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## **Interview #12 Abstract and Transcript, 2001**

Carrie Noble Kline

Anonymous

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2-9-01

Interviewed over breakfast at a restaurant  
Marshall University  
Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia  
Transcribed By Samuel Raymie White

## Interview #12

### Tape Side 1

Carrie Nobel Kline: ... the level for the mic. Can you talk a little bit and? Particularly can you tell me what your date of birth is so we can ...?

#12: Sure my date of birth is June 18, 1973.

CNK: Once more.

#12: June 18, 1973. Pardon me.

CNK: Can you tell me about your people and how you were raised?

#12: My ethnic background is German-Irish, so I was raised pretty strictly. My father was mostly German and he was very strict but he also gave me a good work ethic.

CNK: What do you mean? How did he do that?

#12: It--. He--. He just always made sure that you did all your chores before you got to play. Basically told us repeatedly, it's very important to do the right job the first time. So people will take you seriously, and so you don't have to go back and do it again. Just do a good job. I don't know, he--. He just--. He gave us a lot of responsibility so we would know what it was like to have it, and get used to it at an early age I guess.

CNK: What kind of responsibilities?

#12: Well just you know around the house responsibility. Like you know he would say I trust you to ride to the store across the street on your bike, and things like that.

CNK: So you were raised by your mom and dad?

#12: My mom died when I was four, so my dad pretty much raised me on his own. Go ahead.

CNK: Can you tell me about the places where you were raised? Not necessarily by name but the kinds of communities, and maybe the states.

#12: Well in West Virginia we lived in the country so there wasn't a lot of social interaction at home. Like with other people just because our house--. Our farm was so far away from everybody else. So we got social interaction when we went to the store, or school, or what have you. And then in Florida I lived in the middle of everything. I lived right across the street from the school that I went. And there were at least 25 houses in the--. In the block that I lived--. Or the street. Each side of the street that I lived on. Because I lived basically right at the beginning of the block and then there was houses down here and houses down there. So it was a busy area. So they were very different. They were pretty much on the opposite sides of the spectrum as far as community goes. But it was very--. Like when I lived here, no black people ... lived in the town that I lived in. So I wasn't used to seeing anybody from any other ethnic background or have any other culture. And then when I lived in Florida the community that I lived--. Or--. Yeah, the neighborhood that I lived in was mostly black so I was the minority there. So it was kind of odd. But I was glad to have that to have my eyes opened to different people and different cultures because I know a lot of people that have lived in this--. In West Virginia their whole life that really don't know any black people or anybody from another culture and it--. I think it's it scares them and you know makes them more closed-

mind. That's just my personal opinion. Well get back to the topic but--. So I don't know. Those are my communities I guess.

CNK: Umm hmm. Do you have sisters and brothers?

#12: OK this is a complicated story. My father was married before he married my mother, and his wife could not have children, so they adopted two children, my sister ... and my brother ... who are about almost 20 years my senior. My mother was also married before she married my father and they had my half-sister .... Then my mother and father met, got married, had me. Then my mom died, and my father remarried when I was around 8 and he married my step-mom who has two daughters ... and ... who became my step-sisters. And then my father died when I was 12 and my stepmother remarried to my stepfather and he has 8 children, but I only know one of them, who is my little brother ... So that--. It's not that I don't accept the other ones, I just don't know them. They live in Michigan and Missouri and different places around the US. So my family structure is kind of odd. But family is what you make it so.

CNK: Family is what you make it?

#12: Umm hmm. You know what I mean? I mean your--. You can't choose who your family is, but I could say, oh well my step family isn't really my family isn't really my family because we don't share the same blood, but I don't believe that's true. I believe family is what you make it. You know they're, they're close to me and so I consider them my family whether there is blood or not. You know how like gangsters don't have good home lives and their posse or whoever is like their family? That's what I mean.

CNK: Family of choice?

#12: Right. You know like I don't know. A lot of people ask me, well why do you consider . . . your little brother? He's your stepfather's son, and you have--. No real relation to you, but I do because he's my little brother. I don't know.

CNK: Well can you talk a little bit about, about your own development and things, things you did to bring you to--? Let's see--.

#12: You mean sexuality-wise or just?

CNK: Well sure.

#12: Well I was really a very shy child. You wouldn't believe it now to know me, but. I was really quiet; I had really low self-esteem. I didn't think I was good at anything, and I just pretty much kept to myself. I was really into school, and I concentrated on that. And I started having friends in Florida. I didn't really have a large social interaction in West Virginia just because where I moved back and forth from Florida to West Virginia every year I would miss like the first month of school here. I would start in Florida and then end up here. No, no I think I'm saying that backwards. I would start in West Virginia and I'm going to say we would stay here until October and then we would go to Florida. We followed the warm weather. So I only went to school here--. I'm sorry--. Probably about 2 months. Yeah I'd say about 2 months out of every school year, so I really didn't have a lot of friends here. But I did have a lot of friends in Florida and I would go to slumber parties, and I just, I don't know, I always felt like I was different. And I didn't know if it was because my father raised me and he always bought me dump trucks. And like my aunts would buy me Barbie dolls, but you know he would like say, run over that Barbie with that truck and see what happens to her leg. Things like that. So it was like I

was a tomboy in a sense, and I didn't mind that at all, but it just I don't know--. When I went to the slumber parties I noticed that I felt really awkward. Like all the other girls were used to doing each other's hair and you know pretending to put on nail polish and all that stuff, and that was never my thing. So I always kind of felt like an outcast in some sense or being a girl. Maybe it has to do with not having a mom, mother figure. I don't know. Maybe even if I did have a mother figure maybe I'd still hate nail polish and stuff like that. I don't know. But--. So I just--. I think I blossomed about 13 full of teenage angst, started hanging out with the wrong crowd at school.

CNK: In Florida?

#12: Yes. Yes, in Florida. Yeah--. Oh I'm sorry when I was 12 we moved straight to Florida. We didn't come back here until I was like almost 16. That's when we moved back to West Virginia for good. But--.

CNK: So you started hanging out with the wrong crowd?

#12: Yeah, hung out with the wrong crowd, and then went to high school and was still hanging out with the wrong crowd in high school, but different wrong crowd. And I met a girl who was a senior when I was a freshman because in, in Florida you go to high school when you're 14. And--. So we became good friends, and I don't know really how it happened, but we got drunk one night and had sex. And so the next day she went and told everybody at school that she was a lesbian and broke up with her boyfriend. Her boyfriend like wanted to beat me up. It was this whole ordeal, and I just thought, gosh we just got drunk and had sex. Get over it. And she was like, but I love you ... And I thought, oh gosh. Well maybe I should love her. You know she is my best friend. I

loved her in a sense. I wasn't in love with her and I don't know it was very weird. But she was my best friend and so I thought, OK we can figure this out. You know you think you're an adult when your 14. It was like, let's act like adults, we can do this.

CNK: Do ...?

#12: You know still be friends, but--. I don't know I guess what I wanted was totally different from what she wanted. She wanted to have a relationship and I think I just lived kind of in denial about the relationship part, and just basically tried to maintain the friendship. Is what I mean by do this.

CNK: Without sex?

#12: Well yeah that's originally how it was supposed to happen, and then we still had sex. And her mother caught us and it was very traumatic. Thanks. And--.

CNK: She caught you?

#12: Yeah. Yeah and Kim was my girlfriend's name. She tried to tell her that we were telling secrets or something. I was like, Kim. I'm like, she totally busted us. I was like, we might as well just give it up. So her mom like cried and cried and cried because Kim was her only daughter, and she wanted grandchildren, and this whole thing. Kim just kept saying, "It's OK mom, it's OK. We can adopt." Or something like that. So her mom became OK with it, and you know would always invite me over to stay the night and things like that. And--. Then--. Then when my--.

And everything was fine for a while. I mean I of course got ridiculed at school. Everybody called us the lesbians and you know it was--. It didn't--. I didn't like it. I mean who likes being made fun of? And it's such an awkward age you know when

you're an adolescent anyway, you're just trying to develop your sexuality. You're confused about everything, you don't know how you feel. Your hormones are in high gear and you don't--. It was just crazy and then to have it just all laid out in front of God and everybody was horrible.

CNK: Including your family?

#12: No, thank goodness. But my sister who's always--. My stepsister . . . who's always been very nosy, she went to the same high school as me, she was a year older than me, of course she heard the lesbian rumors or whatever, so she approaches me in front of my stepmother about being a lesbian. I was like, "I'm not a lesbian." And my stepmom was like, well when Kim spent the night a couple weeks ago I thought I heard something going on in your room. I was just like, I don't know what you are talking about and tried to play it off, but I think that they assumed or--. I mean I know that they didn't know for sure because they didn't see anything. But I think they did assume that I was gay at that time. And--. So then my family decided to move back here because of bankruptcy reasonings. I guess in West Virginia you can file bankruptcy and not have to lose your home, but in Florida you do, so. My stepmother is a big spender, and she got herself in trouble with that after my dad died, because he used to maintain the money. But anyway. So we moved back here. Kim wanted me to marry this guy that hung out at Burger King. It was a Vietnam vet named Dave.

CNK: Kim wanted you? Your--.

#12: To do that just so I could stay in Florida. And I was just like, I'm not marrying any Burger King freak. No, it's not going to happen.

CNK: But she was in love with you?

#12: Right. She just wanted me to stay there, she didn't care how. So then she tried to get her mother to adopt me, and she tried to get me to go through the emancipation process. And it was just--. I was like, Kim I'm only 15, you know. I don't--. I'm just going to go with my family, as much as I didn't want to. The thought--. What culture shock, the thought of moving to West Virginia after you've lived in Florida for what seemed like a long time.

CNK: ... leaving Kim.

#12: I've never been afraid of change. I wasn't in love with her so maybe that's why it didn't break my heart or anything. It wasn't like I was indifferent to it, because she was my best friend, and I--. It hurt to lose my best friend, but to me it wasn't that big of a deal so. But it was to her because she tried to kill herself like 5 times after I left. She had her mother call and talk to my stepmother about how she needed me to move back down there or else Kim was really going to die the next time, da da da da da. It was just horrible. She stalked me for probably a year after I moved back here.

CNK: She came up here?

#12: No, no. She said she did, but I really don't think she did, because once--. If you've ever been to ... you can't just go tool around the town of ... and know where people are you know. It's like--. It's very hilly, and you have to know where you're going. She was being crazy.

But then I moved up here, and I tried to be straight. I thought it would be better that way, because apparently gay women are crazy and psycho, and I didn't need that.

So--. So I start dating guys, and that works out well because I've always liked guys anyway. And I met my ex-husband, and we dated for about four years and then we got married and had our son and--. The whole time we were dating I had--. I've always had bisexual impulses or whatever, feelings and thoughts. But--. I didn't tell him that I was bisexual. I alluded to it once, and he just told me how gross he thought that was, and so I never brought it up again. Because I wanted to be normal or whatever. You know I wanted to have a normal life and not have to deal with the feelings that I had. Because everybody else thought they were gross and abnormal so.

I lived in denial for about 5 years, and then my ex-husband and I divorced. It had nothing to do with my bisexuality. And then--. But then after we divorced it was kind of like a new found freedom, and I really felt like I could be myself, and I wasn't a teenager anymore. At that point I was 21 so I felt like an adult, like I should live my life the way that I should live it so. I started going to church to try to find some guidance, because I've always been a spiritual person, but not always a religious person. My mother was very religious, but she died when I was so young I didn't really get that instilled in me I guess. So I started going to church, and of course found out that they think it's gross too. I was like, oh my gosh I'm just gross. I'm this gross person and I can't help it. So I again tried to stifle my feelings, because I didn't want to be gross, and I just thought you know what if I believe in God and I believe that God made every human being and I know that I can't help the way I am, because I've tried to not be that way or whatever, and I am. It's just the feelings that I have and the thoughts that I have then I think God loves me for me, so I became OK with that. And now I'm very open about my sexuality. I still don't

discuss it with my family. I don't feel that comfortable with that. But all my friends know, all the people I work with know. I don't care.

CNK: How do you tell people you meet, who you work with?

#12: Well the work thing is kind of different than the people I meet. If I have a friend and they--. If I discuss anything with them for long enough, they're going to pick up on something anyway, just because of probably my comments about sexuality or just life in general. I have a tendency to have a big mouth and say what I feel, and sometimes I blurt things out that I probably shouldn't I'm sure.

CNK: ...

#12: Well you know like I guess the typical one is like if a beautiful woman walks by, it's hard not to look. And then everybody's like what are you looking at? She's a woman. I'm like, yeah. And then I'm like, I mean no, I don't know what I was looking at. I don't know I just find it a lot easier just to say how I feel, instead of trying to hide things. People I work with. There is this gay woman that I worked with when I first started my job. I've been at my job for almost five years now, and--. I mean it was like the second day I was there or something, she walked up and she goes, "Are you bisexual?" I was like, "What is your gaydar on?" I was like, "Get away from me." She was like, "I thought so." She was like, "Well that's cool. Anytime you want to talk, da da da da da." I was like, "OK, thanks." And before I knew it everybody knew. And I mean it's not a big deal. I'd prefer to tell people myself at my own level of comfortability, if that's a word. But--. But so she kind of told everybody I guess, or they found out somehow, and I don't know.

CNK: How did she know?

#12: I don't know. My sister Sandy is gay, my half sister. And she tells me that gay people do have a gaydar and they can tell. They can just tell when they meet gay people or bisexual people. I wish I could because--. I mean I can usually tell gay people, but I very, very rarely can I tell when a person is bisexual.

CNK: What thoughts and feelings go along with being bisexual?

#12: Well besides the gross--. The feeling that most people in society think you're gross and immoral, and un-Godlike or whatever. I think mostly just the fact that--. Well let's start when I was a teenager. It was just a very chaotic mixture of confusing I think. It's like when--. When I was in gym class, we had this one gym instructor that would make us get naked to take our showers. Like our other gym didn't mind if we kept our bra and panties on, and we could even like wrap a towel around us and like just kind of wash our pits and legs and feet or whatever we needed to wash, and like show her. But the other gym instructor, she forced us to get naked and actually take real showers, because she didn't think anybody, everybody was washing properly. And there was also this girl in our class that was really poor, and I don't think she had running water, or maybe she lived--. I don't know. I know she lived in a trailer park.

CNK: Which state are we in?

#12: This--. We're in Florida. And she was always real dirty, and so I guess the gym--. This was the way of letting her take a bath without ostracizing her from the group. Everybody didn't have to know that she was poor or whatever, but we all did. But anyway--. So of course we're in the shower and we're all naked, and it was just very--. I

would get very excited, and I would feel like, I know I'm not supposed to . . . getting excited. And I would try to like turn to the corner, and everybody just thought I was shy. Which I was kind of in a way you know. But at the same time it was just really weird because I knew that I was different even then. But--. So then I guess as I've gotten older I still get excited by women of course, but it's not really on the same level. Like when you're a teenager and your hormones are kicking you know it's totally different than when you're an adult. Or it is for me at least. When I get excited it's much more on a muted level I guess compared to then. Like I don't jump at my first instinct. I'm very picky when it comes to women. Which is sad because I'm not when it comes to men normally. But--.

CNK: Oh really?

#12: Yeah. I don't know why. It scares me to think of being in a relationship with a woman because--. Oh I didn't tell you about that. I tried it again after I got divorced, and this girl was just as psychotic as Kim. So I--. You know my sister Sandy keeps telling me, well it's because women are psycho. Men are stupid, women are psycho. You know that's why men and women get along so well because you know you have to be stupid to get along with a psycho, and you have to be psycho to deal with a stupid person everyday or something. I don't know how she says it but--. But so--. So I'm pretty much just think about--. I feel like I should--. I have to become friends with a woman first because if I don't--. Because I've tried to just like have sex with women and I just--. It doesn't do it for me. So--. But I don't want a relationship from them, so it's not like the same thing as I have to be in love with them to have sex with them and have an orgasm or whatever.

But--. But I like to become friends with women first so I think I have to think a lot about who is this person and what is she like and I don't know. I think a person's personality is a big turn on compared to just the way they look. Don't get me wrong you know I probably wouldn't turn a hot girl down, but you know it's different.

CNK: So you're not looking for a relationship with a woman then?

#12: Uhh uhh. I don't feel like I really fall in love with women. I like them and I can love them as a friend, and then as another human being, but when I look at women I don't know. I'll compare it to the way I feel about men. I know when I look at my boyfriend that I love him. I look in his eyes and I could get lost in his eyes. I'm just in love with him. And I look at women. I think they're beautiful and smart and funny and wonderful people, but I just I don't get that feeling. I don't know. I guess that's what makes me bisexual instead of gay.

CNK: I imagine bisexuality runs the same spectrum as being gay. I mean I think sexuality is probably along a spectrum for some people. They might have the same feelings for men and women but not be ... as distinct as ....

#12: You're right. And see I think my sister, even though she says she's gay, I think she really borders on bisexuality. But in the sense that you're alluding to because she's been in relationships with both men and women her whole life. And she can fall in love with both men and women. She just prefers women so. I keep telling her, you're bisexual, you just chose women. And she's like no, da da da da da. I don't love men. And I'm like, you've been in relationships. And she's like, well OK. So--. But yeah, you're right.

CNK: So what--. What's the ... then, if you've got close friends who are women and enjoy their company, and you can enjoy sleeping with women?

#12: Umm hmm.

CNK: And for men? You enjoy sleeping with men?

#12: Umm hmm.

CNK: And you enjoy their company?

#12: Umm hmm, sometimes.

CNK: But there is some sort of--. Sometimes?

#12: Yeah. It depends on the man I'm sure.

CNK: Yeah.

#12: I don't know. I don't know why there's a distinction there. I don't know. My sister just thinks it's just part of my genetic make up. Just that--. Like--. The way she feels--. Or the reason she feels the way she feels is just part--. Just the way she was made. So it's like--. Because we discuss it, our sexuality, often because we don't have a lot of people to discuss it with I guess. And--. You know I've asked her, do you think it's because I dated Kim as my first girlfriend? Do you think if I dated like a normal girl I'd feel different and be able to fall in love with women? She's like, not necessarily. You fall in love with who you fall in love with. You can't help that. She just thinks it's just the way we're made. It's the way--. We feel the way we do.

CNK: What do you think?

#12: I definitely like the scientific approach. I think genes maybe are the reason, like the foundation of my sexuality, but I also think that experience and life and society definitely

shapes and molds people in certain ways, and--. I don't know. It doesn't bother me though. It's not an issue for me, and it's not something that I think about often. But sometimes people ask me, why don't you fall in love with women? And I'm like, I don't know. Maybe I just haven't met the right one. The boyfriend doesn't like that statement but--. But I don't know.

CNK: So you can imagine meeting the right one someday conceivably?

#12: I do and I don't. I really don't for some reason. It's not like a wish or like I want to or anything. I mean you know anything can happen you never know. So I--. I can never say never because it's stupid to say that because you just never know but. I don't know. I guess it could happen. For some reason I don't feel like it will though. I don't know.

CNK: How does your boyfriend deal with your being bisexual?

#12: He doesn't mind as long as he knows that I love him and that I'm--. Another woman isn't going to take me away from him or something like that. It's hard for him. It really is because we--. We are pretty serious and I always try to put myself in his shoes and imagine, what if he--. What if he was attracted to men and liked men too, would I feel jealous? Like if he was going to go hang out with his guy friends would I--? If he said he's going to go spend the night at Michael's would I think, is he really spending the night at Michael's or *spending the night at Michael's* you know? But he trusts me and we--. I think we have a good solid relationship, and he knows that I'm--. He knows how picky I am first of all so he knows that I won't just go do what--. Do my thing at whenever. But I also include him in it.

CNK: Howso?

#12: Like if sexually. You know. Like if I meet a girl that I want to sleep with, I tell her that my boyfriend has to be there. Most girls don't mind. I think it even makes them feel more comfortable, maybe because of the stigma of bisexuality.

CNK: So a menage a trois kind of deal?

#12: Yeah we've only done that once. It has to be a certain kind of girl. I know this sounds weird that you know I get to have sex with a girl, and he doesn't, but he does. But I don't know. I think it's my own deep insecurities of, he'll like her more than me, kind of thing. But he has the same insecurities you know, what if she likes her more than me, and I don't know. So we deal with it by including each other in thoughts, discussions and everything. And so far it's worked out well. So I don't know

CNK: Sounds like a potential hurdle and a potential bonding for a couple to go through.

#12: Right. That it is. I'm slouching. These tables are ...

CNK: Yeah. Let's take a break.

CNK: Can you say that again? You can't say good things off tape.

#12: I've got a big mouth of ...

CNK: I'll wait. Take your time.

#12: OK. Now you're going to have to remind me. What did I just say? People don't like you, screw them, kind of thing?

CNK: ... But you used to not want to talk to people.

#12: Right. I was--.

CNK: You didn't tell anybody?

#12: Right. I never wanted to even think about being bisexual, much less talk about it because of the way people react to it. And I decided it's just much easier to be yourself, and if people don't like you for who you are, then screw them because there's a million other people in the world that will accept you for who you are. It's just easier that way.

CNK: Where'd you get that kind of an attitude?

#12: I don't know.

CNK: Get it ingrained in you at an early age?

#12: No, no. When I was growing up it was very adamant to act proper, and act a certain way. Call your elders Mr. and Mrs. Manners, and etiquette, and children should be seen and not heard kind of thing.

CNK: That was your dad?

#12: Yeah. My father said that a lot. We weren't allowed to talk at the dinner table unless we--. Well weren't allowed to speak at all unless we were spoken to. My father was very strict.

CNK: Anywhere in your home?

#12: Well I mean like when I was in my room or my sister's room we could talk to each other, but like we couldn't--. Especially if there was company. Oh good Lord, if you said anything out of place in front of company it was the leather belt. But--. But no maybe it was my stepmother had a lot to do with it because she's always been pretty mouthy, and I was never used to that growing up, my father being so strict. And then when my father died and it was just my stepmother and then me and my sisters growing up, and she was just kind of--. She was an alcoholic too. So she would always get drunk and be like ...

And I don't know. She would say whatever was on her mind, so maybe in that sense I learned that it was OK to say what's on your mind.

CNK: Did she teach you that with words or just watching her or?

#12: I don't remember her ever saying that. I think just watching her, just kind of modeling the way that she did it, because I became a very big smart ass. And a lot of people thought that we were really mother and daughter because we had a lot of the same attitude when I was a teenager. So maybe I picked up that from modeling from her because I would have never ever done that if my father were alive. I mean that would have been certain death. So yeah. Plus, her daughters could say whatever they wanted, and they got away with anything. So probably modeling from their behavior as well.

CNK: But beyond . . . is a confidence--

#12: Yeah.

CNK: – that you seem to be . . . In the sense that you're OK as you are.

#12: Right. I think that just took years of dealing with being me and saying, you know, look, different people feel different ways. They have their own quirks, they have their own values and beliefs, and why is it OK for Joe Blow over here to be like a conservative republican Christian, and why is it not OK to be me? I mean everybody is who they are and everyone should be accepted as such. And you don't have to like everybody, and I guess by learning that about other people made me stop and think, hey OK, well that makes me OK then too. And nursing has done a lot for me. I've learned a lot of being non-judgmental and really being open minded to people through nursing.

CNK: How's that?

#12: You mean how so?

CNK: Yeah.

#12: It's just within our curriculum. It's what our professors teach us. You go into a room and you've got a gay patient who's like say flaming. I think you know they don't say flaming, but I can't remember how they said it. And you know, how do you treat that patient? Do you treat them just like any other patient, or because he's gay do you suspect that he has AIDS and don't want to touch him without gloves on? How do you talk to him, and how do you treat him? And you have to become aware of your own values and beliefs before you can really give adequate care to your patients, because if you don't know how you feel about them and you go in there and say you don't like gay people and you've never really addressed that within yourself, maybe you won't give him the best care that he deserves, because maybe deep in your mind you are afraid he has AIDS just because he's gay or something like that. They give--.

CNK: So what if he does have AIDS?

#12: There are certain procedures that you go through. And you know, if you have any open cuts or wounds on your hands, no, you wouldn't want to touch them without gloves on. And--. It's for both of your safety I mean you know. A lot of nurses get hepatitis. If the AIDS patient gets hepatitis on top of AIDS it's bad. I mean they--. Their immune system's so--. Oh I can't think of the word.

CNK: Depleted?

#12: Yeah. Yeah.

CNK: ...

#12: What's that?

CNK: Say that word.

#12: Depleted? That's not the correct word either, but that's the point. Yeah. I can't think of it, I'm brain dead right now.

CNK: You're doing well for being brain dead.

#12: Thanks. But yeah so I mean. I don't know. I think nursing's done a lot for me really. I'm really glad that I went into nursing even though I don't want to be a like a regular hospital nurse. 1-. I don't think I'd like that.

CNK: What are you hoping to do?

#12: Psychiatric nursing. It's the only thing I've really liked so far. I liked community health nursing, but it's just so hard. I don't want to travel around the trailers and try to teach women who've never taken their children in for immunizations, why it's important. I know that somebody needs to do that, and I'm glad that there are strong willed people out there to do it, but I just--. It's not for me.

CNK: Can you talk more about reaching this point of confidence and strength, maybe going back to those high school years when everybody called you a lesbian? How'd you deal with that? Where did you find--? Was there isolation involved with that?

#12: 1-. I don't know if it was denial. I think it was. But I just pretty much ignored what everybody said. You know I just blocked it out of my mind. I wouldn't let myself think about it and be brought down by it because I don't know. I just--. I probably just didn't want to deal with it. So that's what I'm thinking is by denial I just blocked it--. Blocked it out, if I don't hear it it doesn't hurt me, kind of thing.

CNK: Do you think maybe it was true?

#12: Well yeah, yeah. You know I mean I thought, sure, OK. I slept with this girl. I guess that does make me a lesbian. And I guess I was scared to be ostracized because I know my sister--. My father disowned my sister when I was 10 because she came out to him. And I didn't want to lose my family and everybody that I loved, and I guess that's what I thought would happen if everybody found out I was a lesbian. Of course my father had already died by then, so I didn't have to fear his finding out, which would have been-- . I probably--. It probably would have bothered me a lot more being called a lesbian but. But I don't know, I just didn't listen to them. I mean I heard them and it hurt me, but somehow I dealt with it. I don't know.

CNK: Did you have friends during that time?

#12: Yeah I had some friends, and they knew me and Kim. You know they were our friends. So they were cool with it. We really didn't ever discuss it though in public. It wasn't like something we talked about a lot. You know--.

CNK: With friends?

#12: Yeah like a lot of the--. We had a lot of guy friends, and of course, come on, let us watch. You know total guy bullshit, but--. I don't know. Other than that, no.

CNK: Were there other gay and lesbian friends, or young people--?

#12: Nope, not that I knew of. I mean there was this one guy that everybody said was gay, but he didn't hang out with our group of friends so. I never really talked to him. He had a very feminine voice though, and you know it doesn't always mean anything but everybody called him faggot and all that horrible stuff.

CNK: So the gay kids didn't exactly band together?

#12: No. In fact I'm really unaware of who was gay and who wasn't except for that one guy. I really don't know. Or that could have been just because I hated high school. I went to my classes, and I left. You know I didn't try to stay around, socialize. I wasn't in any kind of clubs or activities at school. I just really didn't like high school.

CNK: Why not?

#12: Back then I was real like me against the world, full of teenage angst. I hated authority. I hated structure. I wanted to just be able to do what I wanted to do because I thought I knew everything, and I thought I know all this. What do I have to sit in here for another hour and half and listen to her talk about this or you know whatever, but--? I mean I'm sure it had to do with going to school and being ridiculed, I mean not daily, but probably weekly about being a lesbian. I'm sure that didn't help me hating school. But--.

CNK: What went through your mind when people said that?

#12: Just you know, they were making fun of me and being mean and that I was bad, or not a good person, or not--. Not normal I guess because of that.

CNK: And what was your response then on the outside?

#12: Fuck off, basically, is what I said to everybody. There's like this one black guy that would just always, just every--. I mean as soon as I heard, "*Lesbian*," I knew it was Shantel and I would always turn around and be like, "Fuck you, Shantel." Like, "Come here and take it like a man." Like I was going to fight him or something. And he'd be like, "I don't fight lesbians." And I'd be like, "Yeah, because you know we'll kick your ass, sorry loser." So it was always negative. I always said something crass. Who knows.

CNK: But in a way you were saying something positive about lesbians.

#12: That's true.

CNK: Sort of turning the stereotype into your using it for your best interest.

#12: I guess yeah. It always made me feel good to cuss Shantel out. Stand up for myself you know, when I knew there weren't any repercussions. If Shantel was violent it may have been different but--. I don't know. I feel really lucky that I don't feel inhibited by my sexuality anymore.

CNK: How'd you come to tell your professor?

#12: Actually we had to do a project for school and I wanted to do a project on the--. Like we have a million support groups--. Well we don't have a million, but we have quite a few support groups in the area, and there's one--. There's P-FLAG, which is the, some kind of fellowship for lesbians and gay. I don't know what the P stands for but.

CNK: Parents.

#12: Parents?

CNK: Umm hmm. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

#12: Is that what it is? OK. And then they might even have a support group just for like gays and lesbians themselves to go to. Or maybe Leslie said that that was--. That wasn't going on anymore, but anyway there's nothing for bisexual people. So I was like OK, well that could be my project you know. I want to start a support group for bisexual people, and you know I was like, how could I get information. And she was like, well you know, is this for you or for a friend, if you don't mind me asking. I was like, no it's for me. And she goes--. She just gently asked, so it's for you, and you know is that--? Is

it for you, or do you just want to do a project? And I was like, well both. So somehow through our discussion you know I opened up to her or whatever. She's really easy to talk to. She's a wonderful person.

CNK: So you think that'd be a good idea? Would you like to have a support group?

#12: I think it would be a good idea especially for adolescents, because I know how confused I was as a teenager having to deal with those feelings. And it's just like you want to be normal, but you're always told to be yourself. Be yourself; people will like you. Then when you're yourself, you're gross and disgusting. It's just like a constant mixed message as an adolescent when you're just trying to come into your own anyway. I mean I'm sure there are adults out there that want to talk too, but I just think it would be very useful for adolescents and--. I don't know it might be something I do in the future. Right now I'm just worried about getting out of school.

CNK: I keep thinking about what you said a while ago or--.

## **Tape Side 2**

#12: I think it would be a good idea especially for adolescents, because I know how confused I was as a teenager having to deal with those feelings. And it's just like you want to be normal, but you're always told to be yourself. Be yourself people like you. Then when you're yourself you're gross and disgusting. It's just like a constant mixed message as an adolescent when you're just trying to come into your own anyway. I mean I'm sure there are adults out there that want to talk to, but I just think it would be very useful for adolescents and--. I don't know it might be something I do in the future. Right now I'm just worried about getting out of school.

CNK: I keep thinking about what you said a while ago or--. You said you're pretty picky about women and your not very picky about men.

#12: I know. Sad. I don't know what my problem is. I actually found a good guy this time. I think that's why I'm sticking with him so well. But--. I've always been really non-committal. I don't--. I'm never really one to commit to relationships even though I always have long ones. And I think that's why I always pick such losers in guys because I knew that they were losers, and that I would never be able to fall in love with them and like commit to them, but you know I know that I've been selling myself short this whole time because of that though. I don't know, I've just always met the wrong guys. I'm the kind of person who finds good in everyone, and sometimes I shouldn't. Sometimes I should just let them go instead of searching out for the good in them. But oh well. I've found a good guy this time so. He's not a loser this time. Yes, my family loves him. They're like, yes, he's got a job, he's got a car, keep him . . . . Keep him. I'm like, I know.

CNK: And what sort of terms do you or will you set with him in terms of continuing to be a bisexual?

#12: Just pretty much that we, we talk about everything. Just as long as we're always on the same level about--. We're very good at communicating. We're very open with each other, and the way I feel is that I don't--. I want to include him in my life because I love him so much, so it's not a problem for me. And I guess as long as he knows that he's included, he knows it's not like a private thing, like I'm trying to cheat on him or be with somebody else, you know, fall in love with somebody else or anything. So so far it's

been OK. And as long as we're just always open and on the same level I don't see why that would change.

CNK: But you want to be able to continue to have sex with women while you're in a relationship with him?

#12: Yeah, but it's not like I have to do it all the time kind of a thing. I'm very sporadic about women. And a lot of women you meet anyway, even if I did want to get it all the time, they're like, oh yeah, I want to do that, bleh bleh bleh. And then you go out with them a couple times, and they are like, oh I've changed my mind.

CNK: So you have to go out with them first?

#12: Well no, you don't have to. Especially if you hang out at gay clubs, you can just meet one and go home with them that night.

CNK: But for you?

#12: For me personally, yeah. I like to get to know a person. I don't like--. I've tried to just hop in bed with people, men and women, and I don't--. It's no fun for me.

CNK: How can you meet bisexual women?

#12: It's really hard. I do have a lot of male friends, and for whatever reason bisexual women I guess open up to men very easily. And so like sometimes my male friends will be like she's BI. And it's like--. Because I do not have radar, gaydar whatever so I can't tell just by looking at a person unless we like talk about it and you know it comes up. I don't know.

CNK: So you don't tell gay people ...

#12: Pretty much. I mean in this area a lot of gay women cut their hair real short on top and leave it kind of long--. You know it's, it's--. I don't want to stereotype them, but a lot of them do dress in a certain manner and look just a certain way, so it's very easy to tell gay women by their appearance, and then a lot of gay men talk in a certain way, sometimes dress in a certain way and so it's easy to tell them, but bisexual people it's hard to tell. You never know. So. It's harder. I meet a lot more straight girls that have never tried and want to try it than I do bisexual girls.

CNK: So what makes them straight if they want to try it?

#12: The fact that they fall in love with men, and they just want to have sex, they don't want to have a relationship or whatever.

CNK: But that's what you said about yourself.

#12: Umm.

CNK: If I understood you right.

#12: For whatever reason, usually after they try it they're done. You know what I mean? They just want to try it, get it out of their system, something they've always thought about. Maybe they just feel crazy that night. I don't know. But--. But with me it's a continual thing. So I guess that's the differentiation.

CNK: And do you just want to be with women who are clearly bisexual or is it OK if they are at that stage of trying?

#12: That's OK. I mean it's not really an issue with me, but it usually is with them. You know it's like--. Like the last girl I was with, she had never been with a girl before, and we knew each other for over a year before anything happened. And it was like within the

first two weeks of meeting, she said, oh I know you're bisexual and that's something I've always wanted to try. Maybe we could get together. I was like, OK. And then it took like a year for it to happen, just because she was nervous about it and whatever, and I totally understand that. I don't know. You mind if I stop and call?

CNK: No. So I was just interested in how you raised your son in terms of gender roles.

#12: Well I'm--. I've always been pretty much very open with anything. I know that my ex-husband is very adamant about him being--. Having masculine toys and things like that. And I don't know if that means he has issues with his sexuality or what, but. One year for Christmas I bought my son an Easy Bake Oven, and he loves to make little cookies and stuff. I mean it's OK for boys and girls to like to cook. My ex-husband doesn't believe this. He calls me as soon as he found out. He was like, so you buy him an Easy Bake Oven. That's a girl toy. You trying to make him gay? I was like, honey, by buying somebody an Easy Bake Oven it doesn't make them gay, OK? It makes them able to cook a cookie, OK? It's all right. So then when ... was like 3 or 4 he wanted one of those baby dolls that rolls. I think it was called Tumble Baby or something, I can't remember. And I almost bought it for him. But I thought, I better call ... first because he's going to have a heart attack if ... comes home with this Tumble Me Baby or whatever. So I call him and I'm like, I just wanted to warn you, I'm buying Tumble Me Baby because ... is dying for it. That's what he wants for his birthday, that's what he's going to get. He's like, put ... on the phone. So I put ... on the phone. He's like 3 or 4, he's so young. And he's like, "Tumble Baby, Tumble Baby," you know. And you know, I can't hear what ...'s saying, but then he gets off the phone and he goes, "Me no want

Tumble Baby, me want dump truck." And I was like, that's bullshit. I was so mad, so mad.

So I went ahead and bought the Tumble Baby and the dump truck and I took them over. And of course he didn't play with the dump truck at all. He was playing with the Tumble Baby. And I took them over to ... 's house, and he was like, I thought I told you not to buy that Tumble Baby. I was like, you didn't tell me anything, and even if you did I would have bought it anyway. I was like, the kid wants a Tumble Baby. There's nothing wrong with a 3 year old child wanting a Tumble Baby. I said, you're being ridiculous. That's very sexist to say that he has to play with just masculine toys, and I was like, and if you've noticed for the last half hour he's only played with the Tumble Baby and he hasn't even touched the dump truck. And he was like, well that's just because you keep shoving the baby in his face. I was like, I haven't touched the baby. I was like, I don't know why you're freaking out but chill out. So you know I always bought ... anything that he wanted. And ... on a gender specific kind of a toy for me. And you know, he's normal enough kid. He plays soccer, he's in Cub Scouts.

CNK: Boy things?

#12: Boy things, you know, totally. He still likes to help me cook. We're making a little cookbook. So far his has fruit punch and Chex mix in it. Those are his two recipes. But we're working on them. We're trying to make a new kind of chocolate chip cookie that always stays moist, no matter if it's 5 years old or what. I'm like, I don't think that's good .... We'll have to put a lot of preservatives in that thing. But--.

CNK: Do you have intentions with regard to teaching about gender roles?

#12: He's been open to it a lot because my sister's gay. And I've always been open with him about that. My ex-husband hated that too.

CNK: How can you be open with a young child about that?

#12: My sister has a girlfriend, and when she comes in--. Of course in the beginning we said, this is my sister's friend, da da da da da. And then as time--. Because they used to live in . . . so they would come in town to stay the night, and then they'd be staying in the guest bedroom. And he'd be like, why are they staying in the same bed? And first it was easy, because I was just like, well that's the only bed I have. And then as he got older he was like, well one of them could sleep on the couch. And I said, you're right, and I'll offer that to them if they want to do that. And then my sister, who of course has never had children, who's very, very blunt, just said . . . she's my girlfriend, we sleep in the same bed. And I was like, he's 4. Like . . . stop that. But I thought, well you know, it's out in the open now. I might as well give up the jig or whatever. I don't discuss any sexual practices or anything, but of course I don't discuss any heterosexual sexual practices with him either. I just tell him that yeah, sometimes people are gay, and--. Sometimes people are gay. Some people are gay and that's OK. People feel how they feel. And he always like, well don't you think that's gross? And I say, no I don't. I think that's how people feel and that's fine. So normally he's like OK with that, and then--. I think somebody at school said something about their uncle being gay or their brother-in-law being, somebody was gay at school. So . . . came home and he was like, how gross. Matthew's uncle's gay. And I was like, why is that gross? He was like, I don't know. Everybody else said it was gross. Well if everybody else jumps off a bridge, are you

going to jump off a bridge? And he was like, no. I'm like, well then why do you have to think it's gross too just because they think it's gross? He was like, well I don't know. And I was like, what's so gross about it? And he said, well because it's not normal. I said, well why? Why do you--? How do you know what's normal? Why isn't it normal for people just to feel the way they feel? He was like, well I guess so. I said, what if I smacked you in the face and then told you that you weren't allowed to cry or it wasn't allowed to hurt because that wasn't normal? And he was like, OK, OK, Mom. He thought I was attacking him at that point. I was like, I'm sorry. Sometimes I try to discuss it with him, but I think it's too heavy for him at his age, so I back off and say, OK, when he's ready to discuss it, he'll bring it up and we'll discuss it.

CNK: How old is he?

#12: He's 7. Poor kid, I treat him like an adult. I've never done the baby talk kind of thing with him. I've always hated that. Anybody that's doing it. I'm like, stop it. His name is . . . . Wo wo wo wo wo or whatever. Get over that.

CNK: Will you talk to him about being bisexual?

#12: Not until he's either in late adolescence or is an adult. Because my cousin is gay, and her children are my age. And she divorced their father when they were 11 and 12 and moved in with a woman. And I know it was very hard for them because we would discuss it. And they got ridiculed at school and in town because they lived in a very small town called . . . West Virginia, which is very tight knit kind of thing. Everybody knows everybody's business. So it was like everybody knew and they got made fun of. And they felt bad. And of course divorce is hard anyway, much less divorce that ended up

with your mom leaving your dad for another woman. So. I want him to grow up dealing--  
-. Having to deal with his own feelings and emotions and being able to grow up like a  
normal teenager would, and then--. I don't even know why he needs to know my  
sexuality really. If he ever asked me I would definitely tell him, but I mean I'm glad my  
parents never discussed their sexuality with me. That would have totally grossed me out  
you know. I mean to make little sexual innuendo as an adult is OK I think. I would never  
want them to sit down and say you know I'm heterosexual and I love to have--. Her  
husband's name is ... now. I'd love to have ...'s dick in me. I'd be like, gross. I don't  
want to deal with that. But every once in awhile she'll try to make jokes. And I'm like,  
stop right now.

CNK: She who?

#12: My stepmom. Sorry. So to me discussing my sexuality with ... I think would be  
kind of out of hand. It is unnecessary unless he brings it up or asks, asks a question, or  
maybe even says something about being bisexual is gross or something. Then I might say  
something as he's older. I would never say anything now. He wouldn't understand. It  
would just confuse him and--. I don't know. I don't think it's appropriate.

CNK: Did we miss anything?

#12: I don't know....