battle.
- 21 AJ: Yeah. Similarly, EJ, or the Environmental Justice Community, might be a place where broadly  
22 expressive people are welcomed, you would think.
- 23 DP: Yeah, hopefully.
- 24 AJ: What have been some of the more positive aspects since you have begun to fully express all of  
25 Daye? And I want to hear about your name too, Daye. How did you come to that name?
- 26 DP: There have been a lot of positive things that are more just personal and spiritual, I feel like. But,  
27 I think we all have certain experiences that we would like to have, that we build up throughout  
28 our life, and being able to be out and authentic has given me the confidence to just go have  
29 some of those experiences. Or, little things like I want to be able to go out one night and flirt  
30 with a random cute guy and have it just be casual and fun to flirt. I don't know, just little things  
31 where I feel like when people couldn't read what gender I was or when people experienced me  
32 in kind of a gender non-conforming way, it sort of changes the dynamic of most interactions. I  
33 feel so much better about how I look, just being real. I've always been very insecure about how  
34 I look, and I still am, but I feel a lot better than I used to.
- 35 AJ: You're beautiful.

- 1 DP: Thank you.
- 2 AJ: Absolutely.
- 3 DP: I feel just more emotionally connected to things because not being able to be authentic, I feel  
4 like I was just very detached from everything. So, now . . .
- 5 AJ: You have to sort of disassociate to some extent.
- 6 DP: Yeah, because everything is just so weird and feels so odd. So, now I feel like . . . present, I  
7 guess, in my life. Generally speaking, just a lot . . . emotionally healthier than when you're just  
8 struggling with this internal dilemma of, "Who am I? Should I come out?" It's takes a toll on  
9 your mind to go through that.
- 10 AJ: Yeah.
- 11 DP: It's been a weight off to be out.
- 12 AJ: Wow, you're giving me flashbacks. I haven't thought about that stuff for a while. What's your  
13 current relationship like with your family? Your sister? Mom and dad?
- 14 DP: Yeah, my immediate family and I are very, very close. My sister has always been amazing and  
15 the first person I basically always have come out to in my various stages of understanding who I  
16 am.
- 17 AJ: OK, yes.
- 18 DP: She's always been wonderful and very supportive. We fought like cats and dogs when we were  
19 young, of course.
- 20 AJ: Of course.
- 21 DP: But, as we got older, we really are close and don't really have that feistiness anymore towards  
22 each other. I'm really close to my mom and dad. They've been over the top supportive. They  
23 didn't really understand and it took them a while to get used to a pronoun and name change,  
24 which they were a little bit resistant to, I think more because of inertia than anything. They just  
25 didn't want to have to shift, but eventually we got there.
- 26 AJ: "Oh, I've got to learn a new name."
- 27 DP: Yeah. And, I'm sure it's a very unique thing to have to call your child something else when you  
28 gave them a name.
- 29 AJ: Yeah.
- 30 DP: So, I tried to give them some grace and time. But, especially now, they've gotten more used to  
31 everything. I see them as often as I can now that I live out here, but I'm always home for  
32 Christmas through New Year's and usually I'll pick another point in the year, like sometime in  
33 the summer, to go back for a few days and visit.
- 34 AJ: Cool. So, the name. How did you come to Daye? What's up with that?

- 1 DP: So, the syllable day and the sound was in my given name already. So, I kind of wanted to . . .  
2 and I was named after my dad originally, so I kind of wanted to keep a reference to family and  
3 not sort of throw that into space and completely changing my name. It also became, because it  
4 was part of my given name, my nickname in college for a while – towards the end of college  
5 when I was starting to come out more as a woman. I also just loved the meaning that I sort of  
6 saw behind it, which was a new day, a fresh start, a kind of re-birth in a sense. So, everything  
7 just came together where it felt like me. As you pointed out at one point, it does have kind of a  
8 feminine sound, but it's also technically gender neutral, it's not like Olivia or something that is  
9 very clearly distinctly gendered. And so, I also kind of liked that . . . I just felt like it was always  
10 there, it was a part of my name. So, it's been easy to go by and I just sort of feel like I'm giving  
11 credence to my family who gave me my given name but also branching out and having a new  
12 start.
- 13 AJ: Making it your own.
- 14 DP: Yeah, exactly. Which is kind of like my gender metaphor, in general. Like, you gave me the tools  
15 but I'm sort of making my life my own.
- 16 AJ: Right. To the extent that you feel comfortable, and you've alluded to some of this already, but  
17 what medical interventions have you included in your journey to become or sort of assist in  
18 bringing out who you are?
- 19 DP: Yeah. So, I've been on hormones for like two and a half years, and I've had some laser hair  
20 removal, but that's really it. Growing out my hair, I guess, but I always was partial to long hair.
- 21 AJ: Sure.
- 22 DP: I really started some of the concrete processes of what you consider transition not that long ago  
23 – like two and a half years ago. I officially, legally changed my name and I also started hormones  
24 and in the meantime I've had a little bit of laser hair removal, but that's pretty much been all  
25 I've done to this point.
- 26 AJ: Yeah, I mean . . . well, are you considering other medical interventions at any point? And I have  
27 a follow-up question to that too, but go ahead.
- 28 DP: Yeah, I think so – for sure. You know, it's been just not even within the realm of possibility cost-  
29 wise for me to do much of anything else. And, where I've lived – like in Iowa and then Philly,  
30 where I was living before I came to DC, I have never had health care that was inclusive of any  
31 kind of transition-related care. It's just been a thing that's been like, "OK, maybe at some point  
32 if I'm able to but I can't really access it." But, DC has different health care laws and so I just  
33 actually am, in June, in just a couple weeks getting on employer health care that will be  
34 transition inclusive.
- 35 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 36 DP: Yeah, which feels very, very meaningful and awesome. So, hopefully soon.

- 1 AJ: Yeah. Well, thank you, for being willing to talk about that. I was going to ask, though, what do  
2 you . . . what do you think about social transition versus physical transition? You know, which  
3 one is more challenging or difficult.
- 4 DP: That's really interesting. I think, obviously, there's overlap and inter-relationship there but, for  
5 me, I kind of fine . . . I find the social transition the most rewarding and kind of fulfilling. I do  
6 think the relationship to your body is really important, but I think a lot of the time, at least for  
7 me, it was that I wasn't really feeling like I was seen or people knew who I was, which lead,  
8 again, to the detachment – sort of just not feeling connected to my life because it didn't really  
9 seem like other people could see me.
- 10 AJ: The real . . . yeah.
- 11 DP: Yeah. So, in terms of what's harder, for me, the physical feels harder just because it's harder to  
12 access.
- 13 AJ: Yeah.
- 14 DP: I can come out and have really wonderful supporting friends and family and everything, but it's  
15 prohibitively expensive and challenging to get some other kind of physical steps that people will  
16 take. So, for me, that has felt harder.
- 17 AJ: I know you say you haven't had a lot of access to health insurance, particularly in your adult life,  
18 but what has been your experience in accessing health care just generally – insurance aside? I  
19 mean everybody breaks a toe or gets a bad cough or some other health issues – I mean, we're  
20 humans.
- 21 DP: Yeah, I've been really blessed to really be very healthy in general. And, you know, growing up I  
22 had a general physician for when I would get bronchitis or something in school. But, I've not  
23 really had a lot of serious health problems at all. Once coming out as trans, though, it's been  
24 harder to find . . . not just health care, but culturally competent doctors. I started hormones  
25 when I was back in Iowa and so when you're in rural Iowa, for me, that meant driving two and a  
26 half hours to see a physician who could prescribe me hormones. And, even that physician, who  
27 specifically worked in an LGBT-affirming clinic, or a clinic that was advertised like that, still would  
28 say small ignorant things and kind of not be completely with it. So, it was kind of a weird  
29 experience where I was like, OK – I have to go a long ways to access anything and then . . . even  
30 out here though, in Philly and in DC, I've had doctors who work with a lot of LGBT patients still  
31 say kind of ignorant things or just be not as competent as they really should be to work with  
32 trans folks.
- 33 AJ: Wow.
- 34 DP: Yeah, kind of disappointing.
- 35 AJ: Wow. When was the first time you ever met a trans person?
- 36 DP: Oh, my gosh.
- 37 AJ: Who was the first trans person you ever met, as an addendum I guess?

- 1 DP: Wow. I'm not even completely sure. I think it was a trans guy and a non-binary person were  
2 both at the college LGBT student group when I first started at UNI. I went to the first meeting of  
3 the year and there was a trans guy and a non-binary person at the meeting. I think that was the  
4 first time I met someone – yeah, I was like 18.
- 5 AJ: Cool. So, in that context then, you sort of came into trans identity from a political standpoint,  
6 even though you were out as gay. You came out to your parents at 13, but were you sort of out  
7 in the world?
- 8 DP: I was once I got to college, I wasn't really in high school. It was like a known quantity but I didn't  
9 acknowledge the rumors or I wasn't openly dating anyone at the time.
- 10 AJ: I am not judging any of this, just so you know.
- 11 DP: No, of course. It's just interesting when I think back because everyone knew – you were so  
12 feminine and people read you in a certain way, but I was just like . . . my theory at the time was  
13 if I just don't engage with the rumors or anything then it would go away. It was kind of true,  
14 people kind of got bored with it after a while.
- 15 AJ: Sure, yeah.
- 16 DP: Yeah, but what you said about that political thing, that's interesting. I think I came to transness  
17 through queer community because when I went to that meeting I didn't know I was trans, or  
18 even know still really what trans was. But, I obviously knew I wasn't cis and het, there's  
19 something queer. I wanted to date guys, I had crushes on men and I was self-aware that I was  
20 very feminine and so I was like, "OK, I'm clearly not fitting the norm," or whatever. But, yeah.
- 21 AJ: Wow. Well, you . . . one of the questions that I ask is have you ever worked or been involved in  
22 an LGBT organization – you clearly have.
- 23 DP: I clearly have, yeah.
- 24 AJ: Starting in college, right?
- 25 DP: Yeah, so when I was in college it was just a student group, it wasn't like a non-profit or  
26 whatever.
- 27 AJ: No, no – yeah. But, it was LGBT focused, right?
- 28 DP: Yeah, definitely.
- 29 AJ: GSA or . . . I don't know, like a straight, gay alliance or something.
- 30 DP: Yeah, so I actually helped start a gay straight alliance when I was in high school.
- 31 AJ: Oh, wow, so you've been at it for a while.
- 32 DP: Yeah. When I was a freshman in high school, but then when I was in college . . . the GSA in high  
33 school never really took off for a lot of different reasons. But, when I was in college, I was  
34 actually president of our LGBT student group for the last two years I was there.
- 35 AJ: Wow, that's awesome.

- 1 DP: Yeah, I got really, really involved.
- 2 AJ: Leadership.
- 3 DP: Our group was kind of dying off a little bit when I got there and I sort of was coming from this  
4 small town and I was like, “Oh, I’m suddenly going to be in college where there’s going to be so  
5 many resources and a huge community.” And instead, the group was kind of dwindling and it  
6 had been poorly attended for a while. So, I did get involved, trying to get on the board and help  
7 steer the ship in a different direction. And, we were able to make it a stronger group again. So,  
8 I was really, really involved – that was probably the most important thing I did in college, that  
9 was my top priority.
- 10 AJ: Yeah. What do you think the relationship is between the L, the G, the B, and the T? Do you  
11 think we should keep this sort of fragile alliance going or should we work towards strengthening  
12 it?
- 13 DP: I definitely think our experiences and our oppression is tied together and you can’t separate it.  
14 Even with my experience, when I was being bullied all through school, it was because of  
15 homophobia and because of sort of a transphobia of me not fitting . . .
- 16 AJ: Yeah, gender norms – right.
- 17 DP: . . . the gender expectations that people had. I feel like that’s true where it’s very overlapping.  
18 A lot of folks who are cis gender gays and lesbians are bullied and harassed for being gender  
19 non-conforming, just for living their lives.
- 20 AJ: I always say nobody really knows who you’re sleeping with unless you’ve got some videos out  
21 there or something.
- 22 DP: But they know how to experience . . .
- 23 AJ: They know how they experience you when you’re not living up to the gender norms that are  
24 associated with your perceived gender.
- 25 DP: Exactly, yeah. I also feel like just . . . if people feel free to explore and express their full range of  
26 genders in this world, then also homophobia would go away because hatred and fear of gay  
27 folks is dependent on a limited understanding of gender possibilities. So, yeah.
- 28 AJ: Agreed. Let’s take a little break. And, we’re back. So, at any rate, talk to me a little bit about  
29 love and relationships. Are you in a relationship right now? Do you date guys? Girls? Trans  
30 people? What’s the love scene like for you these days, Daye?
- 31 DP: I’m currently single. I really believe in the power of love and connection and whoever you vibe  
32 with. Basically, I don’t necessarily have a preference. I tend to date men regardless of cis or  
33 trans. I don’t really know . . . I tend to find myself crushing on people with boyish energy. They  
34 don’t have to necessarily identify as men. It can be butch women or non-binary folks or men. I  
35 just got out of kind of two back-to-back kind of intense relationships, serious relationships, from  
36 when I lived in Pennsylvania. So, coming to DC, I’ve been nursing my broken heart and going on  
37 dates and seeing what’s out there but not really in a relationship.

- 1 AJ: How has being trans affected your interpersonal, romantic relationship life?
- 2 DP: I think people don't necessarily read me as trans always, so if I go out with friends to clubs and  
3 things like that, I usually meet guys and we'll flirt and we'll hit it off, but I usually don't ever see  
4 them again on purpose because I don't really feel like disclosing or having that conversation.
- 5 AJ: So, disclosure is important to you but you . . .
- 6 DP: Yeah, I don't feel like I owe disclosure to anyone but I feel vulnerable to violence if I were to just  
7 hang out and go on too many dates with someone without telling them, and then if they were  
8 to read an article about my work or something and find out, or obviously you're getting to the  
9 point where you want to be physically intimate. So, in the last year and a half, two years, I've  
10 more so dated trans guys and queer women because there is more of an openness and you  
11 don't have to explain what trans is and educate people – it's nice to have that safety, I guess.
- 12 AJ: Yeah. No, that's real.
- 13 DP: Yeah. I also meet people when I go out and things like that, but I usually . . . we'll dance  
14 together or whatever and then I'll ghost on them or just give them a fake number or something.  
15 I just don't want to have to go through this whole thing of agonizing over whether to tell you or  
16 not and actually starting to like you and then being like, "Ahh, what if you don't accept me?" It's  
17 just like this is too much.
- 18 AJ: What about gay guys? When I first came out I thought gay guys, that's going to be . . . this is  
19 going to be a mecca for me.
- 20 DP: Really?
- 21 AJ: That was my thought, it did not manifest at all. But, what has that experience been like for you?  
22 What's your relationship to sort of gay men?
- 23 DP: Well, even when I was . . . when other people would read me as male, albeit very feminine, I  
24 was really too feminine for most gay men to want to date me.
- 25 AJ: Really, wow.
- 26 DP: I also had some kind of sense that that was just not quite right because I wouldn't really fall for  
27 gay men. I had some sense and was like, "Oh, I don't really feel gay in that way." So, no, I hang  
28 out with a lot of gay men as close friends and supportive, fun people to go out with and things  
29 like that, but I . . .
- 30 AJ: Chosen family and that kind of stuff.
- 31 DP: Yeah, exactly. One of my dearest best friends, who I lived with in DC in the past, is a gay man  
32 who interned out here with me when I originally was interning in DC. So, some of my closest  
33 friends are . . .
- 34 AJ: What was your internship?
- 35 DP: So, funny because we're at Victory Fund things this weekend.

- 1 AJ: We were at a Victory Fund event, yes.
- 2 DP: Yes, I interned through a Victory Fund program where they placed young LGBT college leaders  
3 into congressional offices and paid for us to stay in DC, because DC is so expensive. So, I was  
4 interning in the office of Senator Tom Harkin from Iowa.
- 5 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 6 DP: Yeah, right before he retired, so it was really cool to be in his office having grown up knowing  
7 that he represented us.
- 8 AJ: He was a very long-serving representative, right?
- 9 DP: Thirty years, yeah. He did a lot of really amazing things, including being a big supporter of ENDA  
10 when they were trying to pass that. It was really cool.
- 11 AJ: Wow. So, you came to DC on an internship . . . I kind of forgot where that whole story was  
12 going. But, what do you think the agenda for the trans community should be? And let me  
13 preface all of this by saying, so today was Trans Pride here in DC, an event that was sort of  
14 sponsored by, supported by, conceived by trans-identified people, with a mission to . . . from  
15 what I understand very little, but with a mission to sort of lift up and honor people who are  
16 doing big work in the community.
- 17 DP: Yeah.
- 18 AJ: To create awareness around opportunities for trans people be they services or legal or various  
19 resources, as well as to just kind of celebrate the fact that we are here. So, given all that  
20 context, what do you think the agenda is for the trans movement? Is there a trans movement?  
21 Is there one trans community? What do you think?
- 22 DP: That's a really complex question. I think the trans community, if you want to say it like that, is  
23 more realistically a lot of different, smaller communities that are more localized and, at times,  
24 divided based on identity in age and race and a lot of different things. I do think that in a  
25 broadly speaking way, there is a trans community and that we do have some shared experiences  
26 and needs and issues across the board, even though there is a lot of things that differ. In some  
27 sense, we all have to deal with navigating health care and finding income as a trans or non-  
28 binary gender expansive person. A lot of different issues underneath that branch out a little bit  
29 and differ, but at its core, I think we are one community made up of a lot of other smaller  
30 communities. But, what should our agenda be? I think for the longest time, trans and gender  
31 expansive folks have done miraculous work on the ground – direct service and life-saving  
32 immediate . . . just stopping the wounds of how much we have to deal with as people and  
33 violence and poverty and homelessness and all of it. And, we have to continue to do that  
34 because those are still huge issues, but I think overall our agenda has to be to go beyond just  
35 bandaging up our wounds and treating the symptoms of the way that we're oppressed and  
36 actually change the structures that keep us homeless and in poverty and vulnerable to violence  
37 and all those things. I think the trans community is starting to shift that way as we get a few  
38 more allies and a few more people who understand who we are and a little bit more political  
39 power, even if it's just a little bit. I think we're able to bridge that gap and say yes, we're still



- 1 serving the immediate needs of the community but we're also planning for the future to keep  
2 those needs from being created in the first place – electing trans people is one of the main  
3 things that I believe in will be a meaningful part of that change.
- 4 AP: Do you know any trans people running for office by chance?
- 5 DP: No, I can't think of any off the top of my head.
- 6 AP: Oh, wow. There's this person, a great friend of mine, Phillippe Cunningham, who is running for  
7 City Council.
- 8 DP: And aren't you running? I thought I read that somewhere.
- 9 AP: Oh, OK. Just joking around.
- 10 DP: Of course.
- 11 AP: Wow. Where do you see this sort of multi-pronged community in 50 years from now?
- 12 DP: Wow.
- 13 AP: Or what do you think the state of gender will be 50 years from now?
- 14 DP: My hope is that not only will trans and gender-expansive people be free and safe to be  
15 ourselves completely, but that people, in general, feel free, really, to just express and exist  
16 however ways they want to in regards to gender. Hopefully, we'll get to a point where people,  
17 even cis people, don't feel the need to be as limited to, "Because I'm a woman this is what I  
18 have to wear or act like or this is the type of job I need to have." I feel like there's still a lot of  
19 that in 2017, whether people admit sometimes. So, hopefully people are just kind of liberated to  
20 exist and to express their gender however they see fit.
- 21 AP: I love your t-shirt.
- 22 DP: Yes, I just got this today at Trans Pride. I thought the message was really important.
- 23 AP: Here, I'm just going to pull into that a little bit. "There is no wrong way to have a body." What  
24 attracted you to that shirt?
- 25 DP: I just feel like it's a really kind of revolutionary thing to say and think and something that I really  
26 believe in, which is . . . trans people as well as folks with disabilities and so many other people I  
27 feel like are just made to feel less than and actually discriminated against and harassed and  
28 attacked for our bodies just being different than what people might want or expect. It's like  
29 we're all people, right? So, it just shouldn't really matter – there's no wrong way to have a  
30 body, you should just exist in your body and do your thing and be you.
- 31 AP: Daye, is there anything that I have not asked you that you feel compelled to say or talk about?
- 32 DP: So open-ended. I think everyone experiences being trans or transitioning or being gender  
33 expansive differently, but for me I think it's been a really spiritual experience. I don't necessarily  
34 consider myself to have a super structured religious framework, but I believe in something  
35 bigger than myself. There are definitely times where being trans is really hard and painful, but I

- 1           also feel like I've . . . I feel like there's something kind of beautiful and special and meaningful  
2           about going on a journey with gender and sort of existing beyond the world as people knew it in  
3           a sense. I think there's a lot of . . . when you read about a lot of different societies and cultures  
4           that had special kinds of spiritual concepts of what it meant to be third gender or some other  
5           kind of gender, and many different names for it – that makes a lot of sense to me because I feel  
6           like there is something really profound and meaningful and perhaps gives you a little bit of  
7           wisdom when you're kind of existing in this way.
- 8    AP:    I'm so glad you brought spirituality into the dialogue today. I'm just so glad to have this  
9           opportunity to get to know you a little bit better, to be able to document this little slice of your  
10          story because we know that in just a little over an hour you really can't talk about your whole  
11          life. We really appreciate you sharing today.
- 12   DP:    Thank you, yeah. I really appreciate you reaching out and wanting to include me.
- 13   AP:    Absolutely. Peace out – until we meet again, my friend.
- 14   DP:    Yes, thank you.
- 15   AP:    All right.