

Breatta Bee Amore  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

February 16, 2017



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     Breatta Bee Amore       -BBE  
3  
4     AJ:        So, hello.  
5     BBA:     Hello, Andrea.  
6     AJ:        My name is Andrea Jenkins. I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project at  
7                the University of Minnesota. Today is February 16, 2017, and I am here at the home of Bee  
8                Amore in south Minneapolis. How you doing, Bee?  
9     BBA:     I am great. How are you, Andrea?  
10    AJ:        Oh, my goodness girl.  
11    BBA:     It's wonderful to see you again, darling.  
12    AJ:        It is so good to see you. I haven't seen you for a while.  
13    BBA:     Thank you. I don't hardly go out anymore. I will never forget the times I had when I did. I had a  
14                grand time down at the 90s Saloon, all the bars downtown.  
15    AJ:        All the bars downtown.  
16    BBA:     I miss the Cloud 9 Bar. Do you remember that bar, the Cloud 9?  
17    AJ:        I remember the Cloud 9.  
18    BBA:     Yeah, I remember that bar.  
19    AJ:        Wow. Lots of memories, but before we start talking about our memories and everything, Bee,  
20                tell me your name. I want you to say your name, spell it so that we make sure we get it spelled  
21                right. Tell me what is your gender identity today and what gender you were assigned at birth  
22                and what pronouns do you like to use.  
23    BBA:     OK, I sure will. My name is Breatta Bee Amore. Breatta is spelled B-r-e-a-t-t-a; my middle name  
24                Bee is spelled B-e-e, not B-e-a, B-e-e; my last name is spelled A-m-o-r-e.  
25    AJ:        OK.  
26    BBA:     I got my last name from Deja.  
27    AJ:        Deja – Deja Love.  
28    BBA:     Yes.  
29    AJ:        She named you?  
30    BBA:     No, I named her. I wanted to have Love but I didn't want it sounding like hers so I have Amore.  
31    AJ:        All right, wow – that's a great little story. I like that. And Deja Love is another transgender  
32                friend of ours.  
33    BBA:     Yes, just awesome, just wonderful.

- 1 AJ: Lives in Las Vegas, and she's a showgirl.
- 2 BBA: She's from here, she's a showgirl.
- 3 AJ: She's from Minneapolis, yes.
- 4 BBA: She's from south Minneapolis, she's a showgirl, and she looks just like Nicki Minaj.
- 5 AJ: Nicki Minaj. So, Bee, what is your gender identity today?
- 6 BBA: My gender identity today is I am a trans female.
- 7 AJ: OK, trans female. What was your gender assigned at birth?
- 8 BBA: My gender assigned at birth was male.
- 9 AJ: OK.
- 10 BBA: How I became the way I am today is when I was two, I knew I was gay.
- 11 AJ: Right. How did you know at two?
- 12 BBA: Because my mother and father didn't . . . here's how that goes. My mother would have my aunt  
13 and her friends over. I would not stare at them like when my father would have all of his  
14 relatives over.
- 15 AJ: You were not scared of them you said?
- 16 BBA: No, I stared at the men that came over, but not the women.
- 17 AJ: Oh, you stared at the men but not the women, OK.
- 18 BBA: That's when I knew I liked the men and I was gay.
- 19 AJ: OK, wow.
- 20 BBA: My father knew it and my mother didn't like it, but my father loved me, he didn't care what I  
21 came out to be - he loved me anyway.
- 22 AJ: Really?
- 23 BBA: I was the only child he ever had . . . I was the only child he ever had [inaudible 3:54].
- 24 AJ: Wow. Is your father still alive?
- 25 BBA: No, he got killed in 1970 when I was 12.
- 26 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 27 BBA: I'll never, never forget him.
- 28 AJ: So, what pronouns do you use, Bee?
- 29 BBA: I use female.
- 30 AJ: So she and her.

- 1 BBA: Yeah, she and her, lady, woman.
- 2 AJ: Lady, ma'am, woman.
- 3 BBA: Yeah, as long as they're female, I use them.
- 4 AJ: OK. So, Bee, you realized you were gay when you were two years old. Where did you grow up?
- 5 Where were you born?
- 6 BBA: OK, I was born in Madison, Wisconsin, the capital of Wisconsin, but I wasn't raised there. I was
- 7 raised in Chicago, Illinois and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- 8 AJ: OK.
- 9 BBA: The reason why I was raised in both cities, my grandmother raised me in Milwaukee and I
- 10 moved to Chicago with my dad's parents – they were from Detroit, but they lived in Chicago too.
- 11 I was going down there and being with my dad.
- 12 AJ: All right. So, in-between Milwaukee and Chicago. Wow.
- 13 BBA: We used to travel. My father was a brick mason and a construction worker.
- 14 AJ: Which kind of construction worker?
- 15 BBA: My dad.
- 16 AJ: He was a . . . ?
- 17 BBA: Brick mason and a construction worker.
- 18 AJ: A brick mason and a construction worker.
- 19 BBA: He traveled all over the U.S. to build these skyscrapers like the Sears Tower.
- 20 AJ: He worked on the Sears Tower?
- 21 BBA: Yeah, he worked on the Sears Tower. He helped build a lot of skyscrapers in Canada and here in
- 22 the U.S.
- 23 AJ: Oh, my goodness. So, he made good money.
- 24 BBA: Oh, yes.
- 25 AJ: Bee, do you mind if I ask you to take out your gum just so I can understand you a little bit better.
- 26 Sorry. Thank you.
- 27 BBA: That's all right, Andrea.
- 28 AJ: So, wow. Did you travel with your dad when he was on these construction jobs?
- 29 BBA: Yes, we would live in certain cities and he would work in other cities, but he would come back
- 30 home every weekend.
- 31 AJ: OK.

- 1 BBA: So, when we lived in Seattle and he worked in Los Angeles and he would fly home every  
2 weekend or what he would do, if he didn't come home, he would let me fly to him and I would  
3 go by myself.
- 4 AJ: And spend the weekend with your dad.
- 5 BBA: Yeah, with my daddy – yeah.
- 6 AJ: Wow, that's quite a childhood.
- 7 BBA: My mom, after my dad got killed, she didn't re-marry until about five or seven years later. And  
8 then she married my stepfather and I got some more brothers and sisters – I didn't have no  
9 sisters no way; my mom never had a girl.
- 10 AJ: Oh, really.
- 11 BBA: She had five boys and then when she married my stepfather, she adopted four girls and two  
12 little boys. So, eleven of us all together. My sisters, I will never forget how beautiful they are.  
13 My Lord, my sisters, they're beautiful – all four of them, they're really beautiful. I love them; I  
14 think about them all the time.
- 15 AJ: Do you talk to them at all?
- 16 BBA: Yeah, I talk to two of them – Barbara and Lisa.
- 17 AJ: Barbara and Lisa.
- 18 BBA: Yeah, Barbara is my older – her birthday was just the 10<sup>th</sup> and she turned 61; she's older than  
19 me.
- 20 AJ: OK.
- 21 BBA: I got another sister that's older than her, she's going to be 63 – Cynthia.
- 22 AJ: How old are you, Bee?
- 23 BBA: I'm getting ready to turn 59 in June.
- 24 AJ: Is that right? Wow.
- 25 BBA: Yeah, I'm turning 59 this June.
- 26 AJ: So, you were moving all around. Were you going to different schools?
- 27 BBA: Yeah, but I loved the schools. I loved school. Everywhere I moved to, I made sure my mother . .  
28 . well, one city we moved to, Kansas City, Missouri. We moved there and I was walking the area  
29 and I seen the school . . . I was only like 14 then or something like that then, going to middle  
30 school. [inaudible 8:18]. It was wonderful.
- 31 AJ: It was a beautiful school, huh?
- 32 BBA: Yes, it was. Light brick and tall.

- 1 AJ: And you picked that school.
- 2 BBA: Yeah, I asked my dad and my mom . . . well, my dad was dead then, my mom put me in that  
3 school. I said, "Mom, I walked to the school just to see it." And she said, "Well, honey, you live  
4 here."
- 5 AJ: Wow. So, you knew you were gay when you were two. Did you express that? Did other people  
6 know?
- 7 BBA: No, not too much other people knew it. They knew that I was that way.
- 8 AJ: They could tell.
- 9 BBA: Yeah, because I was always so feminine. I did a lot of boy things too, but I didn't really enjoy . . .  
10 the only way I could do it, I tried to do it with style and grace.
- 11 AJ: Did people make fun of you? Did people tease you? Did people beat you up?
- 12 BBA: Yeah, when I was a kid . . . no, I didn't get beat up a lot but I had a first cousin named Eugene  
13 Polk and he kind of bullied me around in junior high.
- 14 AJ: Eugene Polk?
- 15 BBA: Yeah, Eugene Polk. He's my cousin. Now, when I found out he was my cousin, he kept trying to  
16 take my lunch money that my mom would give me every day for my lunch in junior high school.  
17 So, one day, I found out he was my cousin . . . my first cousin, Vanessa, told me that he was our  
18 cousin. When I found that out, when I saw him on the playground, I beat him up.
- 19 AJ: Did you?
- 20 BBA: Yeah, beat the crap out of him. I said, "You're my cousin and you're trying to rob me every day."
- 21 AJ: Like, "This is not happening."
- 22 BBA: I let him have it – beat his brains out too in front of two friends, and the two friends ran on . . .  
23 they was scared of me.
- 24 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 25 BBA: I had an interesting childhood too.
- 26 AJ: Yeah, tell me about it.
- 27 BBA: Well, growing up in Milwaukee was different than growing up in Chicago. It had a Chicago  
28 flavor, the next city from Chicago – it's almost just like Chicago.
- 29 AJ: Yeah, it's right there; it's an hour away.
- 30 BBA: Yeah, 98 miles away. So, we'd go up . . . now, I had two awesome best friends when I was a kid  
31 until adulthood.
- 32 AJ: Wow.

- 1 BBA: And we all were gay.
- 2 AJ: OK.
- 3 BBA: Eric and Ed. Ed West and Eric Sams. Eric Sams looks like that boy that played on *Empire* – the  
4 light-skinned, tall one; not the short one, the tall light-skinned one.
- 5 AJ: Right.
- 6 BBA: Eric looked like him a hell of a lot. And then Ed is dark skinned and looks like Buster Rhymes, but  
7 tall. He was really built too. Now, I grew up with them two men all my life and we all turned  
8 gay together, we always used to go out together, we all went to school together, we graduated  
9 the same year together, we went to Job Corps together – we did everything. I ain't never going  
10 to forget those two - my two best friends. Eric died in 1991, but Ed West is living in DC and he  
11 works for the Pentagon now.
- 12 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 13 BBA: One of my sisters works there too.
- 14 AJ: Is that right?
- 15 BBA: Yeah, my sister Barbara that I just mentioned.
- 16 AJ: Barbara.
- 17 BBA: Yeah, she works at the Pentagon.
- 18 AJ: So, she lives in DC or Virginia?
- 19 BBA: She lives in Virginia; she's got a house in Virginia, right outside of Richmond – east of Richmond  
20 in a suburb, but I forgot the name of it. But, she got a couple of cars too so when she lives in  
21 Virginia but she's got to go to work in DC, she will drive from Virginia to DC every day and back.
- 22 AJ: Right.
- 23 BBA: So, she told me that she's looking for another house though. This house has nine bedrooms and  
24 six bathrooms in it.
- 25 AJ: She got a lot of kids or something?
- 26 BBA: No, she doesn't have any kids.
- 27 AJ: Why does she need a big old house?
- 28 BBA: She just likes big homes.
- 29 AJ: Really?
- 30 BBA: She asked me to come live with her.
- 31 AJ: So, do you talk to Eric at all?
- 32 BBA: No, Eric is dead.



- 1 AJ: I'm sorry – then . . . what's the other? Ed. So, Ed is the one who works . . .
- 2 BBA: Ed – Ed is the one that works with my sister.
- 3 AJ: Do you still keep in touch with him?
- 4 BBA: Yeah, yeah – a lot. I hear from him all the time. And my sister, Barbara, Deja . . . let's see, who  
5 else? When I go downtown, I always see Nina.
- 6 AJ: Nina DiAngelo?
- 7 BBA: Always, I always see her.
- 8 AJ: Yes.
- 9 BBA: I go by the Saloon.
- 10 AJ: She's a showgirl at the . . . she used to be at the 90s but now she's at the Saloon?
- 11 BBA: Yes.
- 12 AJ: OK.
- 13 BBA: She still has the same job at the Saloon that she had at the 90s, she was the manager of the La  
14 Femme Show.
- 15 AJ: Right.
- 16 BBA: I don't know what they call it at the Saloon, they call it something different at the Saloon. She  
17 calls it something else there.
- 18 AJ: Yeah. It used to be La Femme at the 90s.
- 19 BBA: At the 90s, yeah. They still got that show but she ain't running it, they got another manager for  
20 it.
- 21 AJ: Right.
- 22 BBA: I don't know who's the manager for that. I think it's Roxy Marquis.
- 23 AJ: Who?
- 24 BBA: Roxy.
- 25 AJ: Roxy . . . oh, Roxy Marquis. No, she left too. Roxy Marquis M-a-r-q-u-i-s.
- 26 BBA: Yeah. You know who else is back in town?
- 27 AJ: Cee.
- 28 BBA: Cee, yeah, but somebody else.
- 29 AJ: BeBe?
- 30 BBA: No, someone else.

- 1 AJ: Oh, my goodness.
- 2 BBA: Chi Larue.
- 3 AJ: Chi? Oh, wow. She's back in Minneapolis?
- 4 BBA: Yeah, I know her real good. I performed – me and Daisy performed at Margarita Bella's with Chi  
5 Larue.
- 6 AJ: Oh, really.
- 7 BBA: Yeah, we did. Do remember Margarita Bella's over on Central?
- 8 AJ: Margar . . . ?
- 9 BBA: Margarita Bella's, it was a gay bar.
- 10 AJ: Oh, Margaritaville.
- 11 BBA: Margarita Bella's is the old name of it. A gay boy opened it up and it closed down, but before it  
12 closed down, that's where I met Chi LaRue at.
- 13 AJ: OK.
- 14 BBA: Deja had already knew Chi Chi. Now, Chi Chi is doing real good. She travels from here to  
15 California . . .
- 16 AJ: She was making movies out there, right?
- 17 BBA: Yeah, I have one of them movies too.
- 18 AJ: Porn?
- 19 BBA: Yeah, I have one of those movies.
- 20 AJ: I've never seen any of her movies. Are they gay-themed movies or are they transgender?
- 21 BBA: They both, they're transgender and gay. She makes all that.
- 22 AJ: Oh, wow. But, she's back in Minneapolis now.
- 23 BBA: Yeah, she's back up here. I seen her this last winter with Nina. I seen both of them together.
- 24 AJ: Wow. OK, I'm going to have to take a trip down to the Saloon.
- 25 BBA: I seen BeBe, Phoebe and Genevieve.
- 26 AJ: OK. Genevieve Richards?
- 27 BBA: No, Genevieve Love. Genevieve Love is the one that played Beyonce with Champaigne and  
28 BeBe in the Destiny Child skit and they won at First Avenue.
- 29 AJ: OK. So, Bee. You realized you were gay at two, when did you realize you were transgender?

- 1 BBA: Oh, when I found out I was transgender, I was hanging out with Deja. One day she made me up  
2 and I couldn't believe who I looked like. I looked like Angela Winbush or Diana Ross . . .
- 3 AJ: Angela Winbush, Diana Ross.
- 4 BBA: All the Black girls - Gladys Knight, all the girls. But, yeah, Deja . . .
- 5 AJ: So, were you a performer too?
- 6 BBA: Yeah, we all worked at the 90s.
- 7 AJ: Really?
- 8 BBA: Yeah. I got hired as one of the La Femme girls by Nina and Cee Cee Russell.
- 9 AJ: OK.
- 10 BBA: Child, they had me. OK, I moved from Central Avenue, I moved on to Hennepin, right across the  
11 street from the library in a high rise apartment here. There was a queen named Richard that  
12 lived in there and she would do shows at the Brass Rail. So, one day she . . . she just said,  
13 "Wow." I did that for about a month, that was before she asked me to do a show for her at the  
14 Brass Rail. I did not know it was going to be whole review show, for a whole 30 days. They  
15 wanted me bad.
- 16 AJ: So, you thought it was just going to be like one night, and it was for 30 days. A whole review.
- 17 BBA: Girl, I made like \$20,000.
- 18 AJ: Is that right? For 30 days?
- 19 BBA: Yeah.
- 20 AJ: Oh, my goodness.
- 21 BBA: Had my name on the building and inside the bar, across the bar – it was going this way, that  
22 way. [Inaudible 17:25] what my performance was, Deja performed with us too, but they were  
23 really taking me because I could really perform so, Nina and Cee Cee came to see my show and  
24 that's when they told me to come join the 90s and I performed there. I performed at the 90s,  
25 downstairs on Wednesday night. You know, on Wednesday nights downstairs [inaudible 17:55].  
26 So, I performed there and then Nina called me on the telephone after I got home, right after she  
27 got home from the 90s, and told me, "I want to make you a La Femme girl because you can  
28 really perform."
- 29 AJ: Oh, wow. Oh, my goodness. So, you used to do Gladys Knight, Diana Ross?
- 30 BBA: Right, Diana Ross.
- 31 AJ: Diana Ross.
- 32 BBA: I used to do Natalie Cole.
- 33 AJ: Natalie Cole.

- 1 BBA: Natalie Cole – and Angela Winbush.
- 2 AJ: Oh, right.
- 3 BBA: Anita Baker and . . . let's see, who else was there? There was one party I went to that's when I  
4 did a Mahalia Jackson song.
- 5 AJ: Really?
- 6 BBA: Yeah.
- 7 AJ: *How Great Thou Art?*
- 8 BBA: Yeah.
- 9 AJ: Wow, that's beautiful. So, you were saying, though, that Deja is the one – she made you up and  
10 you just felt really comfortable?
- 11 BBA: Yeah, more comfortable and I looked good. We used to go out and I'm going to tell you  
12 something about Deja. I met her at a Gay Pride event.
- 13 AJ: At a Gay Pride event?
- 14 BBA: Yeah, at Minnehaha Falls park.
- 15 AJ: Yeah, I think I remember that event – I was there.
- 16 BBA: An AIDS walk and a picnic.
- 17 AJ: AIDS walk and a picnic, yes.
- 18 BBA: At the picnic, I saw Deja playing with four little kids. This was when I was working for Tom and . .  
19 . what's his name? The name is making me . . . what's his name again? He had Minnesota Men  
20 of Color – what was that man's name?
- 21 AJ: Oh, Nick.
- 22 BBA: Yeah, Nick Metcalf and Tom. OK, they took me to the AIDS walk and the picnic and that's where  
23 I saw Deja.
- 24 AJ: Roxanne used to work there to.
- 25 BBA: Yeah, she worked there with us when me and Deja worked there. I think another person . . . it  
26 wasn't Anna . . . the one that wore the brim hat with the little glasses – her. Dark-haired girl  
27 with the round-rimmed glasses.
- 28 AJ: Rochelle?
- 29 BBA: Is that her name?
- 30 AJ: She hangs out with . . . does she hang out with . . .
- 31 BBA: I need some water.

- 1 AJ: Now remember you've got your microphone on.
- 2 BBA: I know I've got to take it off before I get some water . . .
- 3 AJ: Hang on, where's your water? Maybe I can just grab it for you.
- 4 BBA: I have to go upstairs and get some, I think.
- 5 AJ: Oh, OK. Well, let me stop the tape for a minute then.
- 6 BBA: My mouth is getting dry.
- 7 AJ: So, we are back – got some water, feeling a little better?
- 8 BBA: Yes, thank you, Andrea.
- 9 AJ: No problem. So, you know, you were kind of telling me about Deja and how she . . .
- 10 BBA: Oh, yeah. Deja was a very good influence on me. I knew she worked, I knew she did it on her  
11 own, but what happened to Deja, she got evicted from her apartment so she ended up moving  
12 in with me. We became the very best of friends.
- 13 AJ: And this was after you guys met at the AIDS event over at Minnehaha Park.
- 14 BBA: Yeah. She was working for Macys but they fired her, I don't know why. Maybe they found out  
15 she was a man so they fired her. She had a lawsuit against the company too about that. I think  
16 she finally won that and then that's when she moved to Vegas.
- 17 AJ: OK.
- 18 BBA: But, what I really want to do, Andrea, is go back to work, go work out at the gym, save some  
19 money, get me a car, and travel to see Deja and the rest of my family. Like Kenaday . . .
- 20 AJ: Like who?
- 21 BBA: Kenaday.
- 22 AJ: Kenaday? I don't remember . . .
- 23 BBA: You don't remember Kenaday Williams, she used to be up here from Houston, Texas.
- 24 AJ: I don't think I remember Kenaday.
- 25 BBA: She used to be with me and Deja all the time.
- 26 AJ: Really? OK.
- 27 BBA: Me and Deja went out five years straight - every night for five years straight.
- 28 AJ: Every night? Seven days a week?
- 29 BBA: Every night. Yes, every day of the week for five years straight.
- 30 AJ: Wow.

- 1 BBA: After that, then that's when she moved to Las Vegas. That's why I'm missing her – a lot of grand  
2 times with her.
- 3 AJ: I know, I loved Deja.
- 4 BBA: Every night.
- 5 AJ: I miss her so much.
- 6 BBA: The Saloon every night, Exchange every night, Brass Rail every night. We loved it, I just loved it.
- 7 AJ: So, let me ask you a personal question, Bee, and you don't have to answer it – only if you want  
8 to, but are you HIV positive?
- 9 BBA: I have full-blown AIDS and I've been living with it since 1993.
- 10 AJ: Really?
- 11 BBA: Yes.
- 12 AJ: That's a long time.
- 13 BBA: The reason why I'm living with it is, still living, is because the doctor says I'm non-detectable and  
14 everything and I've taken a low dose of medicine for the last 15 years now.
- 15 AJ: Is that right?
- 16 BBA: Yeah.
- 17 AJ: Wow. Man, AZT . . . is that . . . ?
- 18 BBA: No, they don't have that no more. That killed my friend, Eric – that killed Eric. They had that –  
19 that was the first drug for AIDS and HIV, but it was still killing people.
- 20 AJ: Wow. What kind of medication do you take?
- 21 BBA: They've got very advanced new drugs now and I take six regiments of AIDS medicine and two of  
22 them are in one pill and four of them in one pill.
- 23 AJ: So, you only take two pills?
- 24 BBA: No, I take five pills – like vitamins, but those two I take every day. Every morning and if I miss it,  
25 I take it in the afternoon or at night. It gives me a boost of energy.
- 26 AJ: Yeah, you look good.
- 27 BBA: Well, thank you. I try to keep myself looking good.
- 28 AJ: Wow, since 1993. That's quite a long time.
- 29 BBA: I contracted HIV in 1990 and I went [inaudible 24:48] and then I contracted AIDS in 1993. But,  
30 they started me on medicine when I was HIV-positive too and they said that helped a lot too.
- 31 AJ: Right. So, if your viral loads are undetectable, does that still mean you have full-blown AIDS?

- 1 BBA: Yes, it just can't be spread as quick anymore. That's the benefit, it can't spread as fast.
- 2 AJ: How do you think the impact of being Black, being transgender, and having HIV and AIDS has  
3 affected your life?
- 4 BBA: Well, my life has been . . . since I found out I had this, up and down. [inaudible 25:48]
- 5 AJ: Can I ask you to just speak a little bit louder.
- 6 BBA: OK. My life has been like an up and down battle since I found out I have this. Back about 15  
7 years ago, I was on street drugs every day, that didn't help me out any. That brought me further  
8 down.
- 9 AJ: When you say street drugs, you mean like cocaine and . . .
- 10 BBA: Yeah, cocaine and acid and pills. But, I've been clean and sober since 2003.
- 11 AJ: Nice.
- 12 BBA: That life didn't help me at all.
- 13 AJ: Right. Has it affected your ability to find work?
- 14 BBA: No, it hasn't done that – they all know I'm a transsexual. All my jobs I had, I would tell them I  
15 was transsexual.
- 16 AJ: OK.
- 17 BBA: There wasn't no problem because of that. It was my . . . I'm not sure it helped when I got sick  
18 and I called in.
- 19 AJ: You're sick, yeah. And then you would lose your job?
- 20 BBA: Well, my one job kept me for many years – I worked that job for five years. I got sick and I was  
21 in the hospital for a week and that job paid me for being out that week too.
- 22 AJ: Wow.
- 23 BBA: I had no problem with employment here in Minneapolis.
- 24 AJ: What kind of work did you do?
- 25 BBA: Well, I do computer work, I worked in a NutraSweet plant.
- 26 AJ: In a which kind of plant?
- 27 BBA: NutraSweet – sugar.
- 28 AJ: Oh, NutraSweet. OK.
- 29 BBA: A NutraSweet plant. I worked for the Minnesota Twins in the two World Series they had.
- 30 AJ: Really? That was fun.
- 31 BBA: Yeah, I was at the MetroDome, I worked two jobs there – concessions, selling brats and beer.

- 1 AJ: OK.
- 2 BBA: And then I worked cleaning the seats too. I got any old job – any old job. I met Kirby Puckett.
- 3 AJ: Really?
- 4 BBA: I was a batboy for the Minnesota World Series.
- 5 AJ: You were the bat boy? Really?
- 6 BBA: Yeah.
- 7 AJ: At the World Series?
- 8 BBA: Yes – both of them.
- 9 AJ: Both of them.
- 10 BBA: Kirby Puckett was a good friend of mine.
- 11 AJ: So, you were good friends with Kirby?
- 12 BBA: Yes.
- 13 AJ: Actually, I grew up in the same neighborhood as Kirby Puckett in Chicago.
- 14 BBA: Yeah, yeah – he’s from Chicago.
- 15 AJ: He went to Calumet High School and I used to live right around the corner from Calumet.
- 16 BBA: Yeah, he sure did. I have some cousins that went there – they still go there.
- 17 AJ: Really?
- 18 BBA: Yeah, they’re going there right now.
- 19 AJ: Is that right?
- 20 BBA: I’ve got one cousin that’s 17, he’s in the school. I was raised well - I was raised very well. I was  
21 raised good by my mom and my grandmother. Now, the reason why I talk about my  
22 grandmother more than anyone else is because she was my heart. I miss her, but I still know  
23 she’s looking over me and everything. When I was coming up with her, it was a wonderful  
24 experience.
- 25 AJ: Is your mom still alive?
- 26 BBA: No, all my parents and grandparents are gone now. The only ones from my immediate family  
27 are me and my two brothers.
- 28 AJ: Really? Did your mom or your dad know that you were transgender?
- 29 BBA: Yeah, my mom did; my dad didn’t – my dad was long dead when I . . .
- 30 AJ: When you came out.



- 1 BBA: No, when I came out . . . he knew when I came out . . .
- 2 AJ: As gay, but not as a woman.
- 3 BBA: Not as a woman, no. He didn't know [inaudible 29:45].
- 4 AJ: So, did your brothers and sisters . . . they know.
- 5 BBA: Yeah, they know.
- 6 AJ: Do you guys still talk? Do you guys get along?
- 7 BBA: Yeah, my brothers and sisters love me.
- 8 AJ: Really?
- 9 BBA: Yeah, they like the way I am.
- 10 AJ: Yeah, I love it – that's beautiful.
- 11 BBA: They like it too. I went home for the first time as a trans woman in 2012. I didn't think I would  
12 be accepted as well as I thought I was. My cousin, my female cousin, Joyce, I walked in the  
13 house and she said, "Oh, my goodness – whoa, you looking fine. You must have a good life up  
14 there in Minnesota the way you're looking girl." My middle cousin said, "You look more like a  
15 woman than you ever did." "Oh, shit." And my brother, he said that too. I look like my mama  
16 and he said, "Damn, you look exactly like our mama now." Crazy boy. "You look like mama  
17 now," he tells me.
- 18 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 19 BBA: I love my family.
- 20 AJ: That's good.
- 21 BBA: I got some that don't accept the way I am, they're church-going people . . . deacons, you know,  
22 but I can understand where they're coming from, they're living for the Lord. I believe in God, I  
23 always have. Just because I'm a trans don't mean . . .
- 24 AJ: Right. Do you go to church now?
- 25 BBA: Oh, yeah, I still go to church. I'm going to church this Sunday. There's a church right here in  
26 Richfield here that I go to, it's called East Side Baptist Church, it's on 62<sup>nd</sup> and Oliver.
- 27 AJ: East Side Baptist Church.
- 28 BBA: 62<sup>nd</sup> and Oliver – you know where the freeway is?
- 29 AJ: Yeah.
- 30 BBA: That's the street behind the freeway, the church is right behind the freeway over there.
- 31 AJ: Really?
- 32 BBA: You can park right there by the freeway fence too.

- 1 AJ: I know, I've been around there.
- 2 BBA: There's the church parking lot.
- 3 AJ: And the people at the church are pretty nice to you?
- 4 BBA: Yeah, they're crazy about me. I love people. If I didn't, I wouldn't have no friends.
- 5 AJ: Right.
- 6 BBA: I love good people – people with heart and soul.
- 7 AJ: Wow. So, do the police harass you for being transgender?
- 8 BBA: No. Do you know what happened to me? We went to see Patty LaBelle on the 14<sup>th</sup> of last  
9 month. I was dressed as a woman and I had to go to the bathroom.
- 10 AJ: Right.
- 11 BBA: So, one of the people that worked there, I went downstairs and I went in the women's  
12 bathroom and she told me I couldn't do in there. I said, "I'm here dressed as a woman, I'm  
13 going to the woman's bathroom. If I go in the men's bathroom, they're going to wonder why  
14 I'm in there and they're going to harass me." So, that's why I went to the women's bathroom –  
15 to avoid all the harassment, and they find out I'm a guy I might get killed by somebody in the  
16 bathroom.
- 17 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 18 BBA: Men are very, very suspicious.
- 19 AJ: Was this at a casino?
- 20 BBA: No, this was at the State Theatre.
- 21 AJ: Oh, downtown at the State Theatre. OK.
- 22 BBA: She was talking so loud while I was going to the bathroom and the police came to the top of the  
23 stairs and waited until I came back upstairs. He didn't say two words to me because he thought  
24 I was a real girl.
- 25 AJ: Yeah. So, no real harassment.
- 26 BBA: I used to get harassed when I first started transitioning, but see Deja helped me come out of  
27 that. "What are people going to say? They're going to say it anyway, you're going to keep on  
28 living and breathing." That's what Deja taught me.
- 29 AJ: So, Deja is like your mentor? Your sister?
- 30 BBA: She was a good . . . she is a sister to me and I miss her so much. It's like I said, if I ever get my  
31 stuff together, get my car, take the transfer all over from New York to LA, then I'll go see her.
- 32 AJ: Wow. So, can I ask you this question – and again, only answer it to the extent that you feel  
33 comfortable, but have you done any medical things as a part of your transition?

- 1 BBA: No, I'm working on that right now.
- 2 AJ: OK, really?
- 3 BBA: I'm on a lot of hormones.
- 4 AJ: You're on hormones, OK.
- 5 BBA: Dr. Deborah Thorpe at Park Nicollet Clinic, she got me on six hormone . . .
- 6 AJ: Dr. Deborah Thorpe. What's the name of her clinic?
- 7 BBA: Park Nicollet.
- 8 AJ: Park Nicollet – yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 9 BBA: Yeah, Park Nicollet and she's got me on six hormones now. I started with two and went all the  
10 way up to six. I feel great.
- 11 AJ: You feel good.
- 12 BBA: Feel great.
- 13 AJ: Have you had, or are you thinking about having any surgeries at all?
- 14 BBA: Yeah, I think about it.
- 15 AJ: Yeah, cool. Looking back on your decision to express your true gender identity, Bee, would you  
16 do it all over again?
- 17 BBA: Yes, I would. I would do it over again and even better.
- 18 AJ: Even better.
- 19 BBA: Even better, I would. I had so much fun doing it with Deja. It's good to do it with somebody,  
20 especially another transgender person that you can call a friend, that made it seem like it was so  
21 much smoother and easier to come out being with her.
- 22 AJ: What about relationships? Are you in a relationship?
- 23 BBA: Well, I have had a few relationships. I had one relationship when Deja was living with me and I  
24 had a guy named, Gary, living with me.
- 25 AJ: So, David?
- 26 BBA: No, his name was Gary.
- 27 AJ: Gary, OK.
- 28 BBA: He lived with me and Deja when I had my apartment. OK, this guy would come and tell me Deja  
29 was hitting on him and Deja would come tell me he was hitting on her. So, I put them both out.  
30 I put them out and I ain't seen Gary . . . he tried to break my door down to get his clothes, but  
31 he came back with the police and got them. And then Deja moved in with Richard, Richard  
32 Judge.

- 1 AJ: Yeah, Richard – another good friend of ours. Richard Judge.
- 2 BBA: Yeah, he's doing good I heard too.
- 3 AJ: Yeah, he is.
- 4 BBA: I was always crazy for him. Do you know Gus and Larkin?
- 5 AJ: What's his name?
- 6 BBA: Gus and Larkin – do you know them two?
- 7 AJ: Gus and Larkin? I don't know those two.
- 8 BBA: You might know who Gus is, he's from Chicago.
- 9 AJ: I might.
- 10 BBA: Gus is from Chicago and Larkin is from here and they used to live . . . they used to give after  
11 parties on Franklin and . . . was it Clinton? Yeah, Clinton and Franklin.
- 12 AJ: OK.
- 13 BBA: They'd have after parties there, after the bar closed.
- 14 AJ: Right.
- 15 BBA: They'd charge \$2 or \$3 to get in . . .
- 16 AJ: To get in . . .
- 17 BBA: Buy your drinks and food and party all night.
- 18 AJ: Drinks and food and have fun all night. Are you in a relationship now?
- 19 BBA: No, not now. I'm waiting to get my dentures.
- 20 AJ: OK.
- 21 BBA: I had all my teeth pulled out and I'm getting dentures pretty soon here.
- 22 AJ: Pretty soon.
- 23 BBA: So, I'm definitely going to get my teeth and then go on a manhunt.
- 24 AJ: So, do you date men? Women?
- 25 BBA: No, I date men, I don't date women. I'll go out with women and have fun with them, but no  
26 dating, no sex with women – none of that.
- 27 AJ: None of that.
- 28 BBA: Nope, none of that, Andrea.
- 29 AJ: Wow.

- 1 BBA: Wait, Andrea. OK.
- 2 AJ: So, Bee, do you ever think about . . . and I know you've identified as gay in the past, what do you  
3 think the relationship is between the gay community and the trans community?
- 4 BBA: Well, I think I see similarities but gays, gay people, don't dress as girls – they dress as guys. They  
5 look like girls but they [inaudible 38:42]. I understand that life, I lived it. It was fun doing that  
6 too.
- 7 AJ: Right.
- 8 BBA: I had my two best friends from doing that with.
- 9 AJ: Yup – Eric and Ed.
- 10 BBA: Right. We were real butch bunnies in Chicago and I loved it – just loved it. It happened in the  
11 1970s, you can just imagine how much fun we had those years.
- 12 AJ: In the 1970s, exactly.
- 13 BBA: Dancing every night.
- 14 (pause)
- 15 AJ: All right, Bee, I am loving this conversation. It's so good to get to know you a little bit better.
- 16 BBA: It's better to get to know you too. I always thought you were one awesome person.
- 17 AJ: Well, thank you so, so much. I really appreciate it. So, Bee, when you think about being  
18 transgender, what are some of the most challenging parts for you?
- 19 BBA: The most challenging part is when I go somewhere by myself, I hope people wouldn't try to hurt  
20 me or harass me or . . . you know, like a drive by to me or anything. It's very dangerous.
- 21 AJ: That happens to a lot of young transgender girls.
- 22 BBA: I've heard a lot about it and I've seen it happen in Chicago before, many times. I've been trying  
23 to stay on the straight and narrow and not mess with the wrong crowd and get in trouble. I'm  
24 all about that. I want to live my life and grow old – grow old gracefully, not recklessly.
- 25 AJ: Yes, exactly. So, that's one concern – are there other things that you worry about or think  
26 about?
- 27 BBA: Yeah, I worry a lot about my family, my friends – like you, I think about you a lot, Deja a lot.  
28 Girlfriends, all the good people . . . you're one of the good ones, Andrea. I think about you, I  
29 know you're doing good and you're looking good.
- 30 AJ: I'm doing OK, I'm doing OK.
- 31 BBA: Sometimes when I'd go to that group at the Exchange, I kind of miss not being there.
- 32 AJ: Really? So, there's a group at the Exchange. Tell me about it.

- 1 BBA: OK, the Exchange is a wonderful place for transsexuals to go to. Now we have two up here – the  
2 Union and the Exchange.
- 3 AJ: And the Exchange, which is at 34<sup>th</sup> and Chicago, right?
- 4 BBA: Yeah, SouthSide.
- 5 AJ: It's part of Café SouthSide.
- 6 BBA: Yeah, it's part of Café SouthSide. There used to be a thrift store upstairs but that's moved out  
7 now. The Exchange is still downstairs.
- 8 AJ: So, the group is all transgender people? Men and women?
- 9 BBA: Men and women, yes. They take all. I have met a trans girl named Max.
- 10 AJ: Max?
- 11 BBA: She used to be a girl. Now, there's another one that comes there, she's got a full beard.
- 12 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 13 BBA: She's on male hormones, that's why she has a full beard on her face.
- 14 AJ: OK. So, she identifies as a guy?
- 15 BBA: Yes. [inaudible 42:46]
- 16 AJ: So, you should probably call her a him then.
- 17 BBA: Yeah, I do call her him. I call her boy – I don't call her a woman; she don't look like no woman,  
18 she looks like a man.
- 19 AJ: Right.
- 20 BBA: I've got some gays in my family too, Andrea. I'm a transsexual, and there's another one like me,  
21 a drag queen – there's two of them.
- 22 AJ: Oh, really? In Chicago or Milwaukee?
- 23 BBA: They live in Milwaukee. My cousin that's gay in Chicago, he's a butch bunny.
- 24 AJ: What's a butch bunny.
- 25 BBA: A butch boy – a boy gay. He dresses like a guy, but he looks like a woman.
- 26 AJ: Oh, really. OK. What's the most positive thing for you about being transgender?
- 27 BBA: Most positive thing is it just feels good to live your life. It feels wonderful to be me.
- 28 AJ: Yes.
- 29 BBA: I'm happy with who I am because I've been this way since I can remember and now that I'm  
30 trans, I feel a lot more comfortable in my skin, I feel wonderful all the time. I thank the Lord for  
31 raising me up and being this way.

- 1 AJ: I can see the joy in your face when you say that.
- 2 BBA: Well, you know, I'm just blessed. Every day when I wake up, Andrea, there's three things I do.  
3 When I first get out of bed, I dropped to my knees and pray that things will pick me up. I read a  
4 verse in my Bible and I read a verse in my AA manual.
- 5 AJ: In your . . .?
- 6 BBA: AA manual – yeah, you know, Alcoholics Anonymous . . . I read a verse in that and my Bible and  
7 then I pray.
- 8 AJ: Wow.
- 9 BBA: And my day works out a lot better if I do that.
- 10 AJ: Gratitude, right? You've got to be grateful, thankful.
- 11 BBA: Yeah, that's true.
- 12 AJ: Bee, the last question. So, when you think about the transgender community, what do you  
13 think it's going to be like for transgender people 50 years from now?
- 14 BBA: It's going to be awesome. Andrea, I think it's going to be skyrocketing to the heavens, that's  
15 what I think about the transgender life. It's wonderful to be this way – as long as you're not  
16 conniving and scheming, you want to live on a positive note with what you are and make  
17 yourself a better person.
- 18 AJ: Do you think transgender people are going to be more accepted and be able to get jobs and be  
19 able to get their own house and be able to get access to health care.
- 20 BBA: I think in the next 50 years, Andrea, they should be equal with any other person.
- 21 AJ: There you go. Full equality.
- 22 BBA: Housing, adopt kids . . .
- 23 AJ: Getting married.
- 24 BBA: Yeah, getting married – if that's your choice.
- 25 AJ: If that's your choice.
- 26 BBA: I almost got married to my partner.
- 27 AJ: Really?
- 28 BBA: I broke it off because he was an alcoholic. What happened, I was with my partner, my last one,  
29 for 15 years and we were going to get married but he started drinking. I was watching on  
30 television and I seen these two African kids – the little girl was 7 and the little boy was 2. When  
31 they showed those commercials on the television, the African boy was asleep and when he  
32 woke up his whole family was dead except him. He had to run to another village, to his aunt –  
33 he ran and [inaudible 46:10]. Now, the little girl, she was 7. She wasn't home when all her  
34 family got killed in a tent. When she went home and found them dead, she ran to another

- 1 country to her aunt's house – another country, I was like, "Oh, that little girl gone, she ran to  
2 another country." She didn't have nothing but her thin gown on her.
- 3 AJ: Little nightgown.
- 4 BBA: She had a nightgown on, it was white and you could see right through it. I wanted to adopt  
5 those two kids but my partner was drinking so much and I didn't want no kids being subjected to  
6 being around an alcoholic on top of everything else, the marriage and the adoption of kids.
- 7 AJ: Oh, boy. Bee, is there anything that I did not ask you that you really want people to know about  
8 you, about your life, about being transgender, about living with HIV/AIDS, about being Black?  
9 Anything that you . . .
- 10 BBA: Yeah, that's probably [inaudible 47:26] being Black and transgender. That [inaudible 47:48] I am  
11 Black and transgender.
- 12 AJ: Right.
- 13 BBA: But, when I go out in public, I don't get no harassment like I used to. They just think I'm a  
14 female.
- 15 AJ: When you're in public – yeah.
- 16 BBA: They think I'm a girl, so I I'm going to let them think that – I want them to think that anyway.
- 17 AJ: Wow.
- 18 BBA: It's been a wonderful experience for me.
- 19 AJ: That's wonderful. I'm so happy to hear that, Bee – I really am. Well, listen, I thank you so much  
20 for sharing this time with me and sharing yourself with everybody.
- 21 BBA: Anytime – I'll tell you more, girl. I'll tell you about all my family and all the years I traveled  
22 around the world twice – everything. I mean, being gay and since I came out, it's just been a  
23 wonderful life.
- 24 AJ: Thank you. All right, dear. Talk to you soon. Bye-bye.
- 25 BBA: Bye-bye, darling.