NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

AMANDA ARMSTRONG

Interviewer: Michelle Esther O’Brien

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Transcribed by Asil Kurundarath

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Michelle Esther O'Brien: Hello, my name is Michelle O'Brien and I will be having a conversation with Amanda Armstrong for the New York City Trans Oral History Project in collaboration with the New York Public Library's Community Oral History Project. This is an oral history project centered on the experiences of trans identifying people. It is March 21st, 2019 and this is being recorded at the administrative offices of the New York Public Library in midtown Manhattan. Hello.

Amanda Armstrong: Hi, Michelle.

O'Brien: How are you doing, Amanda?

Armstrong: I'm good.

O'Brien: Ahem. Will you start off and introduce yourself?

Armstrong: Sure, my name is Amanda Armstrong. I'm—I was born in 1982. and have somewhat lost track of my age somewhere in the range of 35 or 36…

O'Brien: [laughter]

Armstrong: I just moved to New York this past August, with my long-term partner, Alana Price, and, our one—almost one-year old child at the time, named Rend. I—we came here because I got a job at Fordham University, and before that we were in Ann Arbor.

O'Brien: Tell me a little bit about your childhood.

Armstrong: Yeah, so I was born in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. my parents, John and Shirley, uh, were both therapists at the time that I was born. Mom worked at the health center—the kind of public health center in town and my dad worked at a addictions counseling center in Maryland. And, I grew up for the first five or so years of my life in a kind of rural part of, you know, the area. And then, we moved to a suburban part of the area, after kindergarten. I went through the public-school system there. I have a younger sister who's, four years younger than me named Julia. And I would say it's hard to sum up a childhood but, I had a pretty positive experience as a child, and in a lot of ways, and you know, with some notable exceptions to that. you know insofar as this is a trans oral history interview, I suppose it's relevant that, I had this funny idea [clears throat]. One of my early memories is looking at grown-ups at a party and trying to figure out, whether they had changed their gender yet because for some reason, I had an idea that halfway through someone's life they changed genders, and this was not at all troubling to me in the way you might imagine it would be but…

O'Brien: [laughter]

Armstrong: …was troubling because or kind of exciting—it was kind of neutral as far as the gender piece was concerned, but it was very troubling insofar as when you transition then you knew when you were going to die. So it was like, there was a concern there, and yeah, there might be something to that, [stutters] yeah from a kind of psychoanalytic perspective but, in any case, that was one of my early trans-related memories. I wouldn't say that, I kind of had gender dysphoria as a very young child or knew myself to be trans or a woman from a very young age. there are numbered experiences in high school where I would say that people kind of marked me as gender variant in a number of different ways, like I played on the men's basketball team in middle school and somebody on the team found a sanitary pad in the locker room and sort of plastered it on my back as were walking out to the court. and, you know, like people taunted me in the ways that, you know, people get taunted who are gender variant in the way I was. But, I didn't—I mean I was interested in gay liberationist stuff. I read some of that. in the context of doing debate, I was political in different ways. I did kind of anti-death penalty stuff in high school and went to some of the counter-globalization mobilizations that were happening at the time. but I feel like, you know, looking back on that time, I don't know that I knew that trans people existed. I suppose I did in some way. one of the ways that a friend kind of marked me out as gender variant, perhaps, was by giving me, a VHS of Ace Ventura for my birthday one year. So, you know, probably I picked up on what was in the culture at the time but it was a time where you could grow up, at least where I did and kind of not know that transness was a thing. So a lot of that, a lot sort of changed in terms of my experiences with gender violence as well as, different political transformations and also, kind of coming to terms with being trans in college I would say.

O'Brien: What were you like as a teenager?

Armstrong: I was—I don't know. You'd have to ask people around me I suppose but, I was interested in—I mean I was, I read a lot. I did for—early on, I was pretty involved in sports like I did basketball as I mentioned, and I ran cross country for a few years. at some point I just—there was like a block, I just wouldn't do it anymore. I couldn't do it anymore. So I stopped doing that and, this was probably after my first year of high school. And, I joined the theater, like I was in a musical, and joined the debate team. So those were some of the activities that I was pretty involved in at the time. think I was not terribly happy, in high school though what else is new? And, I think, there were aspects of the experience that in retrospect I think are v—apparent to me as kind of dissatisfaction with being asked to occupy a masculine role or, kind of, projecting myself into a future of being a man and so this kind of disease, that definitely was very gendered but, you know, I had close friends. I had like political interests. It wasn't that bad. [laughter] I don't know. Yeah.

O'Brien: Tell me about your political trajectory and involvement when you were a teenager.

Armstrong: Yeah, so—

O'Brien: [clears throat]

Armstrong: I guess the two things, like I said, that I was more involved in are—was, anti-death penalty work. There was [clears throat] somebody who went to the church that I grew up in. my mom took us to an—to a mainline Lutheran church growing up. so there was somebody in the church who worked at Gettysburg College and was involved in a statewide anti-death penalty coalition in Pennsylvania. [clears throat] so I went up to Harrisburg a few times with him for demonstrations and tried to sort of like canvas around that a bit. and then I guess whenever Seattle happened, I was very interested in that and a lot of the friends that I had through—on the debate team, we were all kind of interested in it and people had very different perspectives on it but that was kind of an occasion where I started to, you know, read critiques of globalization or capitalism—I started reading like Marx's, stuff in the context of debate work. and, we went to some of the—some of us went to some of the mobilizations like there was the, the World Bank action in DC, so that was close to where I grew up—we went there. I was also—I canvassed for Nader in 2000 to get him on the ballot. so—that—I got a lot of hostile responses from local liberals [laughter] as you would imagine. and actually they had a debate and there were—like at the high school and so I played Nader in the debate, which is kind of funny in retrospect but I—so I wore—I was like frumpy and not as dressed up as the other candidates.

O'Brien: [laughter]

Armstrong: So that was high school, you know. And then, I guess, uh, in college, I got involved with a living wage campaign early on at s—at, Swarthmore. I got involved with the Queer-Straight Alliance, and then September 11th happened like a few weeks after college began my first year and, so [I] got really involved in anti-war work at that time.

O'Brien: Do you remember the development of your consciousness around your political work, like what drew you to it and how it changed your thinking over time?

Armstrong: I'd say, you know, like my parents were not terribly political, but they sort of had some stories of demonstrations that they went to when they were young, and they were definitely countercultural. Like part of the reason that they stayed in Gettysburg was—had to do with sort of countercultural, impulses and actually that was like relevant in terms of their response to me coming out as trans—not always in good ways like, like I think they saw it as the wrong kind of countercultural, or countercultural in a way that wasn't what they had—what they saw as the right way to do that, which was sort of involved blending in, to in their case, sort of like rural local, white-dominated culture. Um. So I guess for middle—for middle-class people—both of my parents were middle-class. They went to college at Gettysburg College. Like, dressing like farmers was kind of countercultural in a certain way. [clears throat] In any case, I—I think that probably the socialization from my parents was relevant but not terribly salient in terms of my politicization. I think, you know, this experience with church, that was like—the guy at church—that was very happenstance like, there was a debate in my middle school about the death penalty and I decided to take the side against it because that was just like clearly the right side to take on the issue and my mom was like, "Oh, you know, this guy works on that issue. You should talk to him," in terms of preparing [inaudible]. So you know it was like shaped by that ac—that school context but—and then the church context as well. And then with the counter-globalization stuff, it was very, much about seeing the news and kind of be ex—being excited about the, ant capitalist mobilizations in Seattle and sort of wanting to participate in that. I t—there was another—I took a, class with a left wing philosophy professor at Gettysburg College and kind of got connected with him and he, in some way facilitated going to some of these demonstrations in DC and like I said I was—so it was sort of my politicization was shaped by, academic or school contexts pretty significantly and that never really stopped being the case, I would say. It was very much shaped by, you know, what I was reading, what I was interested in reading, what, you know, kind of research trajectories I went on and so I read feminist stuff. I read, gay liberationist stuff, Marxist stuff. I was reading Foucault. So, these were sort of like shaping my consciousness, I guess.

O'Brien: What were some of the books that had the biggest impact on you?

Armstrong: The History of Sexuality. There was this book by, a guy whose last name was Moine. That was his sort of gay liberationist text. I read Bell Hooks in high school, a number of her works, that were pretty influential. this very weird like Marxist critique of Derrida that used a lot of, uh, jargon [laughter] but that I kind of was fascinated by. I was reading some stuff at the time also about, like surveillance of, benefits recipients by, welfare case managers and different state agents. that was something that was significant. I think—I might have mentioned this already but Foucault's History of Sexuality, Discipline and Punish. Yeah.

O'Brien: Where did you go to college?

Armstrong: I went to Swarthmore. I went in 2001. my mom said she didn't want to go—me to go more than four hours away from Gettysburg and that restricted the possibilities somewhat. and, uh, someone I knew from high school had gone there a few years before so I stayed with her friends, on a campus visit and really liked it, so I went there. yeah. Yeah. I was pretty political during my time there. I guess my first year, like I said, I was pretty involved in this Queer-Straight Alliance, so kind of connected to queer and trans communities at Swarthmore, and then was doing anti-war stuff [clears throat] especially at the time and, right when I got there I joined the men's ultimate frisbee team. Played for like a couple months and then didn't want to go to the practices anymore and—but this thing happened where the team, like some people streaked at some party and so the team was obligated to do this thing where they, um—everybody on the team was obligated to do this thing where you like basically chaperone a frat party, and so I put that off and put that off and finally did it, at the end of my first year and had a really horrible and scary experience kind of, trying to like intervene against what I saw as like a sexual assault that was happening. Getting like, you know, shouted at, pushed around like I—it was very scary. It was kind of traumatic by—by the frat brothers I guess. I saw what I thought was like this really weird initiation accidentally. It was just like a very disturbing event and [clears throat] like I think in general, by then already I was sort of starting to explore in different ways like gender and sexual, my gender and sexual identity I guess or all of that and—but after that, like I, stayed in my partner's room for couple days, like I didn't feel like I could leave the—the room. And the thing that made me feel like I could leave the room was, like wearing a skirt out, like one of her skirts out. So that sort of like was a shift and I started wearing skirts like pretty much all the time. and, you know, for like the fall of the next year I guess, I was like the boy who wears skirts on campus and people were cool about it mostly, like it was a pretty good experience but you know like gradually it just wasn't quite adequate as a status [laughter], you know? and so that was when I started more seriously—like thinking more seriously about, like tran—my trans experience or transness. So, [I] started like experimenting with what would become my name and, you know, in certain intimate settings like, um [clears throat], like went to a support group. I went to some like events in Philly. I think one of the early events actually when I was thinking back on this time was, the memorial service for Nizah Morris in 2002, who was killed af—was found dead after, being, given a ride by the cops and so there was a lot of, you know, people were talking about police violence a lot in the context of her death.

O'Brien: Right. I helped organize that event.

Armstrong: Yeah.

O'Brien: Yeah.

Armstrong: a friend of mine—like a friend from college, uh, Tim Culman brought me to the event. so yeah, so that—that was sort of like, you know, how things started to shift and, I—at some point I started taking birth control pills, like a friend's birth—who got—a friend got birth control pills at the health center. I started taking them and [clears throat] went to the Mazzoni Center for blood work. So I was doing that for a while. and, you know reading a lot of stuff that was being published at the time about trans—trans life, like some Dean Spade's writings, the Piss & Vinegar zine and, the Make zine that was being published at the time, uh, Leslie Feinberg, Riki Wilchins, this history by Joanne Meyerowitz that was assigned to a friend of mine—in this friend of mine's class. I was reading [clears throat] your, uh, writings, the Dead Letters stuff. Um. So yeah, I was reading some stuff that was—a lot of, you know, a lot of it was, kind of thinking about trans life and experience and the oppression that gender variant people faced [clears throat] in a broader political context, in terms of, histories of capitalism and white supremacy and patriarchy and, yeah, fights against those systems. I [clears throat] at some point came out to my parents. They freaked out, said some things that made me decide to stop taking hormones for a while so [I] did that for a while, but was still sort of like socially—I had socially transitioned I guess you would say and didn't not—didn't stop doing that, but was off hormones for a couple years. So [clears throat] that was some of that period. My mom, kind of like put a lot of pressure on me to go to this like trans skeptical therapist who turned out to be a real creep like, you know, like sexually [laughter] harassing basically, so that was a bad experience. But, you know, it was like an interesting time. I guess I was sort of vicariously reading some [inaudible]. I was like aware of the Michigan, contro—the controversy around the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. So there was sort of like—there was a fair amount going on that I was reading or hearing about, things that—places that I went, people that I was introduced to. there were like—you know [inaudible] close trans friends in college. I did a—took a semester off at one point and was working with Books Through Bars and—in Philly, which is a prisoner book, uh, program and started doing a correspond—like a correspondence and making a zine with, trans women in prison. So I was doing that some, during my time in college. Yeah.

O'Brien: What was the queer and trans community at Swarthmore like?

Armstrong: Uh, a lot of—well you know there were a few different subgroups there, but the subgroup that I was a part of was kind of—a lot of people were involved in a lot of different political work. and, we all mostly lived in this off-campus apartment called The Barn, which was a place that was very fun to be and there was a lot of drama and, it was, yeah, so I lived there for a few years. yeah.

O'Brien: Did we cross paths at Swarthmore or when I spoke there during that time?

Armstrong: Yeah, I went to your talk at Swarthmore. Yeah. Yeah, that was great.

O'Brien: Oh wow. I don't—I don't remember meeting you. I'm so sorry.

Armstrong: Well I went to, the support group once…

O'Brien: Oh wow.

Armstrong: …that you facilitated.

O'Brien: Oh, that's amazing.

Armstrong: Yeah, and I came and said, "I just figured I'd come and listen." And you said, "Yeah, that's what everybody says."

O'Brien: [laughter]

Armstrong: And I was the only one there so I ended up talking.

O'Brien: [laughter]

Armstrong: [laughter]

O'Brien: Wow.

Armstrong: Yeah, that was great.

O'Brien: Oh, that's very touching. [laughter] Yeah. Ah, what were your studies like? You were reading tons of trans stuff. Was that—what were you doing academically?

Armstrong: Yeah, I was a religious studies major. I also—and then I sort of like did a lot of history. and I wrote a thesis as an undergrad on, the Cult of Kubiley, this ancient Roman cult, that involves—that was, composed of, people of Phrygian descent like, uh, a population, that was experiencing Roman colonization, displacement, slavery, kind of dias—a diasporic experience in the Mediterranean. And, kind of after the colonization of Phrygia, this kind of, uh, religious, complex emerged that in—included, you know what we might refer to now as like transfeminine, priestesses. And, so I was—I wrote a thesis about that cult, thinking about—basically writing against a lot of like really transphobic stuff about this cult that kind of goes way back in terms of classical historiography, and racist stuff too about the cult. Just really terrible scholarly work kind of trying to like, you know, piece together a different story about this group that was not totally, you know, negative and, you know, matter of stereotype and kind of tried to present the—what I was talking about as like the body theologies of, these priestesses, in relation to histories of slavery, colonization, uh, the kind of experience of, being put at some remove from the capacity to be involved in biological reproduction directly and sort of, embodying in especially, this annual ritual performance, kind of, uh, uh, a feminine mourning subject position. so like taking up all these conventions of funerial processions, like self-lacerating, crying, milk was involved a lot—this was characteristic of kind of women's role in mourning, uh, processions in ancient Rome. So I was kind of thinking about reproduction, gender, mourning, kind of colonization in the context of this cult, and that was really exci—that was fun. I really enjoyed writing that piece. And then also I was making an argument about, Saint—the Pauline epistles, arguing that he—that Paul kind of encoded these references to, uh, the Cult of Sibyl in his viceless and in these various places within the letters and that his, the way he makes kind of, the gender variant priestesses, the galley like Anathema sort of allows—they're kind of a foil and in some ways it facilitates his somewhat universal, universalist politics, right? So it was this sort of like critique of universalism in Paul. I really enjoyed hating reading Batyu's book on Paul, which kind of is like does all the—repeats all of the bad things and in fact like has these very transphobic moments in ways that I think are very symptomatic of like this dynamic that I saw in Paul's letters. Anyway, so I was doing that. Yeah. And wanted to kind of carry on with that. like I applied to graduate schools and went—ended up going to the Chicago Divinity School thinking I was going to do work on this cult and kind of classical historiography and things changed from there but, yeah.

O'Brien: You've become more animated—

Armstrong: Yes! [laughter]

O'Brien:—talking about your writing and your arguments.

Armstrong: Yeah. You know I was, I kind of like was very excited to go back to this thesis last year because, in the context of, my partner and I having a baby and, I induced lactation and so I was thinking a lot about kind of transness and motherhood and reproduction and the kind of like limits of like our bodily capacities around reproduction but the ways that we sort of push those limits and, and kind of the way in which there's a, you know, relation but disjunctive relation between sort of social recognition for, maternal labors and sort of, what's happening physically and, you know, these different levels, of experience and so I kind of was thinking I wanted to write, something that was looking back at this research and a bit more memoiry but then I got a job unexpectedly so now I have to write, you know, a book for a tenure file so that's sort of on hold right now. But I'm very exc—I, I like sort of got excited again about this project, last year. Yeah.

O'Brien: [inaudible] Sounds great.

Armstrong: Yeah.

O’Brien: Ah, anything else you want to say about your time at Swarthmore?

Armstrong: No I think that—I think I talked about the most salient aspects of the experience in this context. Yeah.

O’Brien: What did you do after? You said you applied to the—was it Chicago?

Armstrong: Yeah.

O’Brien: Divinity?

Armstrong: Yeah, University of Chicago School of Divinity. The [clears throat] —basically my partner, Alana, and I applied to graduate schools in the same cities, and Chicago was the city we both got into schools. She wanted to do, journalism, like a journalism master’s so we went to Chicago. Um. I was doing a master’s program there but got money to do it so it was like, usually I would have had to take out debt to do that but, but—but I had to work a lot you know. I was doing this and that other kind of work, in Chicago. Um. And, yeah so we were there for three years. I didn’t do as much political work there. I was really involved—my partner and I both were really involved in, this surrealist, uh, exquisite corpse drawing circle that we kind of like pulled together with our friends and developed this kind of technique of doing these exquisite corpses and then did a show at, a café in Chicago, which was where the Chicago Surrealist Group had done their shows in like the ‘80s and so I actually got pretty close to, Penelope and Franklin Rosemont who were really involved in that group and worked with the Charles Care Press at the time. I did some work for them—editorial stuff and just sort of like moving boxes in the…in the press. So that was really cool. I really liked that experience.

O’Brien: For people that don’t know, could you tell us a little bit about the political relevance of that pair at [inaudible]?

Armstrong: Yeah, they, they…you know, they kind of, were really active in Chicago, back in the late ‘60s, early ‘70s. Um. They…they kind of, were connected to the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] there, and sort of developing this very politicized approach to surrealism. Um. They—I think they studied some with St. Clair Drake in Chicago, and, uh, yeah so they were involved in sort of like labor radicalism, sort of stuff around, the defense of, sort of spaces within the city that were somewhat more, uh, oppositional to the state and, yeah the—they also [clears throat] have like a massive archive of anarchist writings, and yeah the—they’ve just been sort of active in lots of different struggles. And I think their sort of trajectory, you know is not the trajectory that you sort of hear as the dominant story often about the new left or the sort of period of time. they were—they were out at, uh, Seattle. They had this sort of broad side that circulated pretty widely. So yeah, they were great. It was really great to get to know them and yeah, to know—to kind of learn about their political trajectory.

O'Brien: How was your program in Chicago?

Armstrong: It was alright. It wasn't terrible. I, you know, in retrospect I'm surprised it wasn't worse. I ended up studying a lot with Bruce Lipkin who was kind of like a Marxist sociology. He did a lot of—he does a lot of work on, kind of, uh, antisemitism and, anti-black racism within, kind of the history of the discipline of religious studies. And I also took Moishe Stone's Marx seminar at Chicago, so kind of like went beyond the divinity school in different ways. and, yeah had some friends. It was alright. Um. But, and got accepted to PhD program there but decided to go to Berkeley just 'cause I thought kind of I'd have a better—I'd have interlocutors especially amongst graduate students who, you know, would, would be more interested in some of what I was also trying to think about and interested in so…

O'Brien: Where were you at gender wise at that time?

Armstrong: [clears throat] Yeah, I was not back on hormones. I was, you know, Amanda, "she" pronouns. I worked, um—one of the jobs I had there was as like the professional transsexual at the LGBT Center at University of Chicago so I was like doing these workshops like Trans 101 workshops, that kind of thing. Um. I was not out at this one job that I had, which has to do with sort of like family, family ex—family dynamics I would say. Like I wasn't out to extended families in a lot of ways and this job I got through sort of family connections. but I was using what I thought of as like a gender-neutral name. but anyway so it was like the last period of my life where I was sort of negotiating places where I was out and places where I wasn't out. Um. Then when I went to Berkeley, that was like—that stopped. Like there was a bit of a breakthrough with my family. I came out to like all of my extended family, went back on hormones. Sort of like things got more stable and in some ways like uninteresting [laughter] or, you know, it was just sort of like that's [clears throat]—it's been a pretty stable sort of situation as far as that's concerned since then, which is good. [laughter] Yeah.

O'Brien: And how did your research go during that time?

Armstrong: Um. I did, you know, I wrote some stuff on early Christian writings about the Cult of Kubiley kind of extending the same work and then just started doing a lot more reading on 19th century, classical historiography and thinking about discourses of race and gender in 19th century kind of European history writing and, then got really into Marx with [inaudible], and he has sort of a particular way of understanding the relationship between, uh, discourses of race and, and the kind of social forms characteristic of capitalist societies so I kind of played with that a bit. and went to Berkeley thinking I was going to do a project on, kind of time, history writing, race and gender, in the 19th century which in some ways is sort of some of what I've done, but it became much more a labor history project about [clears throat] rail way workers who were kind of involved in, maintaining the systems that helped standardize time in the 19th century but, you know, some of these more conceptual interests in time, of history of time sort of went to the side a bit. And I wasn't doing work on historiography [inaudible] so that's kind of how that moved.

O'Brien: What was your time in Berkeley like?

Armstrong: Very, uh, dramatic and energizing. Um. So I came in 2008 and I had a really rough first year like I felt sort of distant from the classes. Felt like kind of a hostile place. In general, I think I have trouble with, you know, the first year in a new place. so I just was like pretty down that year. [clears throat] And then, but like, you know, had gotten really close with, uh, people in my cohort. And then the summer—so 2008 financial crisis, the, the summer of 2009 was when that really hit, like the state budgeting in California. Um. The UCs also lost a ton of money just from the crash itself like way more than the state reduction accounted for in terms of their, financial holdings and that kind of thing. But in any case, the summer was when the Board of Regents sort of gave the President emergency powers to lay off workers and rearrange contracts and dramatically increase student tuition levels. And so basically they—these austerity measures provoked a really strong response from people in various sectors of the UCs, so like different sectors of workers, academic workers, technical workers, clerical workers, service workers, and students, and faculty. [It] was a mixed bag but, you know, something. And then beyond the UCs sort of within other education institutions, so K-12 teachers really took a lot of action that following year, the community colleges, especially students, and the CSUs [California State University], especially students. So there was basically a statewide education movement that year against these austerity measures that I got really involved in. There were strikes, building takeovers, a lot of state repression, kind of anti-repression work. Oscar Grant was murdered by the police that winter so there were massive demonstrations and kind of insurgency in Oakland. And there was a lot of kind of crossover between the stuff that was happening campuses and these mobilizations for justice for Oscar Grant. And that kind of flow between the, you know, campuses in the Bay and sort of organizing, especially kind of anti-racist organizing in Oakland, was characteristic of that time there and there was sort of, you know, it was fraught in various ways but there were interactions between movements in these different sites and with different aims and different in certain ways. So, um…

O'Brien: Can you tell us about some specific protests you were a part of during that time?

Armstrong: Sure, yeah. So there was a huge walkout in September, that, you know, kind of was a walkout on campus. And then later in November, there was a three-day strike that the graduate student organizing committee was kind of spearheading and that was less massive, you know the participation was more uneven. The third day of that strike was the day after a twenty-seven percent fee hike went through I think—the Board of Regents passed this huge fee hike—and I was involved in this building takeover at an academic building on campus that was involved like barricading a floor of academic buildings and it turned into this day-long confrontation with the police who were trying to get in through the doors and like thousands of students came out basically because they were really upset about this fee hike and this was what was happening in response to it. So they all came out. There were all these clashes with the police. People were like pushing the barricades trying to get into us. The cops were like hitting people with batons. And they finally like busted down the doors in the evening but there were so many people out that the cops just cited and released us in the building because they realized they couldn't like escort us off campus because people would like, you know, destroy their vehicles or something.

So that was really amazing. That was a really kind of defining experience. And a close friend of mine, PJ, Paul Nadal and I wrote a reflection on that experience in the following weeks. It was kind of a way to try to process what was in some ways a kind of traumatic experience being—holding these doors, the cops like hitting the doors with the batons all day, like threatening people. It was like hard to know what was happening in all these different—there were a lot of rumors of like huge weapons that the cops were bringing in and stuff like—it was just like really intense and so partly we were trying to sort of process this experience and think about the very weird experience of—surreal experience of time, especially in space that kind of characterized that building takeover. And also to think about the ways that kind of relations of mutual obligation or care had sort of made the event what it was and had sustained it. People throwing food through the windows like trying to sort of figure out how to take care of each other in this very, you know, conflictual insurgent kind of context. So we were trying to think about that. And partly what we were also trying to do was to sort of head off this, what we saw as kind of retrenchment of different factional lines within the movement at the time and try to sort of like suggest that people from different factions had sort of lingering responsibilities or obligations to each other that in part the events of that day had sort of forged. So that was—so we kind of reflected on that. And that generally sent me down a trajectory of thinking about the events in terms of questions of care, labor, reproductive labor, the ways in which austerity was kind of intensifying burdens of unwaged, gendered and racialized reproductive labor and sort of putting in crisis reproduction in various ways. So that sort of also affected I think how I was thinking about the stakes of that political work. So that was a major event. Then in the fall there was a, sort of in the context of the Oscar Grant mobilizations and the university mobilizations, there was a big series of mobilizations on March 4th. Some people took over a highway. I was working as a medic at the time, part of a affinity group that was doing a lot of work around the kind of, you know, care side of militancy. And so went on to the highway as a medic and, you know, everybody got—it was a mass arrest on the highway. So there was that event. Lots of other stuff, like there was a lot happening that year. There was like a month-long hunger strike by Latinx students that was partly about the threats to defund ethnic studies on campus that the affinity group that I was working with did a lot of work in conjunction with. So there were like a lot of different things happening on campus in that year. It was just like a very, you know, it was a period of heightened political activity. There was another sort of wave of struggle in 2011 with the Occupy movement that I was really involved in. There were sort of mass strikes in Oakland and on the universities, a lot of police violence.

O'Brien: Were there ways that being trans shaped your experience or participation in these?

Armstrong: Yeah, I mean I think that the thinking about, kind of, I mean one thing I didn't say about the thinking about care and reproductive work and all that is that part of that was coming out of an experience of frustration at the reassertions of masculine prerogative within the movement and kind of gender dynamics and so I sort of saw it as, you know, women, queer and trans people were being treated like shit in a lot of contexts and basically expected to pick up a lot of these sort of unprepared for eventualities of like jail support or, you know, figuring out the, you know, the medic stuff or the food stuff or logistics of various sorts and just were kind of cut out of decision making processes and cut out of sort of writing, like collective writing activities that were happening at the time. So a lot of it was like this intervention, you know, against those dynamics. So I saw it as I was a trans woman. I was oppressed on the basis of gender. There were a lot of other people who were oppressed on the basis of gender and also race. And those sort of all kind of interacted in various ways. And so it wasn't like uniquely about being trans was sort of how I experienced it and thought about it at the time. It was like part of this larger group of people oppressed on the basis of gender. Yeah. So and I—there wasn't much happening at the time that had to do directly with trans politics. That—and really a lot of the work that I was doing in California wasn't directly or explicitly about trans politics. Of course there are ways that you can think about the kind of particular location of trans people in terms of economies of reproduction and the obligations that people face around and the difficulties that people face around social reproduction being sort of particularly acute and so these anti-austerity struggles, it makes sense that, you know, queer and trans people are in the lead in those contexts and I think I'm more sensitive to that, those realities, now maybe than I was at the time, but it wasn't until the like end of my time in Berkeley in 2013 and '14. So one of the other trajectories at Berkeley was that people who had been, graduate students who had been involved in the 2009 mobilizations basically were annoyed at how uninvolved the union had been. We had a union for graduate employees. They really didn't do much in 2009. So a group of us formed a caucus that was trying to—we had leadership elections within the union and pushed the union to be more involved in social movements and sort of make it a more militant kind of organ of social struggle and—

O'Brien: What was the caucus called?

Armstrong: This was Academic Workers for a Democratic Union and it formed in the winter of 2009-2010 and there were—how did this go? Basically at first the approach was to try to do the work of the union at Berkeley. The union was very—there weren't very many people involved in the union so there was room to kind of enter as head stewards, do the work of the union, kind of build relationships with members, kind of be—yeah, try to revitalize the union but also as a way to demonstrate the possibilities of the union and show a kind of commitment to that project to the broader membership. And to try to build the caucus as well in through that process. And then in the fall, there was a contract campaign anemic, like very, sorry I shouldn't say that, but there was a very kind of inadequate preparation for a strike that the leadership had no intention of actually carrying out and management knew that. We got a really regressive contract, didn't keep up with the cost of inflation. All the kind of non-economic demands were jettisoned at the last minute. So we ran a No Vote campaign in the fall of 2010 that got 40 percent of the vote and then in the spring, contested leadership elections and won, but when it was clear that we were going to win, the elections committee that was controlled by the former leadership that was linked to the bureaucracy of the UAW [University of California Student-Workers Union] walked out of the room and basically, we thought, were trying to invalidate the election by kind of leaving these ballot boxes unattended. But people put a live stream on the ballot boxes so it was clear that nobody was like messing with the boxes and then there were these—there was a week-long, sit-ins at the LA and Berkeley union offices that finally compelled the union to like finish the vote count and announce that AWDU had won the elections. And I think that the, you know, experience of these movements that—where one of the tactics was taking over space and holding it for some period of time kind of shaped that decision.

O'Brien: What year was that election?

Armstrong: That was, I guess, 2010—2011. The spring of 2011. So then in the fall, the union was very involved in the Occupy movement. There was like a lot of overlap and crossing back and forth. The union organized a walkout on the day that the encampment was set to be established at Berkeley for instance. Yeah, so I was really involved in the union. Lots to say about that but in 2013-2014, we had the first contract campaign where there was an AWDU majority on the bargaining team. And so I was on the bargaining team and kind of in a not ideal way introduced all-gender bathrooms into the negotiations, like it wasn't something that had come up in the large assemblies of members to craft the bargaining agenda but of course that's a little bit of a "chicken and egg" kind of thing. It's like what's on the list of demands that you can prioritize and that wasn't on the list so it wasn't like people had decided they didn't care about all-gender bathrooms. They just hadn't had that option. And I was doing a information request in the summer of 2013 I guess it was and doing it for the non-discrimination article. So basically just trying to think of all the different areas relevant to that article that I could ask for information about. And one of the things I asked for information about was where all-gender bathrooms are on the campuses. And that sort of started a process that led to this campaign that was orchestrated by the anti-oppression committee of the union that was pushing for all-gender bathroom access, rights for undocumented graduate student workers, a shift in the mental health kind of related clauses of the contract, kind of reforms that would benefit student parents. So a number of different what we talked about as sort of social justice demands that addressed the ways in which the workplace was a site of oppression for kind of multiply oppressed workers. And so yeah, I was really involved in this all-gender bathrooms effort that whole year during the contract campaign. There were a number of strikes. It was this sort of grueling process. And the one breakthrough around the all-gender bathrooms demand. So it wasn't until the very end of my time at Berkeley that I was doing like something that looked like trans politics, but that was in the context of union reform, kind of left unionism or social justice unionism efforts.

O'Brien: Can you say more about what Occupy was like to be a part of in the Bay Area?

Armstrong: Yeah, so it kind of—so that fall, like on the campuses, I was involved in an effort to try to sort of like recompose a social movement because we kind of knew that another fee hike was coming down the line. In retrospect, I know now that the reason that was happening in part was that the federal stimulus funds expired. A lot of those funds had gone to the university so there was a crunch economically that the university was interested in kind of solving, resolving by increasing the cost of tuition on undergraduates. And so that organizing was kind of happening and in those meetings, in those assemblies on campus, people were kind of like, "Hey, this Occupy Wall Street thing is going to happen in like a few weeks." And there was, you know, mixed—there were mixed views on that before it kicked off but then as it kind of happened, people were like, "Yeah this seems like it's a thing that's happening in New York and starting to get set up elsewhere." And then there were groups in Oakland that started to meet to prepare for the

Occupy Oakland encampment which was, you know, a massive encampment, one of the most militant kind of Occupy movements, very intentionally kind of like anti-racist. The Occupy movement in Oakland renamed the plaza in Downtown Oakland the Oscar Grant Plaza. So there were continuities with the organizing for justice for Oscar Grant and against police violence in Oakland. And the Occupy Oakland encampment was raided in late October and then there was a huge kind of snake march that emerged the next day to try to like push back into Oscar Grant Plaza. And in that, there were clashes with the police. They were shooting tear gas cannisters. Somebody was really seriously injured from one of the tear gas cannisters. And then the next day, it was sort of like this, these huge clashes. And then the next day, basically the police kind of stepped back and it was possible to re-establish the encampment, and people called for, at an assembly, people called for a general strike the next week. So the big central aspect of that action was an effort to shut down the Oakland ports, a kind of mass strike, mass picket, city-wide general strike was sort of what was happening. And I'm a little bit hazy on the timing but I think in between the efforts to take back the plaza and the general strike was the day that, for like a month, people at UC Berkeley had set as the day we were going to set up our encampment to sort of have an Occupy encampment at Berkeley. When we did that, there was really extreme police violence, a series of waves of like batonings of the lines. People had linked arms and were in lines and the police were just, you know, breaking people's ribs, pulling people's hair, pulling them off the lines and arresting them. And people saw videos of that, like students saw videos of that and came out. There was a huge assembly that night and kind of on the model of the Oakland assembly we decided to have a strike in the universities the following week. So there was this sort of like cascade of events that a similar kind of thing happened in Davis, UC Davis. They came out to show solidarity with people at Berkeley. The like infamous pepper spray cop, the pepper spraying happened and they called again for a general strike and had a huge, like many thousands, strike at Davis. So there were—it was sort of this cascade of mass strike actions. It felt like a lot was possible. Things could sort of happen really fast and become mass events. Yeah, there was just a real sense of possibility and also outrage at the police violence that was sort of ubiquitous around those events. You know there were—it was—the movement was fraught in a lot of ways that there emerged at Berkeley like a sort of split between a number of splits. There was a kind of autonomous anticolonial organizing effort that was critiquing the kind of white dominance of the Occupy movement on campus. There were also—there was a split between people, many of whom had sort of come into the organizing like when it happened on campus, and they were some of the most—some of those folks were the most kind of devoted to maintaining the encampment even after the police had like raided it so there weren't tents but like they were sleeping out on the plaza. And so between them and the people who had been doing this organizing that kept meeting in the union hall actually. So like the inside-outside kind of split, like people out weathering the elements versus people who were like, you know, the kind of professional organizers as the people who were sleeping out sort of saw it who, you know, were just in their union hall. And so there were conflicts that emerged in that movement that were actually really difficult to bridge. And, but one of the trajectories that got took at the UCs was an orientation towards takeover of the Capitol Building in the fall—or sorry, in the spring and a group of us marched from Berkeley to Sacramento over the course of five days. So kind of harkening back to some of the United Farm Workers kind of marches in California. That was a really cool experience and really interesting. So it felt like things were just happening really fast.

And it really wasn't until the following fall—I did archival work in London the following fall, where I was like realizing, "Oh, I have a ton of unprocessed trauma from these sort of waves of police violence." Arrests, the tear gassings, the baton—I mean just seeing like dear friends and comrades being really violently attacked by the police. So like everything, it's sort of like the experience in the moment was very different than the kind of retrospective view of the events. And I mean, you know, I look back at it also as a combination of sort of unredeemable trauma. I mean just, you know, some people dropped out. They couldn't keep on with their studies. Like it really affected people in really profound ways, some profoundly negative. Like just—it was a traumatic experience for a lot of people. And then sort of on the other side, and the two don't really enter into any calculus or balance I don't think, there was a sense of victory at having prevented the fee hike from going through, which was the first real tangible victory for this kind of anti-austerity movement in California. So yeah, it was mixed.

O'Brien: You mentioned or spoke about the campaign around all-gender bathrooms on the UC system, fought by the union. That campaign has been notably appreciated in the kind of emerging movements around trans people in the labor movement and how the labor movement can support trans struggles. Is there more you would like to say about that?

Armstrong: Sure, yeah. So as I mentioned, the campaign was organized through the anti oppression committee, which was a committee that was funded by the executive of the union, executive committee or executive board, the sort of statewide elected leadership of the union and the joint council, which were the head stewards on the various campuses, and chairs and recruiting secretaries. And so there was money for an organizer position. So someone—so we hired an organizer to kind of convene the committee. And the charge was to kind of confront forms of gender and racial violence and oppression and kind of bad dynamics within the union and its organizing bodies and culture on one hand, and also to kind of press the union to prioritize issues affecting multiply oppressed workers. I think that the existence of that committee, the effectiveness of Amra Solomon, who was the organizer of the committee that year and a lot of the other active rank-and-file activists who kind of made that committee work, and the kind of political vision of that committee and its leaders was really what made the bathroom campaign possible, was where the campaign was organized. It sort of gave force to that demand among other demands and conceived of the demand as part of a larger effort to press the interest of multiply oppressed workers. So it wasn't like in isolation—we're just doing this bathrooms thing in addition to like a wage campaign. It was kind of a broader effort to transform the priorities of the union and make the union relevant for black workers, for immigrant workers, for women workers, for queer and trans workers, you know. So like basically, it happened in that context. And I think without that committee, it would have been much less effective and possible. And there were—I mean we did a ton of stuff like we did petitioning around the all-gender bathroom issue. We had a bunch of people talk about what it was like dealing with bathrooms in the bargaining sessions, which I think were pedagogical for non-trans or non-gender variant members and leaders of the union for people to realize, "Oh, this really matters." Like a lot of the challenge was preventing management from polarizing more privileged sectors of the workforce against the union and the union leadership around these social justice demands basically, or the anti-oppression demands by suggesting that the union was prioritizing issues that weren't going to benefit the majority of workers, which of course who makes up graduate student workers is liked shaped by dynamics of—on racial segregation and tracking and like layers and layers of incredibly violent educational institutions. So like it's not a neutral body of members, not that anybody of members is ever neutral, these dynamics. And in any case, that was a lot of the work. And I think partly these efforts to talk in bargaining—we did open bargaining, so all the members who were interested could come and watch what happened. To sort of talk about what it was like being a trans worker on campus I think really helped sensitize a broader membership to the importance of the issue. And so actually what ended up happening was when management tried in really ham-fisted ways to polarize the membership against the union leadership on the basis of our prioritizing the all-gender bathrooms issue, people actually got pissed off. They were like, "Who do they think we are? Like these horrible like self-interested bigots who are just going to like cast, you know, our classmates and cohort mates and people we care about like aside because we want like a little extra money, which in any case like wouldn't necessarily even come if we broke solidarity?" So I think people were really, you know, it was really inspiring the way that that sense of, you know, "An injury to one is an injury to all," kind of did in some ways, you know, percolate or it circulated in the context of these strike actions. And also we were prioritizing solidarity strikes. So a lot of other UC unions were in negotiations that year. Our first strike was a sympathy strike with service workers on campus, organized with AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees], and I think there was a similar kind of process by which people realized, you know, even if this doesn't advance our contract campaign as much as some other mobilization could, there's a kind of intrinsic value in solidarity and also it's a strategic kind of value to pull to, or principle to maintain. And so I think that, you know, there were ways in which the campaign built solidarities and those solidarities were reciprocated in pretty inspiring ways. The other, yeah, I mean there's, you know, like the technical stuff that I could talk about like this contract language versus that contract language and blah blah blah, but really what happened was it was, you know, this kind of constant reiteration of the priority of this and other anti-oppression demands like combined with the mobilization of, through strikes, especially of the broad membership and community groups. And there was a community picket at one of our strikes that building trades workers honored. So that was kind of significant economically. You know like compelled management to make some concessions on these issues. And then we had a huge campaign the next year to try to enforce the contract, a grievance process and kind of extra grievance process direct action efforts. So it was like a multi-year process to get, you know, some bathrooms. [laughter]

O'Brien: What was going on in your personal life, in your family life during all this time?

Armstrong: Like I said, things got better with my parents. And my sister had always been pretty staunch and really was instrumental in like pushing my mom finally to stop misgendering me and kind of come around and decide it wasn't a phase. And she actually got really active in like efforts to make her church recognize queer and trans people, which was really moving for me. She gave like a sermon actually that was kind of about like the—her and my relationship and the process that we had gone through. That was really cool. They actually did some stuff, that committee also did some work around Trans Day of Remembrance in the church to kind of make it a event that people in the church participated in. So that was positive in most ways. And the, I mean Alana and I were doing our thing, making a life together. The trauma especially in 2009 was hard in our relationship to kind of work through. I think she felt like vicariously traumatized. I mean she was seeing all of these Twitter reports about the police coming in with these horrible weapons and all this stuff, and had seen the video of me being attacked by the police the week before or I guess that was a few years later but in any case, yeah it's all blurring together. Trauma. [laughter] Anyway, like we didn't do very well at kind of supporting each other through that year of protest movement and it was a bit of a kind of crisis within the relationship that year. And we kind of worked through it. We did couples counseling. So by the end of like time in the Bay, I'd say that relationship was much more positive. And I think I developed just like incredibly close relationships with people I had been involved in the organizing with and kind of gone through these experiences of graduate school and the movements and all of that. I'd say like my social life and intimate life, the kind of bonds that I maintained with friends and comrades and my partner in the Bay were the richest that I've ever had and subsequently like leaving was really hard and there was a real sense of loss and kind of was like drifting in Ann Arbor when I was there for post-doc. Did some work with the first women's strike in 2017 there and went to stuff, political stuff, but just it was very different. I felt sort of like an outsider, or like I was just passing through and was depressed for, you know, like a year, year and a half there. And then we ended up having a kid while we were in Ann Arbor, Alana and me, Alana and I. And I think that kind of got me out of that funk and turned me into a mostly blissed out and massively sleep-deprived new parent. So that was really sweet. And also by then, we had developed some really close bonds with friends there so that sort of shifted over time but, yeah.

O'Brien: Tell me about the move to New York and what it's been like to live here.

Armstrong: Yeah, I didn't get the job before I got it. So I only found out—like someone else took it, had it for a month and then backed out. So I got this call after they had said I wasn't going to get the job like a month later. And they were like, "Oh, this is sort of awkward but do you want to [laughter] work here now actually?" So we didn't know that we were coming until like really late in the spring. It was like this real rush to get housing, a lot of stress. Childcare. But in the end we like got that lined up in the summer and moved out in August and that was really fun. Like the first couple weeks before classes started, I just was like taking Wren on the A train downtown like everyday. Just doing all the like stuff, you know, the kind of like cliché stuff like the Natural History Museum and Central Park and different museums and parks and stuff. So I just felt like it was so fun to get to know the city with Wren and like be kind of companions in acclimating ourselves. And he at the time was like incredibly gregarious on the train. So he would always like say "Hi!" to people or like kind of try to interact with people and that was also really sweet. Like it made me feel like people were really warm here and it was really fun. So that was really cool. And then classes started up and, you know, it was like the first time I'd say that both of us—like it was just this new life of both of us were working full-time. Alana works as an editor at Truth Out. And we were taking Wren to daycare three days a week, taking care of Wren, each of us, one other day of the week and then on the weekends. It just was like we were really busy, you know? It's just been like a nice life, like I think we're both pretty happy here but both feel like we haven't kind of gotten involved in different things in the way that we would want to. Alana just started singing in a choir a few weeks ago, which has been really great. So yeah, I think it's like we have some old friends, actually a lot of Alana's high school friends we've been able to see some since coming here. But I think we're still sort of figuring things out and getting acclimated, but I really like being here and feel like things are kind of—I feel happy about our kind of everyday life right now. Yeah, all good. I actually started seeing the endocrinologist who did the, who like published that case history of the woman who induced lactation, who was working with the Mount Sinai Clinic. So I'm like working with that doctor who was involved in that and the—

O'Brien: What's their name?

Armstrong: Reisman. And in Ann Arbor, I had an endocrinologist and Dr. Moravek and I was also working with a—she was working with a lactation consultant and they kind of collaborated on the protocol—like figuring out what the protocol should be for me inducing lactation. And it was a little different than the one that was published and actually involved not as much going off fully of estrogen. So she's sort of like hoping to publish like that case history to show that like you don't have to go entirely off estrogen in order to induce lactation. So I mean it's the Newman-Goldfarb protocol. It's like modified da da da. There's like technical stuff but it's funny to kind of be like, you know, trans people entered the archive 150 years ago as case histories essentially and yeah.
O'Brien: Here you are becoming a case history of a new form of innovated body modification.

Armstrong: Yes. [laughter]

O'Brien: That's great.

Armstrong: But I suppose entering the archive in another way as well so…

O'Brien: Yeah. Speaking of, why did you choose to do this interview?

Armstrong: I'm kind of like, especially recently, really interested in the question of—well it's, I think it's prompted by the fact that it seems that trans exclusionary radical feminisms are particularly virulent and well-organized and have kind of a platform in Britain in a way that—it's not that they're not organized and having affects in the US but just seems much more extensive and mainstream. And I'm really interested in the question of sort of like how a pro-trans position became hegemonic within feminist organizing in the US, I would say, and not just in the US. But like whether their histories of like the 90s and 2000s that would help explain that kind of trajectory in feminism that, where the histories in Britain for instance which is like the national context that I study in my academic research like so I'm particularly attuned to that. Like maybe that those histories played out differently. And one of the things that I remember from my time in Philadelphia that I think about a lot in these contexts is, somebody I did like a Trans 101 workshop at Bryn Mawr with, MJ McClure, basically talked about work that was happening to like facilitate conversations in like a women's choir in Philadelphia and these different sort of like, ultimately like, probably like 70s feminist institutions about trans politics and the points of convergence, or like the ways that feminism needs to be pro-trans, liberation and trans liberation sort of is strongest when it's, you know, intersectional and feminist. And sort of like having these conversations in a somewhat like less publicly visible or, you know, high stakes way like in the 90s and early 2000s. And I kind of think that some of that really is important in terms of, you know, understanding what's emerged and what possibilities we see now where, as you put it before we started, there's a kind of world historic shift in terms of gender happening and a lot of it has to do with new conceptions of trans life and experience and the kind of possibilities around body modification, changing gender positions and that sort of thing. The other—and so yeah, so I think that like being part of that kind of archive of like people who were around and shaped by these histories of like the 90s and 2000s is something that I think is worthwhile. Yeah.

O'Brien: Was there anything that we didn't talk about that you wanted to make sure to say and to share?

Armstrong: No, I think we covered like, you know, some of the theoretical stuff, some of the political stuff, political formations and trajectories. And I wanted to make sure to mention that thing about these kind of workshops because I feel like that's an important history that I wasn't really directly involved in but encountered indirectly and have thought a lot about recently.

O'Brien: Do you want to check your notes at all?

Armstrong: [laughter]

O'Brien: [laughter]

Armstrong: Let's see, um…

O'Brien: Amanda brought notes to the interview but hasn't looked at them at all during our tie talking.

Armstrong: Oh, yeah. One thing, that I didn't mention—like before I found this good endocrinologist in Michigan, I had like really really shitty experiences with their like old university-based gender clinic.

O'Brien: Yeah.

Armstrong: Like really gatekeeping classic like infamous stuff. Oh, somebody I didn't mention as like one of the people I was reading in college was Sandy Stone, the Posttranssexual Manifesto, which I think I was pretty influenced by. So, you know, it was kind of like, oh yeah, these university-based gender clinics are still doing their thing. Like the worst thing was I was going to get a trach [tracheal] shave that I got a referral to by my like good endocrinologist to a number of different places. One of them was like this cosmetic surgery wing of the University of Michigan Health System. And I went and turns out they're part of this gender clinic and like they basically were like not going to give me this elective surgery, according to the insurance company, that isn't covered, that I was going to pay for like from my salary. They weren't going to do it for me unless I like signed up with the gender clinic and like was part of their information gathering process and all of this. It was just like—I mean, there were worse things in a way where like I wasn't getting what I needed in terms of like HRT [Hormone Replacement Therapy] but I just thought that was crazy or just awful basically and like so outraging that and, yeah, gatekeepy. Oh I guess one thing I wanted to mention is that another reason I wanted to connect with this project is that I'm going to teach a trans histories class in the fall at Fordham, so I'm interested in kind of getting linked up with and relating more to kind of local archives of trans experience and this project is like one of the ones that I was especially excited about.

O'Brien: We've had some good collaborations with academics. Our interviews are transcribed by undergraduate volunteers in LGBTQ history classes around the country for example. Yeah.

Armstrong: Yeah. We should keep talking about possibilities.

O'Brien: Yeah. And here in New York I keep having fantasies of students actually doing interviews but that has been more challenging to make happen.

Armstrong: [laughter] Yeah.

O'Brien: Yeah. Cool.

Armstrong: That would be very cool, yeah.

O'Brien: Well it's been really wonderful to listen with you, Amanda.

Armstrong: Thanks so much for interviewing me.

O'Brien: Thank you.

Armstrong: It's been fun.