

Lane Cunningham
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

August 11, 2015



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 Lance Cunningham -LC

3

4

5 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the transgender oral historian for the Transgender Oral
6 History Project. Today is August 11, 2015, and I'm going to ask you to introduce yourself. State
7 your name, preferred pronouns, gender identity and gender assigned at birth.

8

9 LC: My name is Lane Cunningham, my preferred pronouns are he and him, and my gender identity
10 is trans masculine/male. I was assigned female at birth.

11

12 AJ: Thank you. I really appreciate you coming in today for this interview. Lane, can you tell me just
13 a little bit about your earliest memory, period?

14

15 LC: My earliest memory would have been when I was maybe three or four and my mom and I lived
16 together in a duplex on Clark Lane in Columbia, Missouri. She would let me play outside in the
17 yard by myself and she was maybe doing dishes at the kitchen sink with a window overlooking
18 the front yard. I was outside in the gravel driveway and it was just after a heavy downpour and I
19 had my rain boots on, my goulashes, and I was traipsing through the puddles and the mud and I
20 got down to the end of the driveway and the gravel kind of receded and it was just all mud. I
21 stepped into the mud and I was in the center of this mud puddle and I could not get my feet out
22 of the mud. So I was stuck there in the middle of it and I was panicking and I was waving and my
23 mom later tells me that when I was going like this, she thought that I was just waving "hi" to her
24 and she was just like, "Hi," and I'm like, "Ahh, I'm stuck." So, that's probably my earliest
25 memory.

26

27 AJ: Wow, fun. So there was fear – you kind of panicked a little bit?

28

29 LC: Oh yeah. For some reason it didn't occur to me that I could just take my feet out of the boots, I
30 was like, "I've got to stay here in these boots."

31

32 AJ: Well you were three or four.

33

34 LC: Exactly.

35

36 AJ: Tell me a little about where you went to elementary school.

37

38 LC: So I went to a few different elementary schools. I started off at Benton and actually ended up
39 switching schools out of Benton because I got bullied on the bus a lot. So switched schools, and
40 this was in the middle of 1st grade, to Russell Blvd Elementary. That was a good school from
41 what I can remember. Generally speaking I was always kind of the precocious kid who would
42 get their work done really quickly and then bother all the other kids in class, build towers with
43 markers in the center of the classroom, and my teachers were pulling their hair out trying to
44 figure out what to do with me. I have a couple of teachers from elementary school that I was
45 really fond of. I was kind of troubled when I was young, all through my younger years actually.
46 But there were some teachers who really . . . I could tell even though I was frustrating for them,

1 they really kind of reached out to me and showed me that they cared about me and put in that
2 extra effort despite their frustrations. So that really meant a lot.

3
4 AJ: Tell me a little bit about the bullying. What was that experience like? Were they calling you
5 names? Were they making fun of your hair color? What do you think that was around?

6
7 LC: One particular incident on the bus after school was . . . it may have even been within the first
8 couple of weeks of 1st grade starting, and I went back about three-quarters of the way to the
9 back of the bus and tried to have a seat and then these two older girls, I think they may have
10 been in 4th grade, kind of file in after me and push me down into the seat and they start putting
11 their fist in my face and telling me that if I don't say a bad word, and then they would tell me
12 which one to say, then they were going to beat me up. So then they kept saying that until I
13 would say it and then when I would say it, they'd be like, "Oh, you said a bad word" – like
14 humiliating me essentially. And then the bus driver . . . they kept shoving me back down into
15 the seat and the bus driver eventually had to come and break it up and brought me to the front
16 seat, sitting behind him. But the little boy who ended up sitting next to me, kicked my shin the
17 entire way home and I just sat there and took it – I don't know why I felt like I couldn't say
18 anything. So that happened. I don't know what it was in particular that made me an easier
19 target for bullying than anyone else. I think maybe I was just . . . despite the precociousness, I
20 was also really sweet and kind of trusting.

21
22 AJ: So you don't think it was necessarily around gender identity issues at that point in time?

23
24 LC: Well, I actually hadn't thought about it but it could have been because I definitely was never a
25 frilly girl when I identified as a girl. I always gravitated toward wearing things that were from
26 the boy's section of clothes in department stores and from Walmart. And so it definitely could
27 have been that. I think that with younger children it's hard for them to articulate their
28 discomfort when they see someone that's kind of bucking the norm that they're used to. It's
29 definitely possible that that impacted their perception about me and why they needed to sort of
30 oppress me in some way.

31
32 AJ: So, you talked a little bit about your mom and growing up, but what was your home
33 environment like? Did you have brothers and sisters, siblings?

34
35 LC: Yeah, so my parents got a divorce before I was born and my dad, shortly after, remarried and
36 had two children with my ex-stepmother, I now have a new stepmother, a very blended family.
37 My brother, George, and my sister, Katie, between my ex-stepmother, Melissa, and my father.
38 And then when I was nine, my mother remarried my current stepfather, Gerald, and between
39 them there are two girls, Maddie and Audrey, my sisters. So I mostly lived with my mother
40 growing up and I would visit my dad on the holidays. There were a couple year periods and
41 stints where I would stay with my dad, I lived up in Michigan with him for a period of about two
42 years or so in middle school.

43
44 AJ: What was that like, in Michigan?

- 1 LC: What was it like? It was very rural. We lived outside of town, outside of a town called Mount
2 Pleasant. Mount Pleasant was already a small town itself, so being on the outskirts . . . in fact,
3 so far out that we ended up going to a charter school which was drawing in kids from all the
4 different small country towns in that area. That school, I think it's since been shut down, but it
5 was honestly kind of a joke. For that two years that I went to school there, I really didn't learn a
6 whole lot. I just kind of hung out with my friends and the teachers, they didn't really care. So
7 yeah, that was definitely an interesting situation. I got to experience some fun things at the
8 time that maybe I wouldn't have if there had been more authority, I don't know. Looking back I
9 think that it was really unfortunate.
- 10
- 11 AJ: You probably got really good grades.
- 12
- 13 LC: Right, really good grades if they don't care at all. "Yeah, that's an A." During Spanish class I
14 remember the teacher would sit there, he would put on a movie dubbed in Spanish while he sat
15 over his computer looking at God knows what – every class, the entire school year. I always felt
16 just this kind of nagging feeling, though, that there was something kind of below the surface for
17 me. In my social relationships, there was just this kind of disconnect where I felt like there was a
18 part of me that I wasn't able to really talk about with my friends - at around that age and when I
19 was living in Michigan when I was going through puberty and experiencing some changes in my
20 body that were making me uncomfortable. I felt especially uncomfortable because I was coming
21 to this realization that I didn't feel comfortable the way that my body was turning out and didn't
22 really understand how to put words to that. Growing up, there was no . . . there was no history
23 project, there were no popular stories that I could have heard that would have provided me
24 with some amount of comfort. So I was really isolated in that sense too.
- 25
- 26 AJ: So this was around 12 or 13?
- 27
- 28 LC: Twelve or 13, yeah.
- 29
- 30 AJ: So, when was the first time that you realized that you felt different from the gender you were
31 assigned at birth?
- 32
- 33 LC: Well, my mom has said, and continues to say, that I always used to tell her when I was younger,
34 "When I grow up, I'm going to be a boy." I don't recall that, but she never really pushed back
35 too hard against any of that. I had trouble with that at my dad's but at my mom's, and I was
36 primarily with her, she was mostly just supportive of me just expressing myself creatively and
37 letting me pick out my own clothes, she never put any restrictions on that or the kinds of toys
38 that I played with or how I behaved. She was pretty chill about that. I think the first time that I
39 realized that something was different was when I was at my dad's, I must have been . . . I want
40 to say 7 years old, and my brother would have been 5 and it was on a hot summer day and our
41 friend Levi was over playing and my brother and Levi were out in the side yard running around
42 and they were just wearing shorts, no shirt or anything, and so I step outside and I take off my
43 shirt and I start running around with them and then all of a sudden I hear my stepmother call
44 down to me that I need to come inside. I go inside and she tells me that I need to put on a shirt
45 because I'm a girl. At that moment, I experienced a few different things. First of all, just kind of
46 . . . like the first kind of awareness of the sexualization of my body, as a then female-identified

1 person, that even at a young age I couldn't escape just this sort of . . . the shame, I think, that
2 comes with that too. Like, you need to hide your body, first of all, but then also that I felt much
3 more connected with the spirit of my brother and Levi than I knew was being implied by what
4 my stepmom was telling me that I needed to do or telling me about myself. She's basically
5 saying, "You're a girl so you don't get to do that." That just didn't sit right with me, it didn't feel
6 right.

7
8 AJ: So your first recognition was around 7 years old?

9
10 LC: Yeah.

11
12 AJ: What terms do you use to describe yourself now? How has that changed over time, if at all?

13
14 LC: That's a good question. So, I currently use male, man, trans masculine. I also use gender queer.
15 I would say that I'm masculine of center but I also have this fluid tendency where I'll wake up
16 and I'll just feel this kind of a shift in my spirit or presence for however long – sometimes it lasts
17 a few days, sometimes it lasts a half a day, or sometimes it will last longer than that. There are
18 multiple dimensions happening inside of, and around, my gender. Prior to now . . . I feel like I
19 went through a phase when I first came out. Well, there are levels to my coming out. When I
20 first started transitioning, which was about four years ago now, I, at that point, felt very much
21 identified with masculinity. I felt like there was this element of performativity that would affirm
22 my gender. I feel like there is truth in that, that it's easier for me to walk through . . . or not
23 easier, it's . . . so I was attempting to achieve a social norm of masculine performance that I feel
24 like wasn't necessarily natural and was very much focused on the physical presentation of my
25 gender and focused on the physical aspect of it. I think primarily because that's, for some folks
26 like myself, that's just part of the transition process but also what's interesting about it is up
27 until that point it was very much just this kind of inner-manifestation that what wasn't able to
28 express itself fully until I made that choice to step into that energy of transitioning of my
29 identity, of what I needed to do. When I was a teenager I was always kind of more masculine
30 presenting. I identified as kind of an androgynous lesbian at that point and then, like I said,
31 when I transitioned I went hard into that – like I've got to be this super-butuh guy. Then after
32 doing some exploration, some meditation, and kind of feeling out my gender and what feels
33 most natural and a way to express it, to talk about it, and also doing research about masculinity
34 just in general and just kind of the construction of it and trying to pick apart what feels best for
35 me from what society is telling me I should do as a masculine-identified person.

36
37 AJ: Wow, that's fascinating. I'm really interested in a couple of terms that you used – gender
38 queer, and then you talked about this fluidity and it seemed like you had some challenges
39 thinking about it. Can you say more about those terms?

40
41 LC: Yes. So, my gender queerness is . . . so my gender has many dimensions and expressions. To
42 me, being gender queer means that I am intentionally freeing myself of the need to perform my
43 gender in a way that society expects me to and that shows up for me where I'm just . . . I'm fully
44 able to just express my creativity and how I dress and how I interact with people and how I
45 speak, which frequently pushes back against what society might say is the masculine way. I just
46 try to do . . . I just try to honor where I am at any moment in terms of my relationship with my

gender, which it shifts – so when I say that it's fluid, it's like . . . sometimes it's like a wading pool where it just kind of . . . the water just kind of shifts back and forth, flows back and forth easily and I can kind of tell where I'm at. And then sometimes it's these huge arching waves where I feel like I'm being thrown about and I feel like my . . . I'm grasping for this sense of concrete identity within myself but then I'm able to settle again just . . . and realizing that I get to have this really broad and rich experience of my gender. It's really emotional sometimes, honestly.

AJ: Yeah, I imagine. Particularly you used a description of waves.

LC: Yeah, that's emotion and dream interpretation.

AJ: Hm-hmm. What challenges have you faced since you began to express your true gender identity?

LC: Well, first and foremost, I experienced challenges within myself. I recognize and defer to the privilege that I'm afforded for the fact that I can walk down the street and nobody is going to clock me or call me out, and that's a lot of times easier for me to default to that instead of walking how I really feel, which maybe, on any given day, means wearing some cute little shorts and a crop top, but maybe I'll instead put on a suit and tie just because it's easier. There have been some . . . definitely some people, strangers, who have been rude and said cruel things and even had a couple of guys follow me when I was walking to my car from a club about a year ago. So that was definitely scary. Honestly, the biggest challenge though really has been with myself. I think, too, I have trouble with being present in the fluidity of my gender – that I'll wake up one morning and say, "Why am I feeling this way today when I felt differently yesterday." Maybe I wake up and I'm feeling more of this feminine energy, that's the best way to describe it, but I was feeling masculine yesterday. So trying to hold on to that instead of just allowing myself to go into it. I think that that really creates a lot of emotional stress for me when I'm resisting that natural tendency. There are other challenges that, I think, too . . . back before I met my husband, that's when I was really starting to express this more gender queer side of myself and I saw the pool of people who might be interested in me romantically dramatically decrease when I was expressing this more gender queer self and that felt really scary and lonely because I definitely love having romantic interactions with people and developing those kinds of relationships and so that was kind of unnerving. I can't help but think too that I was also just feeling the sense of . . . continuing to carry this sense of shame I have about my identity and how I believe the right person will come along and it doesn't matter what you're wearing or what you look like. I do believe that. But there was definitely a layer of loneliness and isolation that I felt.

AJ: You mentioned husband, you're married?

LC: Yes.

AJ: For how long?

LC: For one month yesterday.

- 1 AJ: Wow, congratulations.
2
- 3 LC: Thank you.
4
- 5 AJ: Congratulations, that's quite something. So what are your thoughts about this recent ruling that
6 the Supreme Court just laid out sort of legalizing marriage equality for all Americans?
7
- 8 LC: Obviously I'm happy about it because my husband . . .
9
- 10 AJ: As well you should be.
11
- 12 LC: Yes. My husband also identifies as a male and so we would not be able to be married without
13 marriage equality. I think it's a monumental ruling, it's a monumental event in history. Now it
14 means that I'm going to have access to the same kinds of things that same sex couples didn't
15 have access to before and that makes me feel really happy. There's definitely a sense of security
16 in that. I think it's a shame that in order to gain these privileges that people would have to
17 engage in this sort of agreement, but nonetheless it's working really well for me.
18
- 19 AJ: That's great, that's really awesome. Do you feel that now that marriage equality is the law of
20 the land, that the struggle for LGBT rights are over?
21
- 22 LC: Absolutely not. There is still so much to be won. So I grew up in Columbia, Missouri and then
23 for the past two years, before I moved to Minneapolis a month ago, I lived in St. Louis which is
24 where . . .
25
- 26 AJ: For how long?
27
- 28 LC: For two years, which is where Michael Brown was murdered last year on my birthday, August 9,
29 2014. It became very apparent that, not just within our city but across the United States, that
30 who the LGBT movement was for where the LGBT organizations basically refused to take part in
31 supporting the community in Ferguson and were not outwardly mourning, were not expressing
32 sympathy, empathy, anything, and were actually . . . well, I won't go into too much detail but . . .
33
- 34 AJ: You can, we like detail.
35
- 36 LC: All right . . . yeah, I tried to join a diversity awareness committee for Pride St. Louis, and I'm not
37 at liberty legally to speak about the things that were discussed or what happened, but I
38 ultimately resigned from that position due to frustration about the dynamic within the
39 organization which is seen throughout many LGBT orgs that are in power right now, which is the
40 entire board is a bunch of cis white gay men making decisions for the cis white gay community.
41 Incredibly frustrating when intersectionality is not acknowledged, it's a continuation of white
42 supremacy just looking . . . in a different movement. It's still . . . that organization, Pride St.
43 Louis, is still really struggling a whole lot with the community right now. Since it's been a year
44 anniversary since then, they promised the organization that I used to be on the board with, the
45 Metro Trans Umbrella Group in St. Louis, they were going to do a town hall with the Metro
46 Trans Umbrella Group to talk about police brutality and trans folks and they're . . . apparently

1 they cancelled the town hall and since have yet to reschedule. I mean the agenda has always
2 been privileged and there are trans folks who are living and dying on the streets and having to
3 engage in survival sex because they can't access the resources that they need in order to maybe
4 even get a job or go to school, no less get the legal documents required in order to get an
5 appropriate identification to enroll in school or get a bank account. There are all these barriers,
6 all these basic level needs. We don't even have a true standard of care within the medical
7 system. I know that when I first started transitioning, I had to educate my doctor about what to
8 do. There are so many fundamental concerns that a lot of the LGBT orgs in power right now are
9 not listening to, so there's a lot of work to be done.

10
11 AJ: Wow. So a couple of things in what you just shared. First of all, you talked about cis, you used
12 the term cis a couple of times – c-i-s. Can you just define that briefly for listeners who may be
13 listening to this audiotape 20 years from now and have no idea what cis means, or 20 minutes
14 from now and have no idea what cis means?

15
16 LC: Yeah, right – thank you. So cisgender is someone who identifies with the biological sex assigned
17 to them at birth. So, meaning a body comes out, there's a penis and the doctor says, "That's a
18 boy." And then they're an adult and they still are identifying as a boy or a man.

19
20 AJ: So the majority of the people on the planet, basically?

21
22 LC: Yes.

23
24 AJ: And it's a way to sort of distinguish between transgender people and non-transgender people.

25
26 LC: Exactly. And I think that there is also kind of a colloquialism inherent within the way that I used
27 it just then. So when I say, "It's run by a bunch of cis white gay men" or, "Cisgender white gay
28 men," what I'm saying is that they have basically no idea what it's like to be trans, there's kind of
29 this implied sense of disconnect as well as the privileges that come with not having to have had
30 the experience of being trans. So never questioning your gender, that's probably a lot easier of
31 a life in present social circumstances.

32
33 AJ: The other thing that I was kind of interested in, I feel like I read that there were some challenges
34 at the St. Louis Pride where people of color were disinvited from marching in the parade. Are
35 you familiar with that at all?

36
37 LC: Only on the fringe. I actually wasn't there for Pride, but apparently, from what I know, the Black
38 Lives Matter protestors who were marching in the parade along with the Metro Trans Umbrella
39 Group did a die-in and then later were at the festival and security were telling them that they
40 needed to leave and were escorting them out, and I think maybe even physically pushed
41 someone out or led someone out of Pride. So there was definitely a tone of, "Who's Pride is
42 this?" And I think there are a lot of tensions right now too just because of all the, sort of,
43 corporate takeover of Pride in St. Louis now that is really dictating these system decisions about
44 what to allow in the parade, what to not. It's complex and . . . yes.

45
46 AJ: Pride has become a little heteronormative in some ways.

1
2 LC: It is in some ways.
3

4 AJ: Lane, what are some of the more positive aspects of your coming to terms with or realizing your
5 true gender identity?
6

7 LC: So personally, having come to this place where more than ever previously, I'm able to
8 experience my gender in the way that it shows up in any given moment. I try to really honor
9 that. I find that emotionally, while that fluidity may be a little bit stressful, actually being able to
10 express it has enriched my life and ultimately been so much better for my mental health instead
11 of fighting the urge to just be who I am. That's been such a beautiful experience coming to
12 embrace myself. And with that embracing myself also comes this access to kind of the breadth
13 of my gifts, my talents. I feel more motivated to play music and to pursue computer
14 programming stuff, which I've always been interested in but now fortunately have the
15 opportunity to really study it. Also, just caring about my body and taking care of myself and
16 eating healthy, working out, is very much . . . it has a direct relationship with my mental health
17 which is ultimately better because I'm now trying really hard to honor my feelings. In my
18 relationships with people, I felt a lot of support since I officially began my transition four years
19 ago. So many people have shown up and are telling me that me sharing my experience or
20 knowing me has been so positive for them, that maybe something that I've shared on social
21 media, like maybe a link, reminded them of someone else that they know and so they shared
22 that with them and it was good for them, or whatever the case may be. Just that through living
23 authentically and not hiding myself, that that is creating more space for love and acceptance –
24 just like all of the trans folks throughout history who were audacious enough to be who they are
25 and took that space, I'm also able to take that too as sort of a tribute to just living authentically
26 and how that's a legacy. I think that's so important for our community that we live authentic
27 lives despite society and the people who tell us not to. So having a lot of support has been
28 wonderful for me. My parents have been pretty supportive, since I've been an adult anyway,
29 and I've found friends and relationships with people who have also been really accepting and
30 supportive. And that's, I think, really refreshing too because, you know, we were talking about
31 the fact that there isn't a lot of documentation about our history. I feel like when
32 documentation started happening, it was also surrounding tragedy. So the first time I realized
33 that I was transgender, that there was a word for it, that there was someone else who felt like
34 me, I was in high school, I was 16. I was involved in the GSA, which met after schools on
35 Wednesdays or something in a particular classroom.
36

37 AJ: The Gay Straight Alliance?
38

39 LC: Yeah, the Gay Straight Alliance, GSA, and the movie that we were watching that afternoon was
40 *Boys Don't Cry*. So, that's about the story of Brandon Teena, played by Hilary Swank, from a
41 small town. Brandon ends up meeting a girl, they fall in love and she eventually finds out that
42 he's trans and, unfortunately, so does her family as well. A lot of violence – emotional, physical,
43 and otherwise ensues. It's a tragic story. So needless to say, it kind of sucks when that's my first
44 identification with, "That's me . . . ohhh."
45

46 AJ: Wow.

1
2 LC: So yeah, we need to create more positive stories, we need to control the media about us.
3
4 AJ: That's kind of what this project is going to be all about.
5
6 LC: Exactly.
7
8 AJ: To the extent that you are comfortable, Lane, talk about some of the medical interventions that
9 you have pursued or hope to pursue as a part of your gender transition.
10
11 LC: So, I started on hormone replacement therapy, taking shots of testosterone every week, about
12 three and a half years ago now. I had surgery to masculinize my chest, I think it was last year –
13 in June of 2014. So that's the extent of the surgeries, or medical transition, that I've had. If
14 we're talking about a continuation of my gender expression and what that will look like for me,
15 I'm actually planning to, at some point, carry children. So that's something that will . . . that will
16 be a medical procedure that I'll have as well that, in the grand scheme of genders, is
17 noteworthy, I suppose, at this time.
18
19 AJ: Yeah, I would say. So you and your husband, your spouse, are planning to have children?
20
21 LC: Yes, we are.
22
23 AJ: Wow, that's incredible. And you hope to carry a child.
24
25 LC: I do, yeah. I really do, I really want that experience.
26
27 AJ: I would say that's a pretty significant medical, maybe not intervention, but certainly a medical
28 event that a lot of men don't necessarily experience. You will be unique in that aspect – that's
29 great. This love and relationship . . . so you're married to a man, so clearly your sexual identity is
30 gay, I would say. Right?
31
32 LC: In this relationship . . . this is a gay relationship. Generally I identify as pansexual, queer. I've
33 always been pretty interested just in people rather than gender.
34
35 AJ: Sure. So do you have a label or term or a box that you put around your sexual identity?
36
37 LC: I would say probably the closest is pansexual or queer.
38
39 AJ: Pansexual or queer. Two terms which are sort of vague.
40
41 LC: Would you like for me to . . . ?
42
43 AJ: Please.
44
45 LC: Pansexual . . . so pansexual, and queer, to me when I use them to identify my sexuality, it means
46 that it doesn't matter what someone's physical body looks like, that I'm more attracted to the

1 personality, the person. I could name other things I'm personally attracted to – I like achievers,
2 of course I like someone who is good looking but their gender doesn't necessarily dictate that
3 for me. And, I like someone who can make me laugh. So basically it's not about the physical
4 person, it's about who they are and so that pansexual piece means that anybody is fair game –
5 so watch out.
6

7 AJ: Oh boy. This is just a whole new world. How do you feel about monogamy? You're married but
8 I know a lot of people who identify as pan are engaged in alternative relationships. Is that a part
9 of your current reality? Or future reality?
10

11 LC: No, naturally I'm a monogamous person. I definitely still experience attractions, I think that that
12 is human. But, I really enjoy the experience of just committing to someone and putting all my
13 effort there. I also am naturally introverted and so I can only imagine trying to manage two
14 romantic relationships. For a while I dated but nothing was serious, but for the fact that I like
15 serious relationships, one is plenty for me.
16

17 AJ: Oh boy. Have there been times when someone has been really helpful or insensitive or rude in
18 interacting with the medical community or the academic world or criminal justice system? Have
19 you had some experiences that you feel like are either positive or negative that you would be
20 interested in sharing?
21

22 LC: Sure. Yeah, and this is kind of funny because it might not be considered best practice, what this
23 doctor did, but I really appreciate what he did because he operated within the system in a way
24 that he felt would meet my needs. So when I first moved to St. Louis two years ago, I started . . .
25 I looked up what doctors would be covered under my insurance and I just kind of picked one.
26 The guy I ended up going to, I was the second trans person he had met and had in his office. He
27 was very open about asking me questions about what I was comfortable with and what I wasn't
28 comfortable with. The first time that he wrote me a script for testosterone, he was like, "You
29 know, I'll write this for you, I'm not going to send you for bloodwork right away because that
30 might tip off your insurance or something." I forget what it was . . . or exactly how he framed it
31 but he was like, just get bloodwork done in three months down the road. And so he tried to
32 help me navigate the insurance system, the medical system, in a way that wouldn't create a big
33 hardship for me. I really appreciated that a lot. It's just unfortunate that he had to do that at
34 all, that he had to maybe compromise best practice for the sake of helping me out when he
35 knew that the way that he was helping me was me accessing the medicine that I needed and he
36 didn't want me to be prevented from doing that and he shouldn't have to push back against the
37 system to make that happen for me. It will be nice once there's some official standards for care
38 of trans people.
39

40 AJ: Yeah.
41

42 LC: It will be much safer physically and emotionally. That waiting room was fine and no one ever
43 questioned my name or anything like that. I've heard horror stories where, like, front desk
44 attendants are loudly arguing in the waiting room with a customer about not being able to call
45 them their chosen name. It's like, "What is the big deal? Come on."
46

1 AJ: I'm telling you this is my name . . .
2
3 LC: Right, it's outrageous and humiliating, and ultimately could be dangerous for someone, if we're
4 being honest. If someone is outed in a situation where there are people around who are not
5 savory. Fortunately, I had a good experience at the doctor.
6
7 AJ: Any involvement with the criminal justice system at all?
8
9 LC: How soon is this going to be released? Who is going to see it?
10
11 AJ: Well, it will be a little while before it's released, but it will be public.
12
13 LC: Sure. I'm probably going to decline to answer that one.
14
15 AJ: That's perfectly fine. How about in your schools or education situation?
16
17 LC: Any involvement with the . . .?
18
19 AJ: School would have had to have been like negative experiences around your identity in those
20 kinds of institutions?
21
22 LC: Yeah, definitely in public school, in high school. That was when I started settling into this more
23 masculine expression of my gender and I remember just walking down the hall and there was a
24 group of other students who were following me down the hall, probably trailing about 30 feet
25 behind, just making all these awful comments about what I was wearing. That happened
26 somewhat frequently. I grew a pretty thick skin for that kind of thing and didn't . . . I guess it's
27 possible that it did hurt my feelings more than I led on at that point, but you have to. I had a lot
28 of friends and I was friends with a lot of different people in high school, but I definitely hung out
29 with the kids who were kind of more outliers, they were my main friends. I actually dropped out
30 of high school the beginning of my junior year.
31
32 AJ: Oh boy, OK.
33
34 LC: I was just not able to really focus on my studies, just a lot of stress.
35
36 AJ: You found your way back?
37
38 LC: I did, yeah. I got my GED within six months and then went to the University of Missouri and
39 graduated.
40
41 AJ: That's great. I know that's a somewhat common narrative for a lot of trans young people to
42 have to leave school for a variety of reasons. What do you think the relationship between the
43 LGB and the T is like? And you sort of talked about it a little bit specific to St. Louis, but on a
44 broader scale, what do you think that relationship is like?
45

1 LC: Well, what I find to be kind of ironic is that a T could be L, G, or a B, yet the T is so frequently the
2 specific concerns of the T, the value of the trans experience is not afforded by the L, the G, and
3 the B. For some reason . . . I mean, not for some reason, our community is just . . . the trans
4 community is ostracized from the LGB community that for the fact that they are not having a
5 trans – they, the LGB, are not having a trans experience even though we’re supposedly a part of
6 the same community, they are unwilling to acknowledge that there is plenty more work that
7 needs to be done in order to get our whole community up to speed, up to have accessing our
8 rights and even in some cases basic resources. So, the relationship – there’s tension there.
9 Some of the biggest disparities in terms of . . . certainly wealth distribution and access to
10 opportunities is greatest between the gay community and the trans community. So, yeah.

11
12 AJ: Is there a trans agenda or do you think there should be a trans agenda? If you think there is,
13 what is it?

14
15 LC: The trans agenda, I feel like, has reached a really pivotal moment where we are, in this age of
16 technology, able to really connect with each other and share about our experiences with one
17 another and to come out of isolation and we’re starting to access more resources and power as
18 relationships are built. We’re getting jobs in important decision-making organizations where we
19 can advocate, we as trans people can have the opportunity to advocate on behalf of our
20 community and join our voice with the broader conversation. The trans agenda is just one of
21 what equity looks like, which I think that there are so many different components to equity
22 including the disparity of race equity, of gender equity that continues to be pervasive. There are
23 intersections in immigration, making sure that if a migrant person is . . . an immigrant person is
24 detained, that they are kept safe. The trans agenda is, at this point, one of survival for such a
25 large part of our community. I think that we definitely need to start . . . we need to continue
26 having those conversations and pushing through to get our voices heard at the broader table –
27 because if we don’t speak up for ourselves, it’s very apparent that no one else is going to.

28
29 AJ: Well stated.

30
31 LC: Thank you.

32
33 AJ: What, if any, has been the impact of your trans identity on your professional life?

34
35 LC: Fortunately, I have worked for businesses that were very supportive. Not completely
36 knowledgeable, not with the perfect policies in the office that provide unisex restrooms or
37 things like this – gender neutral restrooms, or necessarily trans specific protections in their
38 policies, but the organizations themselves, the leaders in the organizations, have always been
39 supportive of me. For instance, when I first came out and when I started to transition four years
40 ago, I was working in a very small office and all of my offices mates were incredibly supportive of
41 me and immediately began to work on respecting my wishes for calling me Lane, using he/him
42 pronouns. It was really interesting because the folks I worked with then were also willing to ask
43 me questions because that was the kind of relationship we had, where it was safe for them to . .
44 . as I was educating myself about what it means to be trans through living it, I could then also
45 have that conversation with the people at work too. So that was really cool, that felt really
46 important. And then at my most recent job, I had to take a leave of absence for a couple of

1 weeks when I went down to have surgery on my chest. My boss was super supportive. I told
2 her what I was doing, I told her I was going down to have surgery and she was happy for me. So
3 that was really cool. I would say probably the . . . and this is just miniscule in the grander
4 scheme of things, but the thing that's been the most stressful for me is when I do apply for new
5 jobs and I know that if they're doing a background check they're going to be able to see my
6 previous name, sometimes you even have to write it in on the form, and so then I just think to
7 myself, "Is that going to ultimately disqualify me?" Or if I didn't get hired for the job, would I
8 ever know that it wasn't because I was trans, because that's what they found out?

9
10 AJ: Sure.

11
12 LC: There's definitely that nagging in the back of my mind.

13
14 AJ: Tell me a little bit about your music, you're a musician. What instrument do you play? Are you
15 a singer/songwriter? What?

16
17 LC: Yeah. I'm definitely a singer/songwriting type, but also I love making digital music too using DJ
18 programs on the computer. I like playing around with my voice a lot. I also love playing guitar,
19 that's been pretty consistent for me for . . . gosh, when did I start? About 13 years now.

20
21 AJ: Oh wow. What genres? Are you a folk singer, disco?

22
23 LC: Honestly a little bit of everything. I like to compose my own melodies to songs, really any song.
24 I did kind of a cool rendition of *Let's Stay Together*.

25
26 AJ: By Al Green?

27
28 LC: Yeah.

29
30 AJ: Nice.

31
32 LC: I also did one to *Sweet Dreams* by Annie Lennox.

33
34 AJ: Annie Lennox, a classic.

35
36 LC: I'm a huge 1980s kid. I like to take songs and then adapt them, change them around, and mold
37 them into my own. And so a lot of that is just finger picking melodies and playing around with
38 the vocal part of the song. I really love to write love songs – those are probably the songs that I
39 write the most. I'm a huge romantic and . . . yeah, simple little love songs, they come really
40 naturally.

41
42 AJ: Oh, sweet. So, one last question, Lane. There have been some dramatic changes in the
43 landscape for transgender people over the past 10 years – like just sort of this rapid visibility and
44 awareness of the broader community, some of the issues and ideas around being transgender.
45 Where do you see the community in the next 10, 25, 50 years?

- 1 LC: My mind immediately went to *Hunger Games*. I'm just thinking in the grander scheme of things,
2 there's always this political apathy I have with that piece, just . . . I'd like to think that we'll have
3 . . . so I feel like it's inevitable that there will be a surge in knowledge about the trans community
4 in various realms. So if we're thinking in terms of . . . if we're talking about medical stuff, I feel
5 like that's soon to come and as that's normalized, I would like to think that insurance, as it
6 already has been, will continue to evolve to make that more accessible. We're starting to see,
7 also, community-based programs that are allowing people who don't have insurance or are low
8 income are able to now access hormones and things like that. So I think that resources like that
9 will continue to evolve as the awareness around the trans community and what our needs are
10 come to light. So that feels really positive to me because I know that people who desire to have
11 a medical transition will be able to access that. I know that for me personally that was very
12 important to my transition process. I think that as we continue to show up in the broader
13 cultural media, as we continue to create our own media and shape the conversation about what
14 it means to be transgender, that the experience of being trans, I hope, will, be de-mystified to
15 the point where we can celebrate that expression of diversity like other cultures already are. To
16 me that would look like just getting to see even more diversity walking down the street, just in
17 how people express themselves in terms of their gender, that we won't be judged by what we
18 look like and instead we'll maybe be more easily able to access opportunities that the broader
19 culture accesses. So I guess I hope that there's more equity, I hope that more people feel . . . I
20 feel like more trans people who are really struggling, I hope that there will be more resources so
21 that we can, as trans people, work within our community to uplift the parts of our community
22 that are struggling. Because as we keep talking about it, as we keep talking about all these
23 disparities, people will . . . they have to listen, that's just the eternal optimist in me, but I hope
24 they eventually listen.
25
- 26 AJ: I think that we've got to remain hopeful.
27
- 28 LC: Yes.
29
- 30 AJ: I really want to just express my deep gratitude for you taking the time to share some really, I
31 think, intimate details about your life with this project. So, thank you.
32
- 33 LC: Thank you. Thank you very much for the opportunity to share my story.
34
- 35 AJ: All right.