

Harvey Katz
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

January 29, 2016



The Transgender Oral History Project of the Upper Midwest will empower individuals to tell their story, while providing students, historians, and the public with a more rich foundation of primary source material about the transgender community. The project is part of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. The archive provides a record of GLBT thought, knowledge and culture for current and future generations and is available to students, researchers and members of the public.

The Transgender Oral History Project will collect up to 400 hours of oral histories involving 200 to 300 individuals over the next three years. Major efforts will be the recruitment of individuals of all ages and experiences, and documenting the work of The Program in Human Sexuality. This project will be led by Andrea Jenkins, poet, writer, and trans-activist. Andrea brings years of experience working in government, non-profits and LGBT organizations. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting project, please contact Andrea.

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- 1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 Harvey Katz -HK
3
4
- 5 AJ: So, hello.
- 6 HK: Hello.
- 7 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project.
8 Today is January 29, 2016, and I am sitting here in a hotel room in Minnetonka with Harvey Katz.
- 9 HK: That's it.
- 10 AJ: Harvey, can you please tell me . . . just restate your name and your preferred pronouns, your
11 gender identity, and your gender assigned at birth?
- 12 HK: OK, so my name is Harvey Katz, K-a-t-z, and I use he and him as pronouns and I'm male with a
13 transgender history. What was the last one?
- 14 AJ: And your gender assigned at birth.
- 15 HK: Oh, assigned female at birth.
- 16 AJ: I haven't heard that particular identity in my interviews. I've heard it a few times but it's a new
17 one for my interviews, "male with a transgender history".
- 18 HK: Yeah, or male with a transgender experience. I don't know, I've been thinking about it a lot
19 lately actually, because I've been thinking about how . . . I get so much cis gender privilege in the
20 world that I can just forget, I can forget that I'm transgender often.
- 21 AJ: Absolutely, yeah.
- 22 HK: And I used to really consider myself somebody who was . . . I've gone from somebody who feels
23 like female to male or somebody who felt like little T to big T, as I sort of grew up. And now I
24 just sort of . . . I feel like so comfortable in my maleness, I don't know. It doesn't feel like an
25 uncomfortable or unpracticed space any more, I just feel like another . . . I never thought I
26 would. I fought against it, but I just feel now like a dude and I'm just a dude that happens to
27 have a transgender experience. It's definitely informed my maleness, but I can really go all day
28 and not think about being transgender, and I never thought there would be a day where I could
29 go all day and not think about being transgender. But I have.
- 30 AJ: No one is mis-gendering you?
- 31 HK: No, I just . . . I think about it, sure, every time I go to the bathroom. I always have a moment of
32 fear and I don't think that will ever go away even though nobody has given me . . . I don't know
33 if I can curse in this or not, but nobody has given . . .
- 34 AJ: You can curse.

- 1 HK: . . . me shit in the bathroom in years and I can . . . I don't know. Because I enjoy so much cis
2 gender privilege at this point, I just consider myself male with transgender experience.
- 3 AJ: Hey, it's a beautiful thing. I'm glad you're able to be at that point in life. I just only wish that for
4 all of our trans brothers and sisters.
- 5 HK: No doubt.
- 6 AJ: Harvey, tell me, what is your earliest memory in life. It does not have to be related to your trans
7 experience, although if it is, that's wonderful and beautiful. So as you're thinking about it, don't
8 think, "Oh, she wants to know when I first realized I was trans."
- 9 HK: Yeah, and no I didn't even know the word transgender until I was 19, so hopefully that's not my
10 earliest history. I think my earliest memory is in pre-school. In pre-school I remember
11 specifically trying to set fires with this kid named Oscar.
- 12 AJ: OK.
- 13 HK: I think that's my earliest memory was pre-school.
- 14 AJ: Wow, setting fires with Oscar.
- 15 HK: Yeah, I don't know why I remember that.
- 16 AJ: Were you guys good buddies?
- 17 HK: I don't even know. I remember I was with this kid, I hung out with this kid and he got me in a lot
18 of trouble. Nothing I did . . . I almost got kicked out of pre-school several times. I would not
19 nap. I used to like to dig a lot of worms and put them places . . . put them on the picnic tables
20 during lunch time. I don't know why I got into this stuff. And then for some reason, I don't
21 know if this kid Oscar . . . and maybe that's not even his name, but in my memory his name was
22 Oscar.
- 23 AJ: That's what you named him as.
- 24 HK: And he . . . we would try to hit rocks together and start fires and I don't know why I knew that as
25 a kid. I have yet to light anything, really . . . I'm not an arsonist, I did not grow up to be an
26 arsonist.
- 27 AJ: Wonderful, that's good news.
- 28 HK: For public record, I'm not an arsonist.
- 29 AJ: So you were hanging out with a little boy in pre-school. Most female assigned children hangout
30 with other female assigned children. Was that something that you consciously sought out or
31 just sort of organically hanging out with the boys.
- 32 HK: It was not organic. I'm telling you this is going through a filter of 32 years, 31 years or whatever
33 – I'm not sure how old you are in pre-school, like 3 or 4. But I remember that there was this one
34 . . . my best friend was a girl named Amanda and she liked this kid, Adam. And so I was like,
35 "Well, shoot, I've got to find a guy to like."

- 1 AJ: OK.
- 2 HK: This is like . . . I don't know, a lot of like . . . I feel like we have a lot of revised narrative in our
3 lives, especially because I think we're just always talking, getting deep into our sexual and our
4 gender histories or whatever, or sexuality and gender histories. But, I do specifically remember
5 that she liked this guy, Adam, and I was like, "I've got to find a dude to hang out with." And so
6 Oscar it was. I always really liked the sort of misfit in a group.
- 7 AJ: Oh wow, awesome. Where did you go to school?
- 8 HK: I grew up in Miami, so I went to school in the public schools in Miami.
- 9 AJ: All right.
- 10 HK: And then I moved to Georgia.
- 11 AJ: What was that experience like in schools in the south? Were you ever bullied as a kid? Were
12 you a good student? You almost got kicked out of pre-school so that tells me a little something.
- 13 HK: I was not a great student, but I did have like a real . . . I think all my years were marked by not
14 fitting in and really wanting to fit in. I was not like . . . I grew up in a pretty conservative Jewish
15 home and I wasn't allowed to wear t-shirts to school. I grew up in Miami and what do you wear
16 in Miami besides a t-shirt or like nothing? I always had to wear these button-down outfits. I had
17 four shirts and four shorts and four tank tops. They were all Hawaiian shirts and then I'd wear a
18 colored tank top underneath that matched and shorts that matched. So all my . . .
- 19 AJ: That was your school uniform.
- 20 HK: For me, all the other kids wore regular t-shirts and shorts and then for me I had this, I guess,
21 personal style picked out by my parents. I've never really cared that much about style. I'm still
22 really bad at picking out an outfit. I'm trying to get more stylish as I get older but . . .
- 23 AJ: But that sounds like sort of a gender-neutral outfit.
- 24 HK: Yeah, or I wore all of my brother's old clothes because I was not a . . . and I feel bad for my mom
25 because she was a very girly-girl.
- 26 AJ: Super femme.
- 27 HK: Well not even . . . she was like a power suit wearing 1980s corporate mama. I didn't know this,
28 she passed away when I was 19 and I didn't know until after she died what she actually did
29 because in my eyes she just went and worked for a mortgage company every day, but she was
30 actually on the forefront of software design.
- 31 AJ: Oh wow.
- 32 HK: Yeah, so she would go to work, and I remember visiting her in the computer room, but she was
33 a really . . . I don't think my parents held tight to gender roles but I do think that they really
34 wanted . . . it's the 1980s, they had a very nuclear family. They had first a boy, then they had a
35 girl, and I do think that there was a line that . . . a life that they had set out for us to achieve. I
36 think that all parents do that with kids, but I do think that it was . . . I remember my mom being

- 1 like, “Don’t squak like a boy.” And I just . . . I remember my grandma telling stories of me just
2 freaking out about wearing dresses. I don’t know if that was gender assigned or if it’s just like I
3 wanted to fit in and my brother was a boy and I wanted to be just like him.
- 4 AJ: Sure. So your dad was in the home too growing up?
- 5 HK: Yeah, and he was actually kind of a stay-at-home dad. He worked for his father so he could
6 come to work late. So he would do my hair in the mornings and dress me, and he was the
7 carpool dad. He was in charge of breakfast. I grew up . . .
- 8 AJ: So there was some gender role sort of shifting in your family.
- 9 HK: Yeah, my mom was at work before I woke up in the morning. She came home and she cooked
10 dinner, but it was like 7-7, she worked long days. And my dad, he was just sort of . . . yeah, he
11 was kind of a stay-at-home dad.
- 12 AJ: And you said you had just the one sibling?
- 13 HK: Yeah, just my brother.
- 14 AJ: And you guys are pretty close?
- 15 HK: Yeah, now. We’ve gone through different periods in our life but he’s . . . when we were kids we
16 were very close and then . . . we’re just four years apart, so just old enough where your interests
17 . . . a 4-year-old has nothing to say to an 8-year-old about what they’re doing and so on. But
18 then, as we grew older . . . I’m very close to him now.
- 19 AJ: Oh good – good, good, good. I’m really glad to hear that because a lot of males with a
20 transgender experience, is that how you phrased it?
- 21 HK: Sure.
- 22 AJ: You know, don’t have those connections to family sometimes, that’s really good to hear.
- 23 HK: I’ve been very lucky to keep my family through this. It’s not been easy, it’s been a lot of late-
24 night emails of, “Learn my name.” That was a big one. Getting my dad to be consistent with my
25 name, it’s been . . . I wrote him a letter in 2003, I came out to him through letter – through pen
26 and paper, and it is now 2016 and we are just . . . we’re at the 90th percentile in getting my
27 name right.
- 28 AJ: Wow.
- 29 HK: But he’s always loved me, which is nice. He just doesn’t want to . . . I think when you have . . . I
30 have this certain level of compassion for it, but then my patience is wearing thin.
- 31 AJ: Yeah, because it’s challenging for our parents.
- 32 HK: Sure, yeah. He would have been happy to go his whole life without ever hearing the word
33 transgender. He’s not like on the forefront of any social movements, he wasn’t psyched to have
34 a queer kid but he was always psyched to have a kid.
- 35 AJ: Your mother passed away at 19.

- 1 HK: Yeah.
- 2 AJ: Did you come out to her at all prior to her . . . ?
- 3 HK: She knew I was queer. She got sick when I was 17 and we actually had kind of like a tragic but
4 funny coming out story where I was having . . . I was in high school and she got diagnosed with a
5 cancer that she had three months to live, but then she ended up living two years. So we were
6 always teetering on the edge of her dying – we never knew . . . so everything was this panic. I
7 was in high school and . . . I didn't ever plan on coming out to my family, I just thought I was
8 going to turn 18 and then I'm going to leave and never speak to them again. That was my plan
9 was to just run away. But then with my mom being sick I just thought, "She's going to die, is this
10 going to stress her out? Is this going to hasten the process or is this going to be something that I
11 need to tell her?" So my plan was just to keep my mouth shut. But I was having a breakdown
12 and I wanted to go visit my friend in Ohio who was really helping me . . . just was sort of a real
13 support system through this. So I needed to borrow like \$100 to pay for my plane ticket and so I
14 was like, "I need to talk to you about something but I don't know how to talk to you about it."
15 And it was just to ask for money.
- 16 AJ: Right.
- 17 HK: And I was like, "I'm really stressed out, I just don't know how this conversation is going to go."
18 And she was like, "Well, does this have anything to do with your sexuality?" And I was like,
19 "OK." So I came out to her then but she never knew me as male. I think it's actually . . . I only
20 came out to her as queer, to which she said, "Yeah, me and your father have known since you
21 were 13 and we've talked about it, we actually went to see somebody to talk about it." But they
22 just never talked to me about it.
- 23 AJ: So they didn't try shock therapy or . . . ?
- 24 HK: No, no. And I don't think that they expected me to change for them either, which was very nice
25 of them. They changed for me and never expected me to change for them. I have to give it to
26 my folks, they really have at least left their feelings as far out of it as possible. But my name, my
27 female name is on her gravestone, and I've never heard my mom say my name. There's certain
28 trans folks that this is an experience with and I've actually wanted to speak to other folks who
29 have had this experience, because it is sort of really isolating to never have had your mom say
30 your name is something that is deeply impactful.
- 31 AJ: It is, having experienced that.
- 32 HK: You have as well.
- 33 AJ: And this is not my interview. No, I've experienced my mom calling me by my name and it's
34 deeply affirming.
- 35 HK: Oh yeah, totally.
- 36 AJ: Yeah, but I don't want to go there, I want to learn about you, Harvey. So, tell me about the first
37 time you realized that you were not the gender you were assigned at birth?
- 38 HK: Well I had some . . .

- 1 AJ: You've already said 19 was when you first heard the word transgender.
- 2 HK: Yeah, like I never heard the word transgender until I was 19, and I never knew that it was a
3 possibility for me. But, I was actually just writing about this this morning, because I had this
4 memory yesterday that I had sort of forgotten for a while. When I was a kid, I was like maybe 8-
5 ish, and I had a friend. I was always very small – not small, I was very fat but I was very short as
6 a kid, like obscenely short. The doctor never thought I would hit 5' and I was like very . . . I was
7 always the shortest kid in my class and whenever I would stay at my friend's house, if I needed
8 to borrow clothes, I would borrow her little brother's clothes, who was like 5. But he was a big
9 5-year-old and I was a little 8-year-old. Her mom went out and for some reason we were left
10 alone in the house, I don't know if it was an emergency or something – it was the 1980s, so 8-
11 year-olds were alone all the time. But we went to the community pool, like the pool in her
12 apartment complex, and instead of wearing her swimsuit, I wore her brother's little speedo.
13 And I remember we blew up a little balloon and I tucked it inside the shorts and I . . .
- 14 AJ: So you were packing at 8?
- 15 HK: Yeah. I wore a really low ponytail thinking it was very Robinson Crusoe, that sort of pilgrim hair
16 period. And I went down to the pool and I remember thinking like, "I just hope this works – I
17 hope this works, I hope nobody notices, and I hope that they don't ruin it for me – this moment,
18 because it was a bet on their end. 'I bet you \$1 you won't do this.'" But I really . . . it was so
19 thrilling. "It is so thrilling to do this." We got in tons of trouble for going to the pool when we
20 shouldn't have, and the balloon came out and we started . . . but it was a very cool moment for
21 me.
- 22 AJ: Wow.
- 23 HK: But when I was 19 I had a roommate who was a women's studies major and I was living in a
24 small city in Georgia. I'd always known about trans women and I have like a very . . . not
25 creative mind but I just never saw past the parameters that it was something that was a
26 possibility for me. And she just sat me down and was like, "I have something to tell you that I
27 learned in class today and I'm pretty sure it pertains to you."
- 28 AJ: Hmm.
- 29 HK: And that's when I found out about trans men and I was just like . . . pshew. And then I really
30 learned to hate myself in a different way and then I was like, "Oh, there's a way out of this
31 body." When you realize that . . . like if you didn't know you were in a jail and then you're like,
32 "Not everybody lives in this jail," and then the walls started closing in. It was horrible, and it was
33 in a small city in Georgia where there was no trans people. I met another trans guy a few years
34 later who actually is still a really good friend of mine.
- 35 AJ: Oh good.
- 36 HK: Yeah, but it was like . . . I started dating somebody who was trans in another city, I went to
37 Overland as they do.
- 38 AJ: Overland is in Ohio?

- 1 HK: Yeah. She goes by she pronouns now but at the time she was like, “I have people call me he
2 pronouns.” And I was like, “You can do that? Do people listen?” I had no clue that you could
3 even ask people to join this journey with you.
- 4 AJ: Sure.
- 5 HK: I just thought, “I’m going to forever live in this hell that I’ve created for myself and it’s going to
6 be a lonely and desolate place.” And then I started . . . I branched out a little bit in Georgia. I
7 only moved to New York five years ago, so I stayed there until I was 30 or 31.
- 8 AJ: What part of Georgia?
- 9 HK: Athens.
- 10 AJ: Athens, OK.
- 11 HK: Yeah, so it’s a college town which is a little bit better than . . .
- 12 AJ: Which college is there?
- 13 HK: The University of Georgia, that’s where I went to school.
- 14 AJ: All right. What did you study?
- 15 HK: Phys Ed. I wanted a degree that I could get that was the least like going to school because I’ve
16 always just . . . I only stayed in school so I could play rugby because if I quit school then I couldn’t
17 be part of the rugby team.
- 18 AJ: Were you on a scholarship?
- 19 HK: No. I went to the University of Georgia. My brother went there and then I went there. I don’t
20 know why he went there, I only went there because I was on my way . . . I didn’t want to go to
21 any college, I was really not intending on going to any college but my mom was like, “Please, I’m
22 dying, go to college.”
- 23 AJ: She hit you with Jewish guilt.
- 24 HK: Totally. I went a year after high school, I didn’t go immediately. But the University of Georgia –
25 I literally applied to all these other schools that I wanted to go to and then I was going to go to
26 Pace for nursing in New York and it’s so expensive, so I said no. And the University of Georgia
27 was the cheapest, at the time it was the cheapest out-of-state public school you could go to and
28 I wanted to get the hell out of Florida. So I went there. That day I turned in my yes to University
29 of Georgia, I got a scholarship to Pace in the mail – the same day. It worked out how it was
30 going to.
- 31 AJ: Well you still ended up in New York City.
- 32 HK: I did. I wasn’t even going to go to school – I was literally . . . I left the week after my mom died
33 and I was in a total brain space . . . my brain was in a horrible space and I was on my way driving
34 to New York City and I was going to forego college all together, but I had a place to stay that
35 night in Athens and, for me, that’s 14 hours – for most people it’s like a 10-hour drive, but for

- 1 me it's a 14-hour drive. So I was exhausted and I was like, "I'll just spend the night," and then I
2 spent 12 years there and then I made it to New York eventually.
- 3 AJ: Wow, that is a fascinating story. So, you kind of had this mind blowing experience at 19 – just
4 pshew, mind blowing experience at 19, when you realized that it was possible to transcend
5 gender, right?
- 6 HK: Yeah.
- 7 AJ: When did you actually begin that journey?
- 8 HK: I'd say by the time I was 20 or 21 I started to socially transition. And then . . . I only went by my
9 last name anyways, Katz – it's a good last name to go by.
- 10 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 11 HK: Especially when you're in a sports community, everybody is like, "Katz – yeah." And so I only
12 went by my last name for years, I didn't even have a first name until like 2006 or 2007, then I
13 was like, "Oh, I should pick a first name that's more gender affirming for me." And then I started
14 to medically transition at 25. At first I just thought I would get top surgery. It's almost like funny
15 in retrospect, only with time has the nostalgia gained any sort of sense of humor, because I had
16 the smallest A breasts, it's as if I didn't . . . if I would have just started taking hormones first, I
17 doubt I would have even needed a mastectomy – literally. But they just felt huge, they just felt
18 like this . . . oh God, it was as if I had double H's. I remember I was riding my bike one day and I
19 was like, "Why am I so winded?" And I realized I was wearing my binder riding a bike and of
20 course I couldn't breathe. And that's when I made the decision, and my grandma had actually
21 just passed away and left me some money, and so my grandma, who I had told I was trans and
22 who was one of my best friends – me and my grandma were pals, and so I thought she would be
23 cool with using the money for that. So I went to an incredibly crappy surgeon who just said my
24 name right. I was like, "You used my male name, yes – you can do surgery on me."
- 25 AJ: Right.
- 26 HK: And that was in 2005 and then I started taking hormones in the beginning of 2006.
- 27 AJ: OK. So you kind of did the opposite experience of . . .
- 28 HK: I did, yeah. When you have surgery, you can keep that private – like I just feel like for me the
29 scariest part about medical transition is that now your transition becomes public, especially if
30 you're taking testosterone like all these changes are happening to you in this very public fashion
31 and your voice is cracking – it's like puberty.
- 32 AJ: Hair sprouting out.
- 33 HK: Hair sprouting – though for me that didn't happen for 10 years, it was slow motion. I just
34 started really shaving a year ago and it's been 10 years. I didn't want to take it public, it just felt
35 like such a personal experience but I was sick of being 14 forever, which was where I was stuck
36 without hormones. And 14-year-olds get treated like crap. It's strange . . . it's just strange to be
37 14 for 10 years. And then it was just time to . . . I was going to say grow up, but I mean

- 1 physically grow up – physically make my body an adult male body, because before I was living
2 like a very teenage boy existence and I wanted to have an adult experience for the world.
- 3 AJ: Wow. What have been some of the challenges that you've faced since you've begun to express
4 your true gender identity?
- 5 HK: Well I think that maybe not a challenge but an interesting sort of side effect was really learning
6 your space in this world differently. It's like before I was always like sort of demanding space,
7 like I belong here – my voice is important. And then I was really scared in the world often, but
8 then I transitioned to being read as male, like now I don't ever get misread, and then I just
9 thought, "Oh my God, I can walk down the street and nobody says anything to me." I remember
10 the first time I walked at night and felt like I'm going to get robbed and I'm not going to get
11 raped. That was . . . I was like, "Well, releasing that fear feels good." Or just being broed by
12 other dudes saying weird and nasty things to you where you're just like . . . it's exciting. Then it
13 gets shitty.
- 14 AJ: It's affirming though, right?
- 15 HK: You're like, "Oh, you want to say something sexist and fucked up to me," and in your brain
16 you're like, "That's so sexist and fucked up," and then you're like, "Ahh, they think I'm one of
17 them." You have to get over that and then you have to be like, "That's f'd up, dude. What are
18 you saying? Why would you even say something like that to me?" And now you can say, "I
19 don't want to hear that," to them or something like that. But it was just interesting to now be a
20 white man in the world. When I first came out to my brother, I got him really drunk – I got me
21 really drunk. He owned a bar in Atlanta and I was just like, "I've got something to tell you," and
22 then I told him that I was transitioning and he said . . . at first he didn't say anything for a few
23 minutes and that was like the hardest minute maybe of my life. And then he said, "You want to
24 be a white man, everybody hates white men." And I was like . . . that was still like one of the
25 best coming out stories I've ever heard. That was his response. Even in the queer community,
26 as somebody who was gender queer or somebody who was living this very, sort of untraditional
27 experience of gender, people were always telling me, "Your voice is important." I made a career
28 using my voice, I became an educator and I became a performer and my voice was the only . . . it
29 became the instrument I had as part of my career, and now sort of being really read as a cis
30 gender male and somebody . . . I'm constantly told to shut up now. Now you're told like,
31 "You've spoken enough, your voice isn't important."
- 32 AJ: How does that feel?
- 33 HK: It's hard. I wish it wasn't so hard. I understand – I absolutely understand where it's coming
34 from and I feel like a whiny white dude to be like, "I have something to say still." But it was an
35 experience and experience that . . . it took me so much to speak up and now I have to quell what
36 felt really brave to me. I have to silence that because . . . I always feel like the price you pay is
37 you get all this privilege in the world. They're like, "you've already been sort of paid to keep
38 silent in this way." It's tricky. It's tricky on so many levels. But emotionally it's been really hard
39 to be . . . to just be told to shut up.

- 1 AJ: Oh wow. This is really fascinating to me, Harvey, that your challenge is really . . . a big part of
2 your challenge, you didn't say it was your only challenge – but one challenge, is that you are
3 always perceived as male. What do you think about this whole idea of passing and stealth
4 identity and really not coming out as having a transgender experience? What's your thoughts
5 around that?
- 6 HK: You know, I think it's all personal. For me, I don't even think I practice holding it back though I
7 have found that I can be a better ally if people don't see me as a transgender person and then
8 work as an ally for the trans community, I actually have found that a really exciting proposition.
9 I can be effective again in this way.
- 10 AJ: Yes, that's an awesome analysis – I just want to point that out.
- 11 HK: It's exciting. I had an experience at work. I work for this real estate company in New York and I
12 just was like . . . oh, because they don't know I'm trans, and it's not even like I didn't tell them
13 for a reason, but it's also a work place – I don't need to tell them anything. They don't need to
14 know what I'm doing tonight and they don't need to know that I was assigned female at birth.
15 I'm here to work, I'm not here to make friends, I'm literally here to go home.
- 16 AJ: And all your documentation and everything . . .
- 17 HK: Well it goes through the state licensing board, so all they knew was that my state license said
18 this. They didn't need any information – the state does ID checks on me, everything. They
19 didn't have any part of my background check because by that time the state had already done a
20 background check on me for the state licensing board. But, I mean, I think that . . . I don't think
21 there's any shame in staying stealth, I don't think there's any shame in coming out. I think that
22 for everybody . . . I think for a lot of trans folks, the end experience is that you get to just live
23 your affirmed gender and then the transition is over. I do feel, like for me, my transition is
24 complete and then any information I want to give about my past is for those that I want to have
25 it. I think I have been gifted this privilege of coming out when I choose or coming out when I
26 don't choose – that's a privilege to get to decide when you tell folks that you're trans and when
27 you don't. I think I only realized I'm here, in this spot, in the last year or two. It's like I finally
28 landed in my reality – recently, which is why I have all these new thoughts about it. I bet you in
29 five years I don't even think about this anymore.
- 30 AJ: Sure.
- 31 HK: Once you don't have to think about it, it's kind of a joy.
- 32 AJ: Sure.
- 33 HK: I remember telling my mom, like sobbing – deeply sobbing to my mom and just telling her, "I'll
34 never be OK in this world. There will never be a place that accepts me, I'm always going to be . .
35 ." I had no adult representation of what I was going to look like when I got older. I didn't think I
36 was going to live until 20 – and my mom didn't either. She told me after I came out to her that
37 she thought I was going to commit suicide. It was really real. If my family hadn't shown me the
38 love that they did, I would have never made it.
- 39 AJ: Wow, well thank goodness for family.

- 1 HK: No doubt.
- 2 AJ: Tell me about some of the joys of coming out. You named one.
- 3 HK: I don't know. I think, for me, telling folks I'm trans . . . I'm not a man-hating man, but I'm not a
4 man-loving man. It's nice for me to get to be like, "I'm a guy, but not like those guys." It's nice
5 for me to separate myself from a traditional male experience. I think it makes me . . . I don't
6 want to be part of that group all the time. I feel like, as a whole, men are getting a little better
7 but not only did they have a really bad rap for a really long time, they haven't had the greatest
8 awareness. I love the fact that I was socialized female – I absolutely love it. I think that it made
9 me a better man. I really do. Though I look at my brother and he's a really great man, but I
10 often wonder what kind of person I would have been had I not had a transgender experience.
- 11 AJ: Wow. Any other joys?
- 12 HK: I don't know. I'd have to say, I love the unique perspective that being trans gives you on the
13 world. It's almost like . . . I don't want to make trans people seem like they're . . .
- 14 AJ: Unicorns.
- 15 HK: Or like unicorns or masquerading or deceiving or having any of that sort of labeling that other
16 people put on us, but it's kind of like a fly on the wall kind of existence. When you're like, "Oh,
17 I've lived that so I know but you don't know that." I love the fact that I have lived many
18 experiences and that they all got to sort of funnel into the person I am now.
- 19 AJ: When I first came out I used to have a lot of my female friends, cis gender female friends, would
20 sort of consult me about relationships with men.
- 21 HK: Right, yeah.
- 22 AJ: I lived that experience, so I know what you're saying.
- 23 HK: Totally.
- 24 AJ: Current relationship with your family good now?
- 25 HK: Yeah, it's great – better than ever. I think that I've really had to fight for space in it, I've really
26 had to have been like, "I'm not letting down, you have to love me as hard as anybody else." I
27 have really . . . a lot of late night emails have gone out to my family. An acquaintance friend of
28 mine in New York recently committed suicide and I . . .
- 29 AJ: Oh no, I'm sorry.
- 30 HK: Yeah, it was awful and I spoke to my dad about it the next day. He said, "Well don't you go
31 down that road now." And I said, "Well I have my family rooting for me so that makes it a lot
32 easier to not do that." And he said, "We're not rooting for you, we're going to treat you the
33 same as anybody else." Which I thought . . .
- 34 AJ: But that's good. That's what we want, right?

- 1 HK: He's like, "I'm not rooting for you, we're going to treat you the same as everybody else." I was
2 like, "That's hilarious."
- 3 AJ: Oh funny. Were there any pivotal moments for you that defined your new life?
- 4 HK: I got married recently. There was something about . . . and I've just never been one to think I
5 would get married, like never. I don't care if anybody else gets married, it's never been a
6 political issue for me. I feel like I fought hard for a gay marriage because I thought that when
7 you live in the south or you live in rural communities, that's what tells people you're human and
8 you deserve a basic right. It was an important fight for me.
- 9 AJ: So you were involved in sort of canvassing, door knocking . . . ?
- 10 HK: I didn't really canvas . . . I give myself more of a pat on the back than I really did. But in
11 conversation, but in voting and all that stuff, I always voted . . . though I have to say, in Georgia
12 in 2004, for that election gay marriage was up for votes and I was at city hall bi-weekly.
- 13 AJ: OK, so you were a strong advocate.
- 14 HK: I had lots of letters from Sunny Perdue, the governor at the time, to me. So actually I forgot
15 about that, so I was . . . and it was shot down by like 86%, it wasn't even a close battle. But I
16 recently got married, and I have to say that in the most disgusting hard to accept way, it's kind
17 of cool to be husband and wife in this . . . in almost like this ha-ha to my teenage self, where it
18 just said, "Oh, you didn't think you would belong – look at you." I just felt like . . . I'm working
19 on how that feels internally still. I haven't really caught it. But I think the most pivotal moment
20 was just realizing that I didn't have to fight so much anymore. I mean, I know that's my
21 experience, obviously that's not all trans people's experience, but this moment where I was just
22 like, "Oh my God, today you just get to be."
- 23 AJ: You know, I've heard a lot of people talk about . . . in similarly situated people, talk about now
24 they get married – trans man, cis gender woman. I'm making a big assumption that your wife is
25 . . .
- 26 HK: Yeah, she's cis gender.
- 27 AJ: . . . is a cis gender person. The struggle becomes how do we let our queer community, our
28 friends, even the world know that we are queer? How do you deal with that? Or do you guys
29 deal with it?
- 30 HK: My wife is like real queer looking, so that's helpful.
- 31 AJ: So you guys are out already.
- 32 HK: I was talking to her the other day, I was like . . .
- 33 AJ: And how is one queer looking? Describe her to me?
- 34 HK: She's just like a really . . . she's got like a pompadour, she's tough and beautiful at the same time
35 in this way . . .
- 36 AJ: The 50s glasses?

- 1 HK: She had lasik, so no.
- 2 AJ: OK, so no glasses.
- 3 HK: She did before. No, she' just . . . she just doesn't . . .
- 4 AJ: She doesn't fit the norm of . . .
- 5 HK: Yeah, when people see me with her I think they think, "Oh my God . . ."
- 6 AJ: Poor straight guy.
- 7 HK: "I don't think you know who you married – she's going to leave you for a woman." I think that's
8 what they think. But I was talking to my wife the other day about how all my relationships have
9 looked so odd to people in the world. When I was 19, I was dating a 33-year-old but everybody
10 thought I was 14 and they would say, "Is this your son?" All this stuff to us – and we'd be like,
11 "No." And then when I dated a trans guy that I dated after her, we both looked about 16-years-
12 old and we traveled the country and we had a lot of trouble because people kept thinking we
13 were kids traveling together. I actually took a group . . . I snuck into a middle school picture on
14 that trip and got away with it – they were traveling at the same national park we were. And
15 then, on and on . . . I think my last long-term relationship before her, I think people really
16 assumed I was a gay man and I think they felt bad for my girlfriend at the time, thinking like,
17 "Oh, you don't know you're with a gay man." And now I think they think, "Oh . . ."
- 18 AJ: You don't know you're with a lesbian.
- 19 HK: "Oh, I guess it takes one guy to change them." And I joke with my wife – like, "You were just
20 waiting for the right man." But it's ours to joke about. But I do, I always want to be like, "I am,
21 but I'm not one of you."
- 22 AJ: Yeah, it can be a challenge. I personally haven't had to experience that but I hear a lot of people
23 talking about it.
- 24 HK: It's like a . . . "Oh, sorry, I feel so bad for you." And you're like "I don't know, it's so hard - I'm
25 sorry it does feel so bad."
- 26 AJ: It is what it is.
- 27 HK: It is what it is, everybody's experience is valid.
- 28 AJ: Any specific moments or persons or organizations that have had a significant impact on your
29 gender identity?
- 30 HK: Well . . .
- 31 AJ: The roommate in college.
- 32 HK: Sure, yeah – she was huge. And her teacher, I guess, too. I don't know who her teacher was at
33 the time who got transgender experience. I remember I was working at this sandwich shop and
34 bakery in Athens and a trans . . . I didn't know he was trans at the time but I had a feeling he was
35 trans, he was applying for a job there. I literally . . . I was leaving off my shift for the day and he

- 1 was just filling out the application and I kept looking for so long that I walked right into the
2 fucking door coming out. But I don't know, I read *Stone Butch Blues* when I was a teenager . . .
- 3 AJ: For some reason, I was just getting ready to ask you about Leslie Feinberg.
- 4 HK: Yeah, of course.
- 5 AJ: Who is a dear friend of mine – but yeah.
- 6 HK: I feel like an integral part of my life . . . I read that book over the years so many times. In fact, I
7 just thought . . . just thinking about picking it up and reading it again because I was now
8 wondering what it felt through this lens of my life. And then there's been communities all over
9 the country. I've traveled, as a performer, for the last 10 years I've gone to all these places all
10 over the country and I get to meet the coolest group of folks in every city – the queer and the
11 trans folks in every city, from fucking Conway, Arkansas to San Francisco, from the little to the
12 big. I've gotten to meet really cool people and they've all been really nice to me and that has
13 changed everything about my experience and myself and my body.
- 14 AJ: That is awesome. Tell me about your artistic life. You're a performer, you're a writer. What do
15 you write about? What's your performance like? You said you've been doing it for 10 years.
- 16 HK: Yeah, over that – 13.
- 17 AJ: Oh wow.
- 18 HK: Yeah, since 2003 I've been doing it mostly full-time.
- 19 AJ: Really?
- 20 HK: Yeah.
- 21 AJ: And you're able to make a living as an artist?
- 22 HK: Yeah, that and odd stuff like here and there. That and the odd jobs, but it's been my primary
23 source of income.
- 24 AJ: That's what artists do, right?
- 25 HK: Right – you figure it out as you go. Yeah, I started doing this project called Athens Boys Choir
26 with another guy, which is why it's Athens Boys Choir.
- 27 AJ: OK, so Athens . . .
- 28 HK: Georgia.
- 29 AJ: Athens, Georgia.
- 30 HK: Yeah, he grew up in a very sort of Catholic all-girls high school situation and so he thought . . .
31 you know, and he was Catholic and I was Jewish so we thought, "Oh, the Boys Choir would be
32 really fun." And that was great in 2003, at this point I would love to get rid of the name and just
33 have been able to have been something else.
- 34 AJ: You're the only touring member of the Athens Boys Club.

- 1 HK: I am, and sometimes if they don't read the rider they set up for a choir and I just feel bad . . . I
2 just need one mic. It's spoken word poetry and then I've sort of shifted into storytelling now.
3 So I do true story storytelling.
- 4 AJ: Your own original stories or . . . ?
- 5 HK: Oh yeah, totally, it's all true stories from . . . anything from . . . and they usually have like a real
6 gay or transness to them depending on what story I'm telling. It's almost all about hard times
7 early in my transition because I just think that that's when the most fascinating stories
8 happened to me. I don't really write much spoken word poetry now, because I think spoken
9 word poetry takes a lot of animosity towards yourself or the world – whether it's political or
10 what, and I just feel like I have love in my life, I know now that I have . . . I don't have struggles
11 like I did before and because I don't it's really hard to write spoken word poetry. I was speaking
12 to another poet the other day and I was talking to her and she was like, "Dang it, love really
13 ruins your spoken word career." I was like, "I know," I was like, "She is the poem," I get really
14 cheesy about it. I don't write so much of that style anymore, and also just I'm calmer in my life.
- 15 AJ: Did you compete?
- 16 HK: No, I got really nervous to compete. I did a few slams in like the Nuyorican in New York and
17 stuff – like spaces that are historically really cool like that. And I did all right, but I just feel like . .
18 .
- 19 AJ: That's an intimidating space.
- 20 HK: No doubt, I was shaking when I was there. But, you know . . .
- 21 AJ: Nuyorican – just spell that for my . . .
- 22 HK: What is it? N-u-y-o-r-i-c-n. I think it's N-u-y-o-r-i-c-n.
- 23 AJ: Yes, that's it.
- 24 HK: C-a-n. It's like Puerto Rican . . . the Nuyorican. And then . . . yeah, now I started a storytelling
25 series in New York, it's called Take Two Storytelling.
- 26 AJ: Oh wow.
- 27 HK: That's my newest project.
- 28 AJ: Where does that happen?
- 29 HK: It happens at this bar in Bed-Stuy called C'mon Everybody and it's basically true story. Some
30 people read . . . so far, nobody has read it but it's possible. They just tell a live story, a true
31 story, and then they give you the actual ending but then you also get an alternative ending
32 where they get redemption or they get to right wrongs or they get to say how they wish it would
33 have turned out.
- 34 AJ: Is that a competitive process?
- 35 HK: No, no.

- 1 AJ: Is there like miracle scores or . . . ?
- 2 HK: No, I don't like to compete. I've never been . . . I was a PE major and I played rugby, but I sucked
3 at sports my whole life. I don't like winners and losers, I don't like competitive ground. I'm
4 really shy about telling anybody that they didn't do as good as the next person – I want us all to
5 feel like or be winners.
- 6 AJ: Wow. You talked about coming out . . . let me ask you this. Well, I have a question here – have
7 there been times when someone has been really helpful or really insensitive related to the
8 medical industry, to the criminal justice system, to educational institutions? It sounds like your
9 life has been pretty steadily OK, but please share with me . . . and I'm curious, you went to the
10 University of Georgia, were you able to get your documents changed when you graduated?
11 What was that process like?
- 12 HK: To be honest, I still haven't . . . I just got my transcript so I just changed my name with them and
13 I graduated in 2003 and it's 2016. I just did it. But I feel like in Georgia getting medical
14 transition was so horrifying. I had so many bad instances. I probably called like 20 doctor's
15 offices looking for somebody who would even take me as a patient. Then I found somebody
16 who was like, "I'm interested." I went to see him and he was a gynecologist and obstetrician in
17 Athens and he was gay. I knew that because he was . . . we had a Rainbow Pages that was like
18 two pages, and I went to see him . . .
- 19 AJ: A Rainbow Page.
- 20 HK: Page - exactly. He was like, "I'm going to have to talk to my doctor in Emory, I don't understand
21 what this is, this transgender." I was like, "That sounds great. You can say whatever you want
22 to me, just give me hormones." And then he refused to start hormones unless I had a
23 gynecological exam and I had told him I just had one three months ago, I brought my paperwork
24 and everything with me. And I said, "You can read right here, I went three months ago – there's
25 no new information you're going to find." But he was so excited to see what I had that he
26 wouldn't let me leave or get hormones until I did and I was just balling and screaming and I left.
27 When I finally found a doctor that was in Atlanta, and he, for my first shot, he berated me until I
28 gave myself a shot – just saying, "You want to be a man, this is what it takes to be a man." And
29 he had me use an 18-gauge needle, which is so much bigger than what you actually have to use
30 – it's like shooting yourself with a bullet in your leg – an inch and a half, 18-gauge needle. And I
31 used it for years thinking that's what you had to use, and now I use like a 23-gauge needle,
32 which is so much . . .
- 33 AJ: It's like a little sliver almost.
- 34 HK: It's like nothing, I don't even think twice about giving myself shots now. But he just berated me
35 and berated me until I did it. It was a horrifying experience. And then going to a doctor that
36 had a sketchy medical license to get my mastectomy – they didn't even use gloves when they
37 put my IV in. It was so crazy.
- 38 AJ: Oh boy.
- 39 HK: But I survived – and I didn't get hepatitis through it somehow.

- 1 AJ: Wow. So, there have been some really sort of horrific experiences.
- 2 HK: Yeah, almost all around medical stuff.
- 3 AJ: Harvey, talk to me about what do you see as the relationship between the LGB and the trans
4 community? Is there a relationship? Should there continue to be a relationship?
- 5 HK: You know, I think it's a complicated relationship but I think it's a necessary relationship. It's like
6 I think a lot of trans people have had some queerness in them or are still queer, so I think
7 there's a lot of intersection of histories. I also think that it's hard not to . . . like you want as
8 many people going into battle with you as possible, but I also think that it creates a lot of
9 assumptions that may not also be true, like assuming that trans people are queer or trans
10 people want to be aligned with queer politics. And also, I think then the aspect of coming out is
11 very different – because coming out for queer people is a matter of pride and being like I'm
12 living a whole and authentic life and then for trans folks coming out is often . . . living a true and
13 authentic life means often like, "I don't have to come out to you."
- 14 AJ: Right.
- 15 HK: "Because I'm actually living my true and authentic life." So I think it creates this idea that people
16 are holding back information that they're supposed to tell you and nobody has to tell you
17 anything. And I think the same thing about sexuality too – I think it's your own prerogative,
18 there's nothing not proud about living your life as comfortable as possible.
- 19 AJ: Hmm. Do you think there's an agenda for the trans community or should be an agenda for the
20 trans community? And, if you do, what is it?
- 21 HK: Oh man. I think that one thing that gets forgotten in lumping communities, is that people have
22 such different prerogatives and different desires. I don't know. I think the agenda for the trans
23 community is getting to live, getting to be part of spaces in an organic manner. So, like . . . I do a
24 lot of work with college campuses so it's all about giving the transgender student the same
25 experience as the cis gender student – so a comfortable place to be housed, bathrooms that are
26 . . . I can't believe how bathrooms are still a conversation we're having. But it feels like the most
27 basic of needs is bathroom safety. It's just like I've gone to the bathroom every day of my life,
28 every day I go to the bathroom.
- 29 AJ: Multiple times a day.
- 30 HK: Often – yes, every day I go to the bathroom many times a day. It's still the scariest place for a
31 trans person. I literally . . . I just want to go to the bathroom and not think about it, and for the
32 most part I do. But, for the most part I'm totally fine going to bathrooms safe, which I know is
33 an experience not everybody has. But to just go in and not think about it, I don't know what
34 that is like. I don't know if there is an agenda beyond just getting equal rights and equal access
35 to services. And I think that's an agenda for everybody to have, to be honest. It's certainly not
36 singular to the trans experience that you're like, "Oh, I want equal access to basic human
37 rights."
- 38 AJ: That's a human rights issue, right?

- 1 HK: Totally. So I think the agenda for everybody is human rights and some sort of push towards
2 equality. And I know that looks really . . . and I look different to different people and I know not
3 everybody wants to live the same life as cis gender folks or . . . I don't know, has the same goals.
4 It's all really varied. I don't know. It's tricky.
- 5 AJ: It's OK, I'm just asking your opinion, you don't have to have all the answers. If you did, you'd
6 probably be a very wealthy person.
- 7 HK: Yes, tell people I do.
- 8 AJ: I will – I will tell them. Have you ever worked for or volunteered for any trans or LGBT
9 organizations?
- 10 HK: Oh yeah. I try to get involved as much as possible. In New York, I have the opportunity . . . and
11 you know, it's difficult because I'm on the road so often so I can't be a . . . like a set part of an
12 organization. But I have worked with the Ali Forney Center and . . .
- 13 AJ: Ali Forney, yeah.
- 14 HK: I'm always like . . . if SRLP has events, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, but mostly it's been working
15 with different organizations on college campuses.
- 16 AJ: Cool, that's awesome. You talked a little bit earlier about coming out and medically
17 transitioning as being a very private experience, which I agree. But, in 2015 we just bore witness
18 to a very public coming out story.
- 19 HK: We sure did.
- 20 AJ: Replete with a reality TV show and the cover of some pretty fancy magazines and I believe you
21 know who I'm talking about – Caitlyn Jenner.
- 22 HK: Of course.
- 23 AJ: What do you think about Ms. Jenner now, as she wants to be referred to? And what is the
24 impact of visibility on this sort of journey or quest for full equality?
- 25 HK: I have a friend, I wish I could have come up with this myself, but I have a friend who I have had
26 this conversation with and he said, "You know, now at least now not one person in America can
27 say they don't know a trans person." And that's huge.
- 28 AJ: That is huge.
- 29 HK: My dad said to me on the phone – like, "What do you think about this Caitlyn Jenner thing?" I
30 said, "How did you learn her name in one day?"
- 31 AJ: It took you 35 years to . . .
- 32 HK: I'm still fighting for this name thing, but you just, "Caitlyn Jenner." Seamless. I was just like,
33 "Arghhh."
- 34 AJ: That is hilarious.

- 1 HK: And then I had an online . . . like a little Facebook fight with somebody who was like . . . they had
2 forward posted this, I don't know . . . shared this story about Caitlyn Jenner being woman of the
3 year and said, "All you need is a schlong to be woman of the year," or something like that and I
4 was like, "I don't understand." And then the person wrote, "I don't understand either." I was
5 like, "What's not to understand? She has brought transgender issues to the forefront of the
6 American consciousness, at great personal cost. So yeah, she should be woman of the year.
7 What's not to understand?" Or something like that, that's just what I wrote back. But . . . at
8 first I was like, "Oh God, she's like a Republican and she's pro guns and all these things," and I
9 was like . . .
- 10 AJ: The Kardashians.
- 11 HK: She's a Kardashian, which I don't follow any of the Kardashians at all, but I was like, "Actually
12 that kind of works in our favor because now the Republicans have a transgender person too." I
13 was like, "Ahhh, I can't align myself with her politics but it's kind of cool that she's Republican." I
14 It's kind of cool that not only is she a Republican, but she's kind of a God/gun kind of Republican.
15 I was like, "Well, it takes all kinds." But yeah. I don't have any . . . I think the most important
16 thing she did was that she became a transgender person that people speak about when they
17 would have never said the word transgender in their entire life – happily. So that's cool.
- 18 AJ: It's awesome, actually. I love your response, it's really great. Last question, 50 years from now
19 what do you think life is going to be like for trans-identified people? Keeping in mind . . . so,
20 another visible reality show is this young lady Jazz Jennings, and so young people are coming out
21 and they're getting access to medical treatment, supportive parents. Their transgender
22 experience is very different from mine. What do you think the world is going to look like in 50
23 years?
- 24 HK: (A) hopefully we still have a world.
- 25 AJ: Fingers crossed.
- 26 HK: Totally. I'm fascinated to find out. I mean, the deal is . . . I didn't come out as trans that long
27 ago – I mean 2000 is 16 years ago, and I remember having to tell people . . . people were like,
28 "What the hell does transgender mean?"
- 29 AJ: Right.
- 30 HK: Or what is a transgender. We didn't even start using it as an adjective properly until like two
31 years ago, you still had news people . . . I even read an Oprah quote recently that said, "I don't
32 know much about transgender . . . about a transgender." Like used it as a noun, and I'm like oh
33 my God, even language has changed really fast. And so in 50 years, the hope is that it just
34 becomes part of the everyday experience. That this sort of the assumption of the binary has
35 really been disproven and we just move along as a transgender identity being part of a wide
36 array of gender identities expressed in the world. So that's my hope. And I actually think that
37 like we're going to get there – because I already think that we're thinking about it . . . you look
38 at the transgender movement, it's moving incredibly fast – like incredibly fast. What other civil
39 rights movement has moved this fast, where people are just like, "Yes, make space for this
40 community, make space for this community." You know, you have a President talking about

- 1 transgender people. I never thought I would ever hear a President say anything about . . . even
2 to use the word like lesbian felt like farfetched for a President to say and now the President is
3 saying, "Gender identity and expression . . . there should be discrimination policies that include
4 this."
- 5 AJ: Right.
- 6 HK: So I think you have . . . like the treadmill is already on run and I think you're just going to have . .
7 . we're going to see so much difference. So in 50 years, I'm just hoping that it's just not a thing.
- 8 AJ: Not a thing. Wow.
- 9 HK: That would be . . . I mean, that you just get to be born and be.
- 10 AJ: Well, this has been a fascinating hour.
- 11 HK: It's been great. Sorry to talk about me the whole time, I want to know so much more about you.
- 12 AJ: No, this whole project is to learn about you. I'll do my own interview and then you can come
13 online and check it out and learn about me.
- 14 HK: Who's interviewing you?
- 15 AJ: We'll figure that out, I haven't figured it out yet. But soon – very soon. Thank you.
- 16 HK: Of course, I'm so happy you came.
- 17 AJ: Good-bye.