

Under the Rainbow: Oral Histories of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,
Transgender, Intersex and Queer People in Kansas

Allison
Oral History

Interviewed by
Tami Albin

August 23, 2009

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Allison: Narrator

Tami Albin: Interviewer

TAMI ALBIN: Okay, so today is August 23, 2009 and I'm here with Allison. How are you doing?

ALLISON: Good. How are you?

ALBIN: I'm good thank you. Thank you so much for participating in this project, I appreciate it so much.

ALLISON: You're welcome.

ALBIN: So the way that I start off all my interviews is, Please tell me where you were born and when.

ALLISON: I was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1980, January 2, 1980.

ALBIN: Did you grow up in Wichita?

ALLISON: No. I was actually—my family lived in Germany when my mother was pregnant. And when it came close to having me she came back to Wichita because that's where both of my parents' family members live. So she had me and then we went back to Germany.

ALBIN: So was she working in Germany?

ALLISON: No. My father is, or was in the army when they were married and she was a housewife so—

ALBIN: Right. Right. Do you have any other siblings?

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ALLISON: I have a brother who's three years older than me, so he is thirty-two. And he lives in Wichita now so—

ALBIN: Right. Right. So did you grow up in Germany?

ALLISON: No. Being in the army we moved probably every two years I guess. So I've lived in Germany, I've lived in Missouri, I've lived in Texas, lived in Oklahoma. Came to Wichita in '93 when my dad retired, and from there went back to Missouri and all over the place.

ALBIN: Right. Right. So what was it like living in all these different locations?

ALLISON: I really actually appreciate that about my past. I got to meet a lot of different people, be exposed to a lot of different lifestyles and cultures, and I feel like that made me a better person or a more well-rounded person, as opposed to being here and I meet people that have grown up in this town their whole life and have never experienced anything. I wouldn't know what to do like that, so—

ALBIN: So you moved back to Wichita in '93—

ALLISON: Um-hm—

ALBIN: —with your family. And so did you—you would have been thirteen by that point?

ALLISON: Um-hm.

ALBIN: So did you—would that be junior high? Did you start junior high at that point?

ALLISON: Yeah.

ALBIN: And so what was it like coming home to—well home—the place you were born and then starting school?

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ALLISON: I don't know. I was used to being the new kid in school. But it was different because I've always gone to school on military bases and so everyone else was always the new kid at school too. And so it was really hard to find a group of friends in Wichita because these kids had grown up together and gone through all the grades together, and I was an outcast so—

ALBIN: Right. Right. So what happened with feeling like you were an outcast? Did—did you find eventually a group of friends or—

ALLISON: I had some. My—at that point my father and my mother had divorced, and so it was just me and my dad. And he is an alcoholic, and so he was drunk every day and he was really mean. And so when I was—and I kind of turned to food. (laugh) So I was this overweight kid in this school where I really didn't feel like I belonged and I got picked on a lot. And then when I went home I got picked on at home. And so I kind of came up with this persona like I was tough and if you messed with me there's a possibility I'd kill you. So (laugh) I kind of kept people at bay doing that, and I had a couple friends but they were like misfits too so we kind of found strength in each other, but I started doing drugs when I was that age, so—

ALBIN: And so what was high school like? Was it—was it kind of a continuation of junior high?

ALLISON: High school was worse. High—(laugh) My father kicked me out when I was—when I was thirteen, fourteen—fourteen and I lived in Wichita in the streets for a little bit in abandoned houses with other people that I just thought were the coolest people in the world. And we partied a lot and did drugs. And my mother lived in Missouri and so I went to live with her. And she lived kind of outside of an army base, but she lived in the country and right on this school district line where I had to go to school in Dixon, Missouri. And it was a tiny, tiny town, all white, all cowboys, cowgirls. And so when I went there I was treated really poorly because I had been exposed to so many cultures that I just was not like them and they were—I—I remember—(laugh) Our school was so small that we didn't have locks on our lockers. And I remember getting into my locker and finding these dolls with nooses around their neck and one was black

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and one was white. And the KKK was thick in that area. And (laugh) so I—it was a lot of racist remarks and I fought a lot and—it was bad.

ALBIN: Right. So how did you—did you say something to someone to cause them to put the dolls in your locker?

ALLISON: No—

ALBIN: Do you have any idea—

ALLISON: No. The minute I started school there—I didn't dress the way that they dressed and I'd come from a rural—well urban area to a rural—I can't say the word—area. And they, off the bat—I hate to say this word, but they off the bat called me nigger and nigger lover. And it—I'm one, at that time, if you said something like that to me I'm going to talk crap back to you. And things just escalated. And there were a lot of threats because of—they just—I don't know. I don't know. It was weird. It was real strange.

ALBIN: And how did your mom react to all of this happening to you?

ALLISON: My mom, she didn't really—she didn't really care. She—we had a weird relationship. She— When my brother and I started school right before my parents got divorced, she started teaching aerobics for the GIs on the army base for their PT, their physical training, and then it escalated to aerobics and weightlifting. (laugh) And then so for my mother—and I don't know what it was but my mother had this huge issue with my weight and being overweight. And if I wasn't working on weight issues with her then we—she really didn't talk to me much, so—she—she still throws that in my face, like if—when I first moved to Missouri and I didn't know anyone she and I would exercise every day. In the evenings we'd go out into the country and walk. And I guess those times were real important to her. And she's still really resentful that at one point I stopped doing that with her. She said—she calls that me turning my back on her when I made friends and had other things to do, so—

ALBIN: Right.

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ALLISON: She rode my butt when it came to school. I got suspended a lot. And there was really no compassion from her in any of that. So—

ALBIN: So did you end up staying and finishing high school?

ALLISON: No. I got—(laugh) I got kicked out of school for the remainder of my junior year because I'd been suspended for fighting so many times that they weren't going to give me my credits. And so they told me just to not come that year and then if I wanted to repeat my junior year the next year I could. And I wouldn't do that. And so I just dropped out. And then when I dropped out my mother kicked me out of the house. So I didn't get to finish, I guess.

ALBIN: And so what did you do?

ALLISON: Uh—um, well I was homeless and I just stayed with people, around, different places. You have friends and you stay with them and you wear out your welcome, which I understand now. When I was a kid I'm like, How are you going to kick me out? Where am I going to go? But no one wants to take care of someone who's not doing anything (laugh) so I just kind of stayed from place to place and I tried to—I tried to work and maintain a job. But even with that I didn't have the means to—Like, I didn't have a car and being—the area was so stretched out that I couldn't get to work or where would I live when I had the job? And it was always never knowing the next day if I was going to be in Missouri or if I was going to go back to Kansas or go to Texas. And I think right when I turned eighteen I went to Texas, to San Antonio, for like two months and then came back to Missouri. So I just—I just existed.

ALBIN: Right. Right. And so how long did you kind of exist for in that kind of traveling around?

ALLISON: I don't know, that lasted a long time. (laugh) I got married when I was eighteen and I—well, I got pregnant and I knew that I shouldn't marry the guy, I didn't love him. And he was in the army. But I knew that if I married him then—and this is horrible—but I knew that if I married him I wouldn't be homeless and I would have

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health insurance. And so I knew that I'd have somewhere that I would be able to know I'm going to sleep there every night. And being pregnant I didn't want to bring a baby into my situation, and so I married him. And he was—he was not a good husband and he was abusive and he was a womanizer. And nine months after we got married he kind of left me no choice but to leave him. It was either that or he was going to kill me, so—then I ended up homeless again and I was living—at that point I had a van (laugh) and so I lived in my van. And I worked three jobs and still could not afford to live anywhere. So in 2000 my mother had found a job here in Pratt. And so she relocated to Pratt and said I could come and live with her with my son. And so—and he was eighteen months old at that time and so that's what I did.

ALBIN: Right. Right. And so what has life like—been living in Pratt?

ALLISON: I don't—(laugh) I don't like Pratt. (laugh) I like it—I think it's getting better now that I'm kind of more stable. But when I first moved here—there's not a lot of job opportunity. I got my GED from the Pratt Community College and tried to live on my own but I still moved probably every six months or so to a new place and then I started doing drugs, hard drugs. Like I had always smoked marijuana and drank at times, but in '01 I—my son went to Texas to visit his father and I was introduced to meth, which I had done before but I think—I don't know, I was—I lost it on the meth.

And in 2001 I was raped by three men and the doctor gave me all kinds of pills. I mean, I think he felt sorry for me and he just—(laugh) he gave me Percocet, Lortab. There was a lot of physical damage from the rape and of course emotional. And so I had all these pills, and so I started trading pills for meth. And then at one point I sold some pills to a guy who turned me in and so I was arrested and went to jail. So—(laugh) They sent me to Larned because I was—I was—I'd been up for eleven days without food and sleep and was hallucinating and pretty delusional. And they sent me to Larned so I could kind of detox from the drugs and came back to jail and I was—I didn't have a record, but the charge—I lived across the street from an elementary school and so the charge carried a 49-month presumptive imprisonment sentence. But they said since I didn't have a record that I could go to treatment and be put on community corrections. So I went to treatment.

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Well— excuse me. My son was actually here when I was arrested. And I called my mother from the jail and said, You're going to need to take care of my son because I'm in jail and I'll be out in a couple days. I still wasn't really—it hadn't hit me what was going on yet, but she said, No I'm going to give him to foster care because I'm not going to take care of him. So at that point I called my in-laws, my ex in-laws, in Texas and— one way or another—well no. (laugh) My ex-husband sent a woman from Missouri to come here and get my son and take him back to Missouri while my ex-husband was in Texas. And so they all lied to me and said he was in Texas. And I was in treatment when I found out where he was. And he was with the woman that my husband got pregnant while we were married.

And when I was in treatment I met some people, some bad people and I think I had pretty much checked out. I think I had given up. I was tired of not having anywhere to live and not knowing where my son was and having these horrible people as parents that I just—I really didn't want to get high or quit getting high. I think I wanted to keep doing it and I didn't—I don't know.¹ And I got beat up real bad by the guy that I was involved with and figured I was about to be homeless again so (laugh) I left him and came back to Pratt. And my mother took me in and I detoxed from drugs. Well the shrink—the treatment center I went to they sent everyone to a psychiatrist when you got there. And he put all of us on Seroquel, which is like marijuana in a pill, it's just legal. So we all thought we were getting away with some pretty cool—we were getting high in treatment. We're taking Seroquels and—and he put me on a really high dose to where I was almost like a zombie. And so when I came back to Pratt I quit taking them. He wouldn't take me off of them so I just went cold turkey and I had probably the worst withdrawals I think I've ever had getting off of those. I was pretty sick. I don't know. I mean, ultimately the story goes I continued to get high.

And my addiction took me—all of the preconceived notions that people have about drug addicts, like I fit the stereotype. I got involved with a drug dealer in Wichita and had sex with him just to get dope and kept failing UAs and went back to jail. Well, I went to treatment like a total of four times, went to jail a whole bunch of times. I don't know. I don't—I went to—the judge sent me to Ohio to go to this—this is insane—to go

¹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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to this Bible-based, supposed to be treatment was the idea that we had. And if I did not complete this then I would go to serve my term in prison plus some county time on top of it so this place was a place for people with life-controlling issues including homosexuality. So I go to this place and I called myself a drug addict. Because I'd gone to AA and NA and you're supposed to call yourself an addict. And they got mad at me and I kept getting in trouble for doing that.

And I think everyone knew—I think I told some of the girls that I was bisexual and I think word got around. And we had to go to church, oh my gosh it seemed like every day. And then we had to—our work consisted of remembering—of learning and memorizing scripture. And one point in church one of the girls that I developed a friendship with was crying in church. And I put my hand on her shoulder to console her and you'd have thought that I was trying to have sex with her in church or something. Like the people who ran the place went off on me. They said I'm not allowed to touch people, and then they made me go in the basement and scrub the cement floor with a toothbrush because I needed to learn to do something constructive with my hands as opposed to putting them on women. So—I told the lady that I would rather be an f'ing crack whore than to sit there and listen to her judge me. And so I got kicked out and had to come back. And at that point I think the judge was tired of me. And I don't know why—he didn't send me to prison, he just said, Get the hell out of Pratt, get out of Pratt. And so I went to WSU, started school. But once I went to that place in Ohio something changed in me. They did say one thing that really got to me that—you call yourself an addict, you're drug addict, and their thinking was that you're not. You're not. It's something that you did. It was a part of your life, but that's not who you are. And that seemed to be the answer for me. When I stopped calling myself an addict I stopped getting high so it worked.

ALBIN: And so when you said that you had mentioned to a few girls that you identified as bisexual, so do you think that—did that get back to the officials?

ALLISON: I think it did—

ALBIN: Right—

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ALLISON: I think it did.

ALBIN: So someone narc'd on you and—

ALLISON: Um-hm. And we had women there that were lesbians that were trying to stop being lesbian, I guess. And that was the one thing I would not—I would not do. Like, you can tell me that my drug addiction is bad and you can tell me that the mistakes and decisions that I made as a parent were bad or were wrong and I can accept that and learn from it and grow. But you cannot tell me that my sexuality is wrong because that's—I really believe that I was born—I mean, I knew since I was twelve that I—I mean, I remember crying when I was twelve years old thinking, Oh my God I'm gay. I'm going to go to hell, and—

ALBIN: And so what triggered this crying incident? Like, do you remember the first time you heard the word gay or lesbian?

ALLISON: I don't remember the first time. I mean, I've always—my— I've always gone to church. My mother—my mother is agnostic. But I remember when my parents were married that she used to take my brother and I to church. My dad would go sometimes if it didn't interrupt his drinking and if she nagged him enough he would go, but— It was one of those quiet churches. Like it wasn't—I don't remember ever hearing any hateful kind of language from that church. And then it was probably 1990 there was a church built out by Wichita and my grandmother started going there. And so any time we came to visit my mother's mother she would take all the grandkids to this church. And it seemed really fun because it was loud and there was a band and people were dancing. And that's when I—I started hearing that it was wrong. But I don't know when I ever heard the first time about—I don't know.

ALBIN: So the incident of where you were twelve and you were crying. What triggered that incident, do you remember?

ALLISON: Well, we had just moved—I was right about to turn thirteen. We had just moved to Wichita. And at this point my father, he used to physically abuse me and then at—when we moved to Wichita something changed and he just stopped acknowledging

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my existence all together. And so all I did was stay in my room and go to school and come back and be in my room. And I remember being in my room. And I was thinking about this girl at school and just how pretty I thought she was. She was just so pretty. And I just—I wanted to like hug her and kiss her. And I remember having these visions in my head of doing this. And then it just happened, like tears and bawling and this realization like, Oh my God, I'm gay. And I cried for a long time. And I don't know when I became like okay with it. I just—at seventeen I came out to all my friends and—

ALBIN: So you came out to them as bisexual?

ALLISON: As bisexual.

ALBIN: Right. And do you still identify that way?

ALLISON: Yeah, I think. (laugh) I kind of prefer women but I think sometimes I tend to be with men out of habit and accessibility. In this area I don't have a lot of options so—When I was seventeen we were in the—we used to smoke in the locker (laugh) room in high school so me and all my friends were in there. And I just came out and told them. At that time there had to be like ten of them I guess. I said, Guys, I got to tell you guys something. And they're like, What? And I was kind of the leader of this group. Like I was the badass and I'm the one that—people—I fight all the time and people were scared of me. It was kind of neat. But I said, Well I got to tell you guys something. Well what is it? I said, Well I like women and I just really want to be with women. And so I'm bisexual because I still kind of like men. And probably my best friend, the closest one to me at that time, was sitting next to me and she scooted away from me. I'm like, Girl please, like you ain't even cute so let's not even go there. Don't—don't try to play me in front of all these people.

So then like all these other—my friends were like, Well okay that's kind of weird but we'll get used to it, that's all right. And then this one friend of mine—I'm not going to say her name but she—we all kind (laugh) of suspected that she was lesbian. She—when I—the minute I came out she like asked me out and so I said, Yeah. So that was my first girlfriend. So—and everyone knew and—like all my friends and they were okay. And I told my parents. I told my mother first. And my mother's so funny because she thinks

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that every decision or action that I do in my life is either to piss her off or to make her happy, one or the other. Everything revolves around her. And so I told her that I like girls and I have a girlfriend and she—(laugh) she's like, Whatever, you just want attention. Okay. And then I went to Wichita for a little while and I visited my dad. And the girl had called and I guess she told him. He took a message for me. And she said, Well this is her girlfriend. And so my dad said, Your girlfriend called. And I'm like, Okay. And he's like, Don't you want to know which one? And I'm like, Well I only have one. And he's like, Wait. You mean girlfriend like—and I'm like, Yeah. And he's like, Now you're a fuckin' dyke, goddamn—because I grew up and I dated black people and he's so racist and he hated that. And so now it's like just another reason to—Oh my God, now you're a dyke. I can't believe it. I'm like, Okay well thanks for the message. So—but he's—he's drunk all the time and he's—I remember throughout my whole life—you can't ever tell him anything important once because he forgets that you told him. So I don't—he—if I was—I feel like I'd have to come out to them again, to both of them. Like it wasn't—they didn't believe it or my dad probably doesn't even remember, so—

ALBIN: Right. Right. So you mentioned that you're now taking classes at WSU. So are you doing like a distance ed program, living so—like—that's a bit of a drive.

ALLISON: Well actually right now I'm taking classes through Butler Community College because I—(laugh) it's crazy. I went to WSU to start—I didn't have an advisor. They didn't really give me one and I thought that they were supposed to. So when they didn't I figured, Okay I'm on my own. So I took every kind of class that just caught my interest. It wasn't necessarily what I had to take. So—oh my gosh. I went to classes that have nothing to do with what I need. And so I'm actually going to Butler right now to finish taking my math and humanities credit so—but yeah, it's a drive. It's in Andover, which is like further than Wichita so—every Thursday.

ALBIN: Right. Right. And so what do you plan to do once you get—so it sounds like those are your gen ed requirements that you're kind of meeting. So once you get finished with all of those, do you have enough credits to graduate or do you need to continue taking it? Like, what area do you want to specialize in?

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ALLISON: Well, I want to specialize in psychology. And as far—I don't really know. Like I know—I have a ton of psychology credits. And I guess there are different levels. Like classes at community college are a different level than classes at a university working towards a bachelor's I think, is that I've been told. And so I have a lot of psych credits from WSU, but I have no idea how close I am to an actual degree in it. At this point I'm just trying to get these general ed classes out of the way. And I intend to go back to WSU. I mean, if I had it my way I'd be in school for the rest of my life. So I mean, I just love it.

ALBIN: Right.

ALLISON: It'd be nice to live in Wichita (laugh) and like go to school, but right now I just—I'm a substance abuse counselor and—sometimes I debate on if I can do this forever or if I really do want to go into—ideally be a forensic psychologist, so—

ALBIN: Right. He missed with that jump. (laugh)

ALLISON: He's an acrobat. He's trying to play it off. It's like, I'm cool, I didn't miss, I meant to do that.

ALBIN: So do you think you'll end up spending the rest of your life in Kansas—

ALLISON: Oh God, no. I hope not. Oh Lord, I hope not. No. I actually—(laugh) I hate Pratt. I hate Pratt.

ALBIN: Right. So what is it you hate?

ALLISON: I hate the very narrow-minded mentality that people in this town have. When I first moved here there was this huge issue with black people. A lot of—I don't know. Just—if you're different, if you're not a white cowboy farmer then you don't really fit in. And so—and I really don't want to fit in with these people. (laugh)

ALBIN: Right.

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ALLISON: Sounds horrible. But there are good people here. There's just not enough—like there's no social outlet for me. We have a bar and that's pretty much what people in Pratt do. And being a counselor, I'm not going to go to the bar because I'll just see a bunch of my clients there. So there's just really no—I don't have any friends. I have one—well I have one, but she's married and has three kids and so she's busy. So there's—Pratt just doesn't offer anything.

ALBIN: Right. And so are you out to people in the community?

ALLISON: Pretty much. I mean, I have no problem telling people. Yeah. They—and—they have a problem with me. So I mean some people in the professional—in my office last year—think—I had told my boss that—the people that I worked with at that time were—are very religious. And I've since stopped going to church and I've actually since—I've stopped believing in Christianity and the Bible and—but that's so—that's everywhere here. And I told my boss one day—because I felt like I wanted to be honest with her and I don't want to hide anything, and so I told her that I date women. That's usually what I say. I don't say I'm bisexual. Bisexual kind of, I think, makes people think you're confused so I just don't say that. I'm like, I date women. (laugh) And I want to be in love with a woman and maybe we could adopt babies, and that's what I want. So my boss was like, Well, don't tell anyone else and we'll pretend we didn't have this conversation.

ALBIN: Wow.

ALLISON: So—

ALBIN: Because that could potentially have gotten you fired, could it have not?

ALLISON: Well, I think that would have been illegal, right?

ALBIN: I don't know. I don't know.

ALLISON: Oh. I think it caused problems. At that—this was my—really my first professional job. And I don't fit the mold well, but it's progress. I continue to try to better

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myself. It was really like a—it was like a dysfunctional family. You know how the family members take on roles—the scapegoat and the enabler and the mascot. (laugh) And it was like, we were really this dysfunctional family, and it's once I came out to my boss things really—I don't know if that was the deciding factor that made things change, but things went horribly, horribly wrong.

And there was a counselor there who is married to a preacher. And you know, when I first got hired I felt so honored to work with people who were intelligent and had degrees and I'm like finally trying to get up to this level. And I thought that they'd have this whole wealth of information that they would share with me. And this counselor who's married to the preacher would really push her clients into going to church and she'd put it on their treatment plans, like Yeah, you need to go and join your church band and—so when I started seeing clients I got this one client that used to be hers. And I'm looking at his treatment plan and I'm like, So you go to church and you're involved in the band? What instrument do you play? And he's like, No. I don't go to church (laugh), I'm not in the band. I told her that so she'd shut up. She would not leave me alone about it. So I had a talk with her. And I said, I think I learned that we're not really supposed to talk about religion and politics with our clients. We're supposed to support them and just kind of educate them and try to guide them and not really make them do what we think they should do.

And she said, Allison, I have two jobs. My first job is being a soldier for God and my second job is a counselor. So if I can use my counseling status to continue to be a soldier for God then that's what I'm going to do. So people started treating me really badly in my office, talking about me, judging me. She tried—that same counselor does what I guess is called Theophostic counseling, which is this weird—well it's not weird I guess. It's just something I'd never heard of. It's a religious type of counseling and they kind of—it sounded like they hypnotize you a little and they take you back to traumatic events that happened in your life and God repairs your belief about that system or that situation because—I don't know, it's just weird. And I'm like, Yeah no, I don't want to do that. But she kept pressuring me, like no you need to come do Theophostic counseling. I'm like, No I don't want to do that.

ALBIN: So she wanted to counsel you?

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ALLISON: Yes.

ALBIN: Okay.

ALLISON: I said, I don't need to like learn about my trauma. It—it is what it is. I've learned. I'm in therapy. I continue to go, it's fine. (laugh) And so she went to my boss. And she's like, Allison needs this day off every week so I can do this Theophostic counseling with her. So my boss is like, Yeah that's great, okay. And I still—I'm like, I'm not going. I don't know—I'm not going. So—(laugh) these people (laugh) were horrible people. And I went out on a limb and decided that I was leaving. And I got offered a job in Kansas City as a counselor for a therapeutic community in Osawatomie Prison. And there was going to be like an eight-thousand dollar a year increase for me. And I'm like in the city are you crazy? I am so moving. So I quit this job. I gave them—I gave them like three months notice. Now that was a mistake because then everything went downhill from there. I was getting like mileage to go to school. They stopped paying my mileage. They started treating me really poorly and doing it in front of clients to where clients were asking me, What's going on? Why are they mad at you? Why are they talking to you that way? And so I go to Kansas City—and I moved. I moved my son, I moved—I moved to Kansas City. I was supposed to start on January 5th and then on January 4th I get an e-mail saying that due to cutbacks and—they're closing that therapeutic community.

So I had no job and I'm in Kansas City. And I'm applying—I'm applying at domestic violence shelters, I'm applying at substance abuse centers, I'm applying at Wal-Mart. Couldn't get anything. And all the time I'm calling back to this counseling center where I work now. And I'm like, Can I get my old job back please because this is not going well. And as it turned out, they pretty much gave the director an ultimatum, the board of my agency did—You can either quit, you can resign, or we can fire you. And so she resigned. So then they put the Christian lady, the Christian, and made her acting director until they found another one. So I'm calling her and I'm like, Can I get my job back? She's like, You are so not ready to be a counselor. You need more help. You need counseling. You need help. You can't come back here. So I found out that they hired who the director is now and I handed her my—I came back to Pratt, gave her my

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resume, and the counselor lady, or the Christian counselor, brought her someone else's resume and handed it to her right after I had handed her mine, and said, Here you need to look at this one because we need some Christian people in here. Do not hire her. So, she hired me. She's pretty awesome. She's like a great director, so there's like—she knows that I date women and she's really supportive of it and she doesn't—she asks. Because I—right now—recently I've decided to pretty much swear off men all together, because I think that it's really just a habit. And so I'm like, I just need to get serious and stop messing around, so I'm just going to—only women from now on. And I've gone on a couple dates and they were horrible, (laugh) horrible. But I told my boss, I said, Maybe I'm not gay. I'm not real good at this whole gay thing. I'm not understanding. But she's like, No Allison I'm pretty sure you are so—(laughter) but she asks and she's inquisitive about it so that's pretty cool.

ALBIN: I'm just going to change the tape—

ALLISON: Okay—

ALBIN: —so we don't run out. Excellent. Now they're tired. Had a good run around.

ALLISON: Wonder where Annabelle went?

ALBIN: She's probably hiding, sleeping somewhere, from you, you little beast. All right, so we were talking about your boss making sure—how your dating scene was going and whatnot. So does your son know that you date women?

ALLISON: No. He lives with—I mean, we have joint custody, but his father has residential and so he's really—I had him for a year this previous year because his father was in Afghanistan. And during that year I was actually seeing a guy that lived in Texas, and so I didn't really get to see him that—it was kind of cool. It was a good situation for me, but—I'm so wrapped up in work and in school and in—when my son is here and being a mother that dating and—I think I've kind of softened it a little bit for when I do have to tell him, because I continually tell him that gay people and lesbians are wonderful people and it doesn't—there's nothing wrong. And we've had that

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discussion many times. And I think that—I hope that that kind of softens (laugh) the blow for when I do tell them.

ALBIN: Do you think it like—the conversations that you've had with them, are they because he has said something or you're just having a conversation?

ALLISON: Well, it's something that he says and it's—I think he hears it from other kids at school. And there's like this big thing going around where people are just calling each other gay. Like, dude you're so gay. And my son would say that and I'm like, Okay look, don't say that. And that would just get it going to where we would discuss it. And then I also had a friend in Wichita that he met that is a gay man. And my son just loved him, but he's—he's so cute. He's so feminine and my son is like, Why does he act like a girl and he carries a purse? Like what's—(laugh) and so I told him. And he was okay with it. And he didn't think anything differently about this guy. He just really thought this guy was funny and fun to be around and—

His— My son's father is— I think he went through some trauma when he was growing up in foster care and so he's very like homophobic. And I—I really don't want that to carry on with my son. And so when my son is with me I always try to expose him to as much diversity as possible. His dad's all kind of screwed up and—my ex-husband beats women and so (laugh) like my son was five years old and there was a girl in his class that he liked and so he beat her up, because he thought that—so I try my best to get him to be open minded if I can at all have any control over that, for when he gets older. And it's the same thing—like his father likes white women and he's a black man. And my son really only likes white girls. And I'm like, Well don't you like little black girls? Or I'll point a girl out. I'm like, She's really pretty. Because he'll only look at—like—on the TV white actresses and, She's hot. And I'll see an African American woman and I'll be like, Well she's hot. What do you think of her? And he's like, I don't know.

ALBIN: And how old is he now?

ALLISON: He's ten. (laugh) So I just want him to be open about everything in life, because there's no black and white, it's like everything is gray. But if one day—and my intention is to meet someone and—a woman—and have a long-lasting kind of healthy,

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nurturing relationship. And then I'll of course tell my son about it and probably have to tell my family again, but—

ALBIN: So do you know of like any GLBT people in the area?

ALLISON: No. Well, there was like one couple, a lesbian couple, but they're really unhealthy people, like—so they're not anyone I would associate with. I think that's it. (laugh)

ALBIN: Yeah. No, I was just curious because how big is Pratt?

ALLISON: I don't even know. It's not that big. I mean it's—but I can't give you even an estimate. I have no idea how many people are in this town.

ALBIN: Part of me wants to guess ten thousand, but I don't know if that's right.

ALLISON: I'm thinking it's around there and I don't know. And what I'm finding out like with women, there's this trend going on where it's like cute and cool to be bisexual. So then they might be interested in you but only if their boyfriend can watch or join. I'm like, What the—dude, I am old okay. I don't want any of that. And so like that's what I've been running into. And then—I go to Fantasy in Wichita. And then I—I hate to admit it, but I have to use the Internet to meet anyone because it's just not going to happen in this town, or I just don't see it.

ALBIN: So in terms of leaving Kansas, do you have an idea of where you might want to go, like is there any place in particular that—

ALLISON: Um-um. I mean I—Missouri, I think, is beautiful, beautiful, and the Ozarks. And I love forests and lakes and swimming in rivers. And then I—sometimes I think New York—New York City because there's so many people and it's so rich with culture. And the idea that there's so many people there it's kind of awesome because (laugh) you just kind of blend into the crowd, you don't really stand out, and I think I'd really like that. So no, just anywhere—

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ALBIN: Right—

ALLISON: —other than Kansas.

ALBIN: Right.

ALLISON: (laugh) Probably need to get out of the Bible Belt is what I need to do.

ALBIN: So I don't think I have any other questions for you. Is there anything that I didn't ask that you wanted to talk about?

ALLISON: Hm-um.

ALBIN: Okay. If I have a follow-up question is it okay if I contact you?

ALLISON: Of course.

ALBIN: Actually the one question I should ask, Have you ever been politically involved in anything?

ALLISON: No. I mean I want to. I want to be. And so I always have the best intentions. Like I—I joined KEC because I wanted to get involved, but then it's like there's always something that I have to do that I can't really participate in their events. And then I've joined—a long time ago I joined a group called FAMM and it's Families Against Mandatory Minimums. And it's a political group that kind of fights minimum sentences for drug offenses and things like that. As opposed to sending people to prison let's send them to treatment, let's send them to get help.

ALBIN: Right.

ALLISON: But I haven't really done anything with that group either.

ALBIN: Right.

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ALLISON: I really want—I really crave some type of social outlet. And if it's political in nature, like that's even better. But I get so—I don't know, I just—I get really busy and then it seems like any time that I have to myself like on the weekends, I sit at a computer all day and either catch up on work from my office job or I do homework from school and, I don't know, doesn't work out too well.

ALBIN: Right. And so with your new job with the new director who's there, has the Christian counselor bothered you as much?

ALLISON: She's actually—she's gone. And she doesn't—actually, I'm waiting to see her actually (laugh) because I went through my employee file and she, I think, had done some pretty unethical things. When I was—when I came back from Kansas City and in the process of trying to get this job back, of course I was looking for jobs at other places. And I did a good job. I'm a good counselor and I gave them plenty of notice. And so I was using this job as a reference when I was looking for new jobs. And I found a fax that she had sent to a potential employer where she stated—(laugh) it just happened to be when she was acting director. She was never my director. But when she was acting director, a potential employer contacted her just to do a reference check. A—no, it was only work verification actually, did she work there and for this long? Well so this lady faxed her a statement saying that I want to care about people, but I'm not very good at how I show that, and that I have low coping skills, that I keep good charts but my charts aren't always complete, which that is a contradiction (laugh) in itself. And it just said all these negative things that—they—they blew me away and I was really upset. And so I thought, I wonder if I could sue her for that because I don't think they're allowed to give information like that if people do a verification or reference check.

And I talked to my mom about it and she's like, No just let it go. What goes around comes around and she'll get hers. I'm like, Well the least I can do is if I ever see her again she and I are going to have a talk. So—now she's—I don't know. (laugh) It really hurt me that these people talked about me the way they did and treated me the way they did, because I was really—I admired them for their intelligence and for their own experiences in life and—I don't know they were very—I can't—right now I'm so full of like this anger towards Christians that it's just—it's probably unhealthy, (laugh) probably unhealthy, but I can't really—I can't help it.

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ALBIN: Right. And how are things with your mom these days?

ALLISON: Well my mother and I—my mother's a very intelligent woman and she's very well educated and career driven. Well, she was laid off and so right now she's unemployed. And since she's been unemployed she's been kind of nice to me because she—well, she told me last week, she's like, Well at the end of the month I might move in with you. So—but she told me last year that she doesn't love me and that she doesn't have feelings for me like a mother has for a daughter. And she told me all my life pretty much that I screwed her life up and love is conditional and you haven't earned it from me and all that. So my mother—I don't know. I know that I need to—I know that if she moves in here it's going to be bad because she's very—she's a mean person and she's hurtful. But I feel like there's this codependency issue (laugh) and I feel like, Well if I help her then maybe she'll be nice and she'll love me. It's crazy. I don't know.

ALBIN: And what about your brother? You have an older brother, three years older. Do you have any contact with him or—

ALLISON: He's an alcoholic. He's drunk all the time. Well, I mean he has a good job. He works for one of the aviation plants in Wichita. I think it's Spirit, but they keep changing names and buying each other out. He's—he's an alcoholic. I mean, he's—and it's—we talk, but I can't—I have to set very strict boundaries with him because you can't counsel family members. And I—by the time I get home from work I don't have the energy for that anyway. But when he calls me he's always drunk and he's depressed and life just sucks. And so I have to not answer the phone a lot of times.

He—when we were growing up—my father was abusive to him first. And I remember when I was young like—because I was daddy's little girl. And I used to egg that on between him and my brother. My brother would be mean or something and tell me to shut up and get out of his room and I'd go crying to my dad. And my dad would what we thought was punishment or discipline, but it was abuse. And my brother got smart and left and went to my mom's. And so then I—it started with me though. It started—it wasn't like this angry abuse. It was just—I was overweight, and not even that much, just a little chubby, cute little kid—straight "A" student. But every Sunday if I didn't lose

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two pounds a week on Sunday mornings I'd have to weigh myself and if I hadn't lost two pounds then I'd have to go to my room and he'd come in there with a belt and take the belt to me. And I was only allowed to eat half of a grapefruit for breakfast. And then I wouldn't have lunch money or lunches for school. And then when I'd get home that night for dinner I'd have the other half of the grapefruit. And like that's all he wanted me to eat. And so I was like stealing food at school and eating my friends' lunches. In essence, I wasn't losing weight.

And then when I was twelve I was raped by a GI in Missouri—when I went to visit my mother. And I had done something I wasn't supposed to do. I had snuck out of the house and I was hanging out with this girl that my mother told me not to hang out with. And I was raped. And so I didn't tell anyone and then like I went back to Texas and started school again. And my dad let me skip school one day and me and him went and had like this father/daughter day which was—I thought was pretty special. And he had—he had opened up to me about the divorce with my mother, because that was something that was never talked about until that point. And he was sober so he was—he was like a dad for a day. And we went home, had a good day. And I went upstairs. And I remember crying and I remember praying, God do I have to tell him? I need to tell him. And so I wrote everything down that happened that summer, even the things that didn't matter like, On this day me and my friend went to the pool and we swam and then on this day we went to the fair. And then just in there—I couldn't imagine being a parent and reading it now, but just in there, just out of nowhere I went with this girl that I wasn't supposed to and her older sister's much older boyfriend raped me.

And so my dad calls me downstairs and he's like—he yells at me to come down. And I'd given him the paper that I wrote and I went upstairs and I cried. I remember just squeezing my pillow sitting Indian-style on my bed and rocking and crying. And he calls me downstairs and he's like, Is this true? And I said, Yeah, it's true. And so he called me a fuckin' slut and whore and I deserved it and I liked it and I wanted it and beat me up pretty bad. And I remember yelling, Let me call mom, let me call mom. Because I thought, Mom's a woman and she's my mother, because parents are supposed to care so maybe one of them will. So he's like, Fine call your mother. And so we call my mom. And he's like, Your daughter has something to tell you. And so I get on the phone and I tell her. And she's just like, Allison why would you tell us? Why would you

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tell us this? All it does is hurt us. We can't do anything about it, we can't change it. So that's when it got violent. That's when the abuse got angry. And I think every day after that I got called a slut or a whore, a fat slut. And he would tell me that I would grow up and only black men would want to date me because no white man would want a fat slut whore wife or girlfriend, just insane.

Yeah, so that's when I started sneaking out of the house. And I'd steal from him. I stole his cigarettes and I'd steal his liquor and I'd steal his money. And I didn't even want it, but I just didn't want him to have it and so I'd steal it and I'd give it to other people—just here, here's a hundred dollar bill, take that. Stupid. (laugh) And I remember going to school and I was picked on at school and I always had bruises and just didn't look like a very happy child. And I'd get picked on. So one day—and I loved school because I excelled at it, like Man I was a—just straight "A" student, I loved it. These girls, they would—I had to walk to school and back and these girls would follow me every day and they'd just say these mean things to me, pretty much the same thing my dad would say. And so one day I took a—I stole a—my dad was a hunter, and it was a huge knife that you skin deer with. And I took it to school. And I was walking home from school again and I had it on the inside of my coat. And these girls were following me and taunting me. And I just turned around with this knife. And I'm like, (makes noise) leave me alone. And then they did. So I'm like, Well, that worked.

Then I—I tried to kill myself at school when I was—it was like around—it was still in Texas, it was around that age right before we moved to Wichita. And I don't know if I was trying to kill myself, but I think I wanted someone to show some type of interest or to see how things—how bad things were. And so I went to school and I took like a handful of aspirin. And I made sure to do it in front of someone. So then they went and told. And so the nurse called my father and he came and got me. And he was actually really kind, like Why would you do this? Why do you want to die? The next day I went to school. And I was fine. Like, I don't even think it made me sick or anything. I was fine. The next day I went to school and a social worker and the nurse called me into the office. And they said, What's your home life like? What's going on at home? And so—and I told them. I'm like, Thank God finally—finally someone wants to hear it. And I told them. And I had bruises. And so they took me into the bathroom to—because I had them like on my legs because he pushed me up the stairs. And so like every time I fell

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these stairs would—and they took pictures and they said that I didn't have to go home that day. And I was ecstatic. And I got to go stay with a friend of mine who was a—I don't know if she was a foster kid, but she stayed with foster parents. I don't know if they were her natural parents that just took foster kids in or what, but I went and stayed with her for like a week and it was amazing. It was like, you're not walking around on pins and needles and you can relax. And I was so happy.

And then my dad came and got me one day. And I said, Well you're not allowed to take me. You're not—you're not allowed to be here. And he's like, Everyone knows you're lying. Everyone knows you're full of shit so get your ass in the car. So I got in the car, got home, got beat up pretty bad, decided I was going to run away. And so me and this other girl, this girl that I had this crush on—she kind of had a hard life at home too—we were going to run away together and we were just going to hitchhike. I think I was twelve or eleven, or twelve. And we were going to hitchhike. And we were going to go to school that morning and ride the buses to school or walk to school and then leave, meet up at the school and then leave. And we did. So we came back to my house and I stole some weapons from my dad, guns, well a little gun, and some knives. And (laugh) then there was this girl who said—another friend of mine, and I knew that they'd already—this was on an army base. And I knew that they always left their back door unlocked. And so we went and ransacked that house and we stole like beer and cigarettes, nothing important. (laugh) We just wanted to—I don't know. I don't know what we were doing. And so we go to the shopette which is a little store on army bases and we're going to start walking from there. And the cops caught up with us, and then of course I had to go home.

And my dad opened this little bag that I had and it had a gun and some knives and tons of cigarettes and bottles of beer. And there was a tree in our front yard. And the MPs, the military police, were there and the minute they let me go—because I was in their car. And so they opened up the car and I get out of the car. And my dad's home at this time. I run over to this tree and I climb the tree real fast and I go all the way, like as high up as I can. And I just was not going to come down. And I couldn't tell them. They're like, What are you doing in the tree? I'm like, I'm going to live here. I'm going to live in this tree. And they're like, Well you can't. Well yes I can. And nobody listened like those—the child abuse against my dad was dropped and life had to go on so—it's pretty

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crazy to think about it like now the things that—I—like, I fit the whole cliché. Like, I was just this kid who broke all kinds of rules, just nonstop. And I—but I know that I was really looking for someone to care about what I was doing and no one did.

So, when we came to Wichita my dad met this woman that was twenty years younger than him and she was about ten years older than me, seven years older than my brother. We did not like her just because she was so young. But when he met her like at that point I stopped existing to him so there was no more getting beat up. From time to time if I walked out to get something to drink or to get something to eat, I—because I stayed in my room and I'd come out and I'd get something real quick and I'd go back in my room—I might catch a little fat ass bitch or something, fat slut, but I'd ignore it. And it wasn't as bad as getting beat up anymore so— And then at one point I don't—the last time my dad ever touched me, we were on these stairs that go down to his basement. And I was coming up the stairs and he was behind me and he tried to shove me and I turned—and he was drunk. And I turned around and shoved him. And he stumbled and he fell back. And then he looked at me like, I can't believe you did that. And I said, Well—and then he never touched me again. We don't really talk to each other now though.

ALBIN: Right, right.

ALLISON: My mother, she always knew that these things were going on and she never—her—if you don't talk about it, then it doesn't exist, so—and now she'll say things like, I know your dad did some bad things to you but you got to get over it. And I mean, I am over it. But she wants me to have a relationship with my dad because he's drunk and he's dying, or he will eventually. And that's just a sad way to, I guess, exist is to know that you have kids that don't want to have anything to do with you. I'm like, Well I don't care. So I don't really talk to him.

ALBIN: So is there anything else that you would like to add?

ALLISON: No, I think that's it.

ALBIN: Okay. Thank you so much.

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ALLISON: Well, thank you.

ALBIN: So much. I so appreciate it. It's very generous of you to give your time to the project.

ALLISON: Well thanks, I think it's great.

[end]