

BARNARD COLLEGE
GENDER* IN THE ARCHIVES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of
Grey Berkowitz

Barnard College Archives

2022

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Grey Berkowitz conducted by Autumn Johnson in 2022 in New York City. This interview is part of the Gender* in the Archives oral history project. Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose

Autumn ([00:04](#)):

Could you please introduce yourself with your name pronouns and class year?

Grey ([00:08](#)):

Yeah. my name is Grey. I use he and they pronouns. Uh, I graduated in 2021.

Autumn ([00:16](#)):

And could you tell me about the first home that you grew up in?

Grey ([00:19](#)):

The first home I grew up in?

Autumn ([00:21](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative>

Grey ([00:23](#)):

Yeah, I, I grew up I was born in LA and then I moved to France. And then from there I moved to San Francisco. Here, let me put in some headphones real quick. Sorry.

Autumn ([00:38](#)):

No, you're good<affirmative>

Grey ([00:44](#)):

Yeah. I have two siblings, you know, cis mom, cis dad, straight couple. Yeah. That's that.

Autumn ([00:55](#)):

Would you describe your relationship with your siblings as close?

Grey ([00:59](#)):

Yeah they're, they're much older than me, but we really love each other quite a bit. I think probably pre-transition, I would've described the relationship as like incredibly close and you know, something that I really cherished and prioritized. But I think post-transition and through transition the- that relationship, those relationships have been slightly strained. I, I still feel super close to them, but I think there's a certain distance that arises in the majority of relationships, which we, you know, we can get into in other context. But yeah, I, I definitely feel a certain distance now.

Autumn ([01:42](#)):

And do you think that distance comes from, do you think there's like something to like, you can like attribute the distance to?

Grey ([01:52](#)):

Yeah, I mean, I think any cis person especially a, a cis straight person doesn't-can never comprehend the gravity of, of something like transitioning. And so I just think that even the most well-meaning cis straight person is not gonna be able to meet the gravity. And the celebration there's sort of, you know, the, this dual response that's needed in something like this, which is one of saying, like, this is the hardest shit you could ever go through. You know, I'm here for the most brave thing ever. And also this is a very exciting thing that we're gonna be celebrating. And I think they kind of miss the mark on both of those aspects. I think neutrality is something sort of a fear response that cis straight people go into where they think the best thing to do is just to treat

this as normal. And I think that can sort of cause both the celebration and the compassion aspect to be lost.

Autumn ([03:01](#)):

And what do you remember about your elementary school experiences?

Grey ([03:07](#)):

I mean, I, I struggled a little bit because I always felt I was my, my body and my weight were policed super heavily as a, as a kid sort of west coast vanity culture. And so I always felt like I was too fat and felt like other kids were, you know, wanting to do more like athletic activities that I didn't feel like I could participate in because I felt nervous about the way that my body in motion would appear. So I think that was always kind of on my mind from a way too early age and sort of began the journey of hyper consciousness around my body. But other than that, I, I really, I like love to dance. I always dancing has been sort of at the center of my life forever. Not in any sort of official capacity, but like if you just watch home videos of me as a kid, like I was always dancing and that's still something that I really love to do. Yeah.

Autumn ([04:16](#)):

And at this point in your life, do you still feel like you have that like hyper awareness about your body at all times?

Grey ([04:22](#)):

Yeah. I mean, it, I, I think this is something that's super common to a lot of trans folks where especially people assigned female at birth where like the initial thoughts that you have around wanting to transition, or like, knowing that something's up with your gender expression. Like

there's always, this need to parse out is this, you know, like fat- internalized, fatphobia where I wanna be slimming down. I want my breasts to be gone because then they'll be smaller. And that's like, you know, along a more conventionally attractive line or, you know, do I want my hips to be smaller because you know, of internalized fatphobia or is it because of wanting to have a specifically masculinized appearance? So I, I think right at the beginning, it was pretty difficult where I didn't, I couldn't, I didn't understand if I was just failing at body positivity along, uh, you know, a womanhood, um, spectrum or if it was not feeling positive about my body for, um, gendered reasons.

Autumn ([05:27](#)):

And do you remember when you were first, like introduced to your first, I guess the first awareness of transness?

Grey ([05:34](#)):

Oh my God. I don't know. Like, I, I think it was, I think as a kid, it was always like the transvestite cross dresser sort of an image of like someone who like just a gay man who either like to perform in drag or had some sort of like sick, disgusting obsession with like a specific item of clothing, like, you know, that sort of Freudian fetish thing. And, but I, yeah, I didn't, I didn't know a single trans person. And then in college, obviously, like my whole mind was opened up.

Autumn ([06:13](#)):

And what do you remember about your experiences in high school?

Grey ([06:18](#)):

High school is interesting. I, so in middle school I like became aware of, I guess you could say like some sort of queerness in myself. I, I like came out as a lesbian just to my friends and then I like took it back when I was like older, but but then I like reintroduced it in high school and was like, I'm certainly some sort of like bisexual something something's up. So I, we had like a diversity assembly and there were like stand up if you're a part of the LGBTQ community. And I was the only person who stood up. So that was pretty like, that marked me as a <laugh> <laugh> as something and no one said a word to me about it. But I, I wasn't, I was only like I was having very intimate, close friendships with girls that were certainly like, dyke interactions, but I just wasn't classifying them as such cuz like, you know, those expectations around like female friendships as being hyper intimate was something I just like, it was, yeah, I didn't realize you could attach like a sexual meaning to that.

Grey ([07:35](#)):

And but otherwise like in terms of sexual stuff, that was just with cis men in high school.

Autumn ([07:44](#)):

And did you feel like it was a safe environment for you to have stood up during that assembly?

Grey ([07:50](#)):

I think it was safe and sort of the, like, you know, it was in San Francisco and it was a city that, where that was to be expected, but it wasn't gonna be embraced. I wasn't gonna be actively ridiculed, but there was gonna be no mention of it.

Autumn ([08:06](#)):

And what were you looking for in the colleges that you were applying to?

Grey ([08:11](#)):

It's a great question. I had, no, I, I just really didn't wanna work hard at the application process. So I was like, Barnard seems really rad and I felt this like sort of spiritual connection, uh, to it and I didn't wanna have to justify it further than that. I, I was sort of like a girl boss type where I was super like, you know, Lena Dunham, Hillary Clinton free the nipple, like just all those, like, you know, shatter the glass ceiling, like all those cliches. And so, and you know, historically women's college definitely appealed to me. And I think I was also just like, it's really time for me to like be a lesbian. And, but I, I didn't vocalize that to anybody. And I, you know, I was like, oh, like the Columbia connection gives me like prestige. Like I'm used to like succeeding academically and I want that to be validated. And I really wanted to come to New York. I really didn't wanna be isolated. So yeah, that's the only school I applied to.

Autumn ([09:22](#)):

Wow. <laugh> <laugh> and do you feel like after arriving to Barnard, like your expectations were pretty accurate of what it would be like?

Grey ([09:32](#)):

No, <laugh> I, I didn't, well, I think, I think I realized that I cause all my friends in high school were boys. And so I was like, wait, what the fuck? Like, why did you think that all of a sudden you wanted to be surrounded by girls? Like that's never what you've done socially. So that was a huge adjustment for me. And I think sort of a lot of internalized misogyny came out of being like, girls are this, this and this. And I find that and appealing and this, this, and this way which I think was just like sort of proto transman thoughts of like I wanted to be, I wanted to be in touch

with a masculine expression. And I, the people that I met at the beginning of college were really, you know, just cis women pretty straight.

Grey ([10:20](#)):

And I it wasn't until I discovered the radical thinkers, the incredible faculty that was like pushing the envelope in ways that no other institution does. Like I firmly believe to this day that Barnard, if you find the most radical thinkers at Barnard, they're gonna be the most radical thinkers in academia period. It just took a second to locate them. And then from there, like I was able to meet the other students who were passionate about that faculty, you know, like whoever in whatever department, women's gender, sexuality studies, American studies all the different departments, like you could locate the students whose like faces would light up when professors would talk about, you know, anti-racist, queer practices. And from there I was like, okay, for sure this is the, the right place. But I think that initial adjustment period of like the girl boss in me that I thought I wanted to come out was like immediately disgusting to me. And then I like hated myself for that. And then, yeah.

Autumn ([11:19](#)):

And what did you intend to study when you applied?

Grey ([11:23](#)):

I thought I wanted to do like international relations, political science, like that type of, you know, like really traditional approach to social change. But then my first ever American studies class, which was Incarcerating the Crisis. I don't know if you've heard of that one. There's quite a bit of folklore around it, but it's have you heard of it?

Autumn ([11:46](#)):

Oh, no, I haven't.

Grey ([11:47](#)):

<Laugh> okay. It's awesome. I, I don't think they offer it anymore cuz the professor they didn't offer him, they didn't like renew his contract. Like he was like the most beloved awesome radical thinker. And I think honestly I think Barnard found him too threatening. And his partner was my thesis advisor and like my main person in the American studies department and they, they write, they co-author a ton of scholarship and they renewed her contract but not his, and then they left. But incarcerating the crisis is really fucking, was awesome. It was just like, it fed me on a silver platter, like all the, you know, all the things that I believed to this day. Like it, as much as I have tried to dismantle it, it still remains like at the core of my political affiliation around abolitionist practices. But yeah, that was American studies and then I was like, okay, let's do it.

Autumn ([12:45](#)):

And what, if anything stands out to you about your experience attending Barnard?

Grey ([12:52](#)):

I mean, it's gotta be the fact that it's a women's college, right? I mean, like I increasingly, as I transitioned, I felt more and more unwelcome by the administration. Just they, I knew I had this overwhelming feeling that like, they, they couldn't kick me out, but if they could, they would, and you know, the, the admissions policy, you know, this, this has been talked about ad nauseum, but like the, the other historically women's colleges and the seven sisters consortium who have an admissions policy where it's just everybody, but cis men to me feels really

appropriate. And this whole, like women's thing when they, which they claim means trans women and cis women, but in practice, I didn't meet a single trans woman at Barnard. I think increasingly they're admitting some, but I don't think there were any in my year. So, and just like the absolute ridiculousness of like the fact that so many of my friends transitioned, like during the course of their time there it's just, you know, if they had transitioned one year earlier in high school, they wouldn't have been admitted, but like then that's who they were able to turn into at Barnard, but it's not welcome.

Grey ([14:12](#)):

It's, it's just so twisted. It doesn't make any sense.

Autumn ([14:15](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative>. And with that feeling of, I guess, like how you mentioned feeling like if they could kick you out, they would, was that through like interactions with professors you were getting that

Grey ([14:27](#)):

It depended on the professor the professors who like refused to do pronouns at the beginning of semesters or who, and then forced me to be the only one to say my pronouns in the class or you know, who only ever said women when they meant like people with marginalized gender identities that was probably like 50%. And then 10% was just like ignorant and then whatever is left of a hundred percent <laugh> was like, you know, actively supportive. But I think it's the faculty less so more, so the administration like schoolwide emails written by, you know, president Beilock or whatever, being like, hello lady bitches, you know? So yeah, sort of the, the

official on paper like I also know that the investors and the board and stuff are like heavily wedded to this woman's image.

Grey ([15:32](#)):

And I think that's probably why to this day it remains that way. I don't think that the administrators really give a shit. I think it's just wherever the money's coming from. Yeah, the faculty I think were pretty rad. And then I think you would get sort of the, you know, the people who held close to the girlboss aesthetic and belief system the students who were like randomly in sororities for some reason at Barnard or just pursuing like a more traditional path. I, I definitely didn't feel comfortable around them. And I knew that they felt like I was an intruder in the space. I mean, nothing overt it's just like energetically, you, you feel these things then like, you can try to gaslight yourself all you want into thinking. That's not what you're feeling, but it's definitely the case.

Autumn ([16:22](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative>. And do you think you had kind of the same experience in classes at Barnard and classes at Columbia?

Grey ([16:28](#)):

I just didn't take classes at Columbia. I I refused, I, I tried at the beginning of my time there, I, I was like called a liberal bitch by a dude when I was saying my stuff. And I just found the classes really not good. Not even just because they were hostile environments politically, but also just, I found them to be of inferior quality academically. So I, I, I really tried to avoid Columbia classes as much as possible.

Autumn ([17:01](#)):

And then was that also socially you tended to stick with Barnard students?

Grey ([17:08](#)):

No, actually I think my, my partner graduated from Columbia and she lived in one of those special interest houses. And so I spent a lot of time there and met a lot of Columbia folks there. I, I think that the Columbia people who sort of regret having gone to Columbia and would rather be at Barnard are the ones that I gravitated toward.

Autumn ([17:37](#)):

And like kind of touched on this, but if you have anything else to say how do you feel about the college experience that Barnard has provided for trans students?

Grey ([17:47](#)):

Yeah. Oh, okay. This is a big part of it for me. I I started, I mean, it, it, I let it die, but I started this group. So basically there was AllSex. I don't know if you're aware of AllSex.

Autumn ([18:00](#)):

Oh,

Grey ([18:00](#)):

It, it started as FemSex. That was before my time at Barnard and then it became AllSex and it's this like peer led discussion group. And it was, it was for people of any gender identity and it was also open to Columbia. And my, I, I was a participant and then I became a facilitator and I was like really connected to this. And then I was realizing increasingly that, like, I just didn't feel

comfortable sitting through listening to like cis people share their experiences. Not that it's not important. It's just like an, a form of labor that I didn't wanna engage in at the time. So I started a, a trans and GNC only group of AllSex and with my friend. And that was really rad that got together a lot of trans kids who didn't feel like they had the opportunity to have a space of exclusively other trans folks. And so the, the topics were like just anything having to do with like gender and sexual experience as a trans person. And that was pretty short lived cuz the pandemic hit and then I lost like steam and let it dissolve. But I think something comparable has been started, but that's like the, that, that, I don't know if you know J Madden who started the butch

Autumn ([19:35](#)):

Oh, yeah. Boys, butches, bros.

Grey ([19:38](#)):

Yeah.

Autumn ([19:39](#)):

Yeah.

Grey ([19:40](#)):

I think that's similar maybe.

Autumn ([19:43](#)):

Yeah, I think so.

Grey ([19:45](#)):

But that doesn't include transfemme folks. So this was for just anyone who identified along trans lines.

Autumn ([19:53](#)):

And do you feel like it's very common that like finding other trans students is like you're left on your own for that?

Grey ([20:03](#)):

Oh yeah, dude for sure. I mean, I know other people who have managed to create a more solid trans community than I have. I think it's not really in my, it's not so much a goal of mine as much, but I think if it was a goal of yours, it it'd be pretty difficult. At least that was how it was at my time. I, I feel like since, since I've left campus, cause we left campus when the pandemic hit. So I really, even though I graduated in 2021, like I haven't been that connected to the Barnard community since 2019. But it seemed like since then people have really been like creating efforts to form trans community on campus. I I'm, I'm not sure that's just the impression I get.

Autumn ([20:53](#)):

And how did you end up keeping in touch with your friends during the pandemic?

Grey ([20:59](#)):

I mean, I did, I had some success in some not success, I think like once I came back to New York then it was much more manageable. But I think sort of, I think I had been sort of overextending myself socially at Barnard when I was there. Just like trying to saying yes to all social plans when I really didn't have the time or the energy for it. So I think when the pandemic hit, I

actually took it as like a opportunity to spend some time alone and just like with my partner and relax. So but since then I, you know, we're all, we all still live in New York and see each other all the time. So

Autumn ([21:51](#)):

And I know you mentioned AllSex. Were there any other communities that you were a part of during your time at Barnard?

Grey ([21:58](#)):

That, that was definitely the main one. I'm trying to think. I like, I can't even remember what happened at Barnard. The American studies department is really, was really a fantastic group of people. Really smart, just like such smart students. People who really just had my like jaw on the floor. And as well as the Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies department. I, yeah, cuz my, I was an American Studies major with a, a Gender and Race minor. I'm trying to think of what communities, honestly, this is embarrassing. Right. I can't really think of, of any right now.

Autumn ([22:44](#)):

Yeah, no, no pressure, anything. This one we also kind of touched on in your experience, how did you navigate connecting with other trans students at Barnard?

Grey ([22:58](#)):

I mean, I think like, I mean this, this is something I think about quite a bit. I, I think at the, at the time I was sort of, I more identifying as non-binary and like my medical transition hadn't begun. I, I really pushed that forward when the pandemic hit which I think is pretty common actually. But so I think I was doing everything I could to have visual cues of, um, gender nonconformity

and being like as visibly queer in spaces as possible. And so I think that was sort of a, a signal to other folks, um, which I think at ti at that time was more intimidating than it. It was inviting cuz it, it was really less common. Like I know it's hard to believe because it's only been like two years, but that it really was like, it, I oftentimes felt really freakish, um, in spaces, everyone else was just like super, super cis in their presentations. And you know, even if they were a dyke or whatever, like it, it still like in their way of dressing and holding their bodies, it was still pretty feminine. So I think I would try to visually signal and that did bring me a lot of interesting people. But also I think communicated as sort of standoffishness that I didn't intend

Autumn ([24:30](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative> and those are mostly like physical cues, like you mentioned, like clothing and postured stance.

Grey ([24:37](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I mean the shaved head thing, like is now the most common thing you can do, but like I was the first <laugh> I really was. I, I didn't know. And it held that a certain value then it wasn't I think now it, it doesn't, you know, you could be a cis woman, you could be non-binary, you could be transmasculine, you could whatever and have that sort of a haircut. But for me it was a really, really important step.

Autumn ([25:09](#)):

And do you feel a connection to the phrase trans joy?

Grey ([25:13](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, hugely. So I, I, I really, really connected with that line of thought in school. Whenever it was, I think it's definitely a much more common topic of study right now than it was then, you know, the trans experience is always relegated to one of suffering. But I think at that point, like the few thinkers who were committed to introducing the euphoric side to the dysphoria coin were really radical and brave. I wrote my thesis on dude, what was even called. It was just like, yeah, really trying to center gender euphoria rather than, uh, dysphoria. And I did that through thinking about, uh, trans musicians, electronic, uh, music artists, and the feeling of being on the dance floor, um, at like raves and you know, that type of stuff. Uh, so yeah, feeling, feeling euphoric through the sonic practices of trans artists. And yeah.

Autumn ([26:30](#)):

And do you feel like the like really common narrative, like trans suffering really impacted you in like your personal transition?

Grey ([26:39](#)):

Yeah, I mean, I, I think I was one of the lucky ones though in that I did experience a lot of suffering and I know that's a, that's a seems like contradictory, but like, I, I think it's a gift to be, to have sort of a clear understanding of, okay, you know, I'm not comfortable in my body. I'm, I'm not comfortable being referred to as a woman. Like I need to make a change. And I think a lot of people don't experience that kind of suffering and feel like they have to in order to, to transition or to identify as trans. So I, I really did experience that suffering though. So it was a pretty clear path for me. But what was the question

Autumn ([27:23](#)):

<Laugh> I guess like with like representations of transness, always being like around suffering, did that also affect your journey?

Grey ([27:37](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative> yeah. I mean, I it's, it's weird because I feel like the, if you had asked me this before, I would've been like, yes, like there needs to be you know, trans joy needs to be at the center of the conversation. We need to not be reduced to suffering beings, blah, blah, blah. But I think at this point, like the sort of push towards centering trans joy has honestly gone too far in my, in my view. And like the immense weight of being trans in society, I think is being erased in favor of like, you know, you don't owe anyone androgyny, you don't owe anyone, you know, you don't need to sell your narrative of pain in order to be recognized. And like, I do think it's important to recognize that if you're not experiencing a visceral pain at being misgendered, a visceral pain at, you know, having certain bits of anatomy like that is a different experience than those who are experiencing that pain. So that, that's just where my head's at these days. If you don't feel the need to make concrete changes then you should recognize that, that there are people who do,

Autumn ([29:00](#)):

And with your personal experiences in mind, how would you define trans joy?

Grey ([29:07](#)):

I mean, in terms of the, the thinking I was doing around dancing for, I think it's like the whole notion of transness, the whole notion of gender, the whole notion of bodily embodiment is, is, goes out the window when you're really, really experiencing trans joy. I think it's just like you happen to be trans, but you're just feeling bliss. You know, I think it's the ability to forget that

you're, you've been othered in, you know, as a trans person you get to just float. I think sort of the little landmarks along the way are like, you know, looking in the mirror and being like, who the fuck is that like, that's awesome. Or, you know, passing for me that is a goal and that is something that's been happening increasingly or pretty much exclusively at this point, which is really, really rad and something I never, ever thought was possible, especially I think because of the thinking, there's sort of always a warning of like the goal isn't passing, like, you know, don't, don't set your sights on that too much.

Grey ([30:15](#)):

But you just can like, <laugh>, you can just say I wanna pass and do it. And I think a lot of sort of people I know from Barnard are still sort of rooted in this like, well, gender isn't real gender is a construct like don't buy into it, which like places the onus on trans people to not perpetuate the gender binary when they're not the ones who invented it, they're not responsible for carrying it out. Yeah, I, if there's anything that I really want to be documented from this it's that like, since like during my time at Barnard, there really started to emerge this division between quote unquote binary, trans people and non-binary people. And the non-binary folks that I was interacting with at Barnard really seemed to think that they were closer to the revolution in, on a superior moral plane, um, because they thought they were doing away with gender in a way that quote unquote binary, trans people were not. And I just think that's completely false on so many levels that I don't even wanna get into why it's false, cuz I don't even wanna like demean my thought to that level of ridiculousness. But if, if I have one wish for the Barnard community is that they like quit that right now cuz I think they're too smart and too beautiful to be buying into that. And it, I think it really started to like erode people's souls. And I'm quite concerned about that.

Autumn ([31:42](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative> so it's kind of like in this effort to be like more progressive it's you're forgetting these little things that are still very important.

Grey ([31:51](#)):

Totally. And you're ultimately villainizing trans folks rather than, you know, identifying who the enemy really is in cis-hetero patriarchy, you know,

Autumn ([32:03](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative> and can you think of a time when you experienced trans joy during your time as an undergrad, this experience does not have to be affiliated with Barnard.

Grey ([32:15](#)):

Yeah. I mean, it really is back to like the rave scene and dancing for me. Um, going, being able to go out, um, in New York as a student and like, uh, you know, go to these like insane spaces of like ultimate deviance and rebellion, um, felt fantastic because it's, it's one thing to study these things in class and it's like another to feel that coursing through your veins on like a very physical level. Um, so that was huge for me. Um, I think, you know, sexually like being in a community, that's just like so sexy and beautiful and like just being surrounded by like-minded folks is like erotically incredibly charged and insane. Um, when you're like coming into your sexual self uh that's you know, you're never gonna find that anywhere else. Like <laugh> cherish that shit while you're there. Um, so I think that was a, a lot of trans joy as well. Like people just being like I'm fully here to see you exactly how you wanna be seen. Like just tell it to me and I'll

reflect that back to you. Um, that is not how the world works. That's how Barnard works if you're, if you're lucky. So that's really cool.

Autumn ([33:30](#)):

And then there's like a few more questions about policy, but I might close this zoom send you a new link. Cause I think this is gonna like automatically close at 2:40.

Grey ([33:39](#)):

Okay. Are you, are you wanting to continue? Is, is that, is that cool for you? Am I talking too much too little?

Autumn ([33:43](#)):

Oh no. Like, no, I'm really happy to like be doing this.

Grey ([33:46](#)):

Okay. Okay. Yeah. Cool.

Autumn ([33:49](#)):

I'll see you like a couple minutes.

Grey ([34:03](#)):

Awesome.

Autumn ([34:07](#)):

Okay. How do you feel about Barnard's policies regarding trans students?

Grey ([34:13](#)):

Yeah, I mean, I just think if the goal is to create an envi-an educational environment where people whose voices aren't listened to, um, can thrive, then that needs to include all trans folks, um, and cis women, but not cis men. And that's that.

Autumn ([34:34](#)):

And so, oh, sorry. <Laugh> how would you see, I guess like right now it's still very much like "We're a woman's college. We serve women." How would you see that? Like being changed to be inclusive of everybody except for cis men

Grey ([34:50](#)):

Yeah. So Mount Holyoke does, does this Smith is still like Barnard, but Mount Holyoke has, has been doing this for years at this point where yeah, that's just their admissions policy. <Laugh> like, it's, it's just everyone, but cis men and that's all you could, that's all you need to do. Um, just make that explicit and clear. Um, and your promotional materials and your, I mean the, the number of years that students have been pestering, the Barnard administration to, to change this has, you know, it's just, it's not inspiring much confidence. I don't, I don't see this changing in the future, I think because of, um, financial interests and this sort of, I think what the relationship with Columbia also has a huge impact of like the, you know, know protected darlings, um, across the street, you know, the chastity gates and all the rest. Um, I really did always feel like we were being read for the sexual fulfillment of Columbia men. Like it, it, I felt that heavily

Autumn ([35:53](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative>. And would you be willing to touch on the support or like the lack of support that you received during your transition of Barnard?

Grey ([36:03](#)):

They were able to change my name. Just, I think it just appeared as like a different name, but not officially change it. I, I don't know how that worked, but I was able to give them a different name that they could provide to professors. But I had a lot of uncomfortable conversations with professors around pronoun practices that I don't think were well received. So the administration could definitely make it, you know, standardized pronoun practices and make that an expectation in the classroom. Um, I think also the medical center, I don't remember being great around those things. Um, I think I just felt a lot of judgment and confusion and I think they were very much like, yeah, trained to cater to cis women, especially like cis straight women and those kinds of ways of practicing safe sex and stuff.

Autumn ([37:08](#)):

Mm-Hmm <affirmative>. And how would you change Barnard's policies regarding trans students?

Grey ([37:20](#)):

I mean, I don't know. I, I think like just whatever you can do to like, make students feel less freakish, like, you know, standardized-standardizing pronoun practices letting everything be an opportunity for, uh, sort of self definition. Like when you enter the medical center, like, this is how I wanna be referred to this is how I want my genitals to be understood. This is the kind of sex I have. Um, just being taken at your word. I feel like there was always a sort of like, "Really, are you sure?" Like, um, yeah.

Autumn ([38:01](#)):

And to wrap up what does being trans mean to you?

Grey ([38:07](#)):

Major question. I mean, I, I don't think anyone has a gendered core, right? Like there's obviously, you know, you can dig as deep as you want and you're not gonna find like a nugget of gender or sex anywhere. So I don't think trans people are actually different from cis people in that regard. It's not like, or from agender non-binary folks who claim that they have some sort of lack of gender that no one else does. That's that's across the board, you know, that's everybody. I think trans folks have just decided to call something out in themselves to make life a little bit more spicy and weird. Maybe because they were bored maybe because they were sad, it doesn't have to be for any, you know, any real reason. It could just be, you know, when people ask me, like when I first started to identify as trans or why or how I, I really like to just be like, doesn't fucking matter.

Grey ([39:16](#)):

I don't know. <Laugh>, you know, maybe I was present for it. Maybe I wasn't, but like here we are now. I think it's it's pretty insulting to try to locate an origin. Because it's saying sort of like, where did this, where did you go wrong? You know, it's like trying to change the course of history. Like it's, again, back to that theme of like, this should really be a celebrated thing, something that, you know, what does trans being trans mean to me, like sacred divinity, like <laugh> someone who is in this world, but not of it, you know, like really saying like, I'm, I'm gonna be here, I'm gonna show up. I'm gonna love people. I'm gonna love myself. But like, this is not it, you know, <laugh> just announcing that like the way things were structured is violent.

You know, it's like you have to be willing to be like, I mean, I'm really obsessed with the notion of killjoy.

Grey ([40:16](#)):

I don't know if you ever read Sara Ahmed's piece about being a killjoy, but it's sort of this, like people label you a killjoy. If you call out like what's wrong with society and try to change the story to be like, "Oh, Grey, was a killjoy," rather than like, "Society did this thing that Grey called attention to." Um and I think trans people are just walking killjoys, you know? And that's in the interest of a true joy. Like, like you were, you know, touching on like the form of joy that we've been fed is so far from joyous. And if you can kill the joy to reach the other side of a truer joy then you should.

Autumn ([41:07](#)):

Okay. Yeah. Thank you so much. Let me, um,