

Transcript

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CAMRYN PARKER:

Hi I'm Camryn Parker and I'm sitting here with Mrs. Morton in her home on 11.01.2017, and we're here to talk about Ms. Gini's life. So, tell me, Ms. Gini, tell me a little about your upbringing.

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

Ok, I was born in Detroit, Michigan, 1933. I was number seven of eleven children, and, I liked my life, I really liked my life. I felt spoiled by my mother even though we had so many children in the house, and I like my brothers and sisters. I had, four siblings that were born to a first marriage and they had left home, so I didn't even know them until during or after World War II. And then when I met my brothers, it was like wow! I fell in love, you know, wonderful, wonderful. And one of my brothers I believe he was gay, but we were all, during a time when you better not say. You just don't tell people anything like that. I didn't know I was gay, lesbian, whatever. You know, we really didn't use labels, or even think about it. You just did what you did, you know, and you forgot it about it in the light of day. It's like, what you did in the dark didn't come to light. So, it was kind of racist around there. We inherited a Jewish ghetto in Detroit and we lived in a four family flat owned by a Jewish guy, which is when I first learned, what it meant, the n-word, because he called me that. And I asked my mother what did it mean and she had me to look it up in the dictionary, and I found out that it was, well they said it was an ignorant person. I liked that, I really liked that. So, I started calling all white people ignorant, or nigger, because that's what they had called me, so if it meant ignorant, then that's what you are, not me. [laughs]

Anyway, I was pretty gifted, so I moved through school, easily. When I was, I think when I was fourteen, was when I, started having a girlfriend. And, she lived across town in Detroit, Michigan, and we did this thing where we didn't know we were in love or anything. But, we did this thing where she would stay with me on the weekend in my neighborhood, and I would stay with her the next weekend in her neighborhood. And I think one evening we slept together, and I think my mother must of heard us making noise, making love. The next day she told me I couldn't see her anymore, but she didn't tell me why she just said you can't see her. No she didn't say, you can't see her, she said, she could not come to my house anymore, and I said, well I'll go to her house. No, no, no you don't understand you cannot see her at all. So, that was the end of that, and Shirley was her name. She lived in the same, subdivision that my cousin and my grandmother lived in. So, I could still go and babysit my grandmother, but I couldn't see Shirley.

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So, I developed this method of how to get rid of people. I would get angry and cuss them out, and that really followed me throughout my life. I realized that, especially when I was in therapy, whenever I wanted to get rid of somebody, I didn't want them talk to me or anything, I would call them bad names. And, not just saying I don't like you or anything, I would just say nasty words, that's all. So, the reason, I stopped, well one reason I stopped seeing Shirley was because

of my mother. The reason I stopped messing with girls—there were other girls in the neighborhood, where we would play with each other, you know, pat pussy is what they called it, and I know that sounds nasty. [laughs] But that's what they said. Anyway, my upstairs neighbor, Pearly, me and her would do the thing, and we just had fun with it. Like, one time she said, wash my coochie over the wash pan and rinse it and then we'll comb the hair and put a bow on it, put it a ribbon on it. And that's what we did, and we just fell out laughing, okay. So, it was more like fun. We didn't think we were doing wrong, the way, society would have thought we were doing something wrong, because we were kind of playing with each other, you know what.

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Anyway, ok so that is kind of my upbringing, and somewhere in there, when I became, sixteen, when I was fifteen my sister jumped in the car with her boyfriend and said, come on we're just going around the block. I go, no we got to be home, we can't get in people's car. And she said we're just going around the block and coming back; we did not. We went couple blocks, we picked up a guy, who was nineteen years old. We drove to Bell Island, which is, a park in, Detroit. My sister and her boyfriend jumped out, left me with this guy, and he proceeded to try and rape me. He tore my panties off, and tried to push his thing into me, and I fought, and I fought, and I fought, and the next thing I know, here's a flash light in the window and the cops were there. Okay, that was horrible. They took me to jail, called my mother, called my brother. They did something to me, they said to prevent venereal disease, shot something up in me, I don't know what it was. I was only fourteen years old, so I didn't know a lot about stuff. I knew rape was bad, and that was what that guy had done. He did not penetrate me, but he hurt. So, then I wouldn't have anything to do with anybody that was sexual, until I was seventeen years old, no, I was sixteen.

Anyway, boys started calling me queer, and said if you don't do anything with boys, we know you're hiding out with those girls all the time, and you guys are playing pussy. [laughs] You're playing with each other. [laughs]. I turned to one of my basketball playing guys and I said, "What's queer, what is queer, anyway?". And, he said that means that, you only like guys, you don't like boys. And, so, then that's when I decided, okay, I got to do boys. And, when I did I got pregnant. Sixteen years old I got pregnant. I had a baby at seventeen, and when I was five months pregnant, I met my husband. I liked him, and well, I don't know, I guess, I decided I couldn't like women, or girls, and I had to like boys, okay. So, I had the baby, and he is now sixty-seven years old. I'm eighty-four, he's sixty-seven, and I married my husband when he, the baby, was a year old, and I had gotten pregnant again. So, we left Detroit, moved to St. Louis, Missouri and got married. So, now I had one kid, one on the way, I was a married woman in a strange place, and I just got into being married, and I got into being a wife, I got into being a mother, and that was my thing.

So, along about when me and my husband had our fifth kid, and I was twenty-five years old, and I was on the way to having a fifth child, actually I was twenty-four, and I had two boys and two girls. And I was about to have another kid that, we didn't, we didn't ever know what you were going to have then. There was none of that, ultrasound, and you going to have a girl or boy, you just knew when it pooped out what it was going to be. And that's when, I started seeing, no, wait a second, I'm getting a head of myself. My daughter was three, okay, I'm getting confused now, so let me back up a bit, is that okay? Alright, when my daughter was six years old, a six-year-old

girl moved into the neighborhood, and her mother became my friend. She woke up the passion for women in me again. I thought it had died, as a matter of fact, I would do mental flagellation, perhaps, not hitting myself, but just talking to myself about, you can't do this, this is sick, and you got to stay with men. I mean it was torturous, torturous, I mean. People today are lucky that, they can be who they are, and not have to go through what us older people had to go through about lifestyle, and who we wanted to love, you know, live with.

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Anyway, I don't feel comfortable other people's names, so I'll just say, she was my neighbor, and it's when they had, decided they were going to destroy an area in St. Louis called Mill Creek. So, a lot of the people from that area had to sell their houses. What do you call when they make you sell your house? Whatever that is. And, so they bought in the block that I lived in, and I lived in my in-law's house, it was a duplex. I lived downstairs, they lived upstairs, me and my husband and my children, so, by then I already had that fifth kid, and I just started seeing women again. But, determined I'm going to stay married, right. [laughs] So, of course they all, always wanted me to get a divorce; and why are you with a man, and you could be with a lady (inaudible sound), well I liked being with him too. And, that, that's basically, when I sort of came out, so to speak, again. I came out again.

So, I don't know, what else I can tell you about that, other than that there where many women in my life. I met them at sometimes straight bars and they worked as, bartenders, and those same people would have house parties, and when you go it was mostly lesbians and gay people there, there were men and women. But everybody was gay, and that's how you met. We danced, we had DJs, and most of the time the bar wasn't considered gay. It could've been, a so called straight bar, but full of gay and lesbian people. But there were also, like Bill's Bar which was on Easton Avenue, which is now Martin Luther King, near Kingshighway Boulevard. It was a meeting place, but it also had good food. And everything was cheap, you know, you could probably get a hamburger for seventy-five cents, you know? Back in 1960, 1956, for goodness sakes, what am I talking' about? It was 1956. It wasn't, sixty-six. So, I had 5 children. I'm married to a man, and I'm screwing' around, with women, and my husband knew. He knew it. He didn't say anything, but he knew it. In fact, one time I came home quite late. I had left him keeping the children, I think he wanted to get out himself. So, when I came through the door he said, Where were you, and I said, I mentioned two women's names that he knew. And he said, I was going to say if you were with a man, I was going to slap the shit out of you. But you better have been with a woman. Really? Okay?

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So, that was basically, my life. We went, okay, we got to remember, first of all, the Civil Rights Movement was not until 1964. So, if you're black, you better be quiet about whatever, and not just being, lesbian and gay, you better be quiet about a lot of things, or you're going to land in jail, you know. And, I wasn't that much of a drinker, but I was a dancer, so I had fun when I went to the bars, you know. Just to dance, and not, get drunk, but a lot of people did turn into alcoholics. It was kind of sad, to see people so messed up off of alcohol. Not only that, there was a big, epidemic of opioids in the form, of heroin. I think that's considered an opiate. And at that time, people would just sit around and nod after they had shot up with this, this drug. And it had been going on since World War II, which was in 1942[sic]. [inaudible] I think, okay, now I

know, World War II ended in, I think, in 1944 or forty-five. And, that's when, especially the black, military men came home and they knew how to use, heroin. Now, [scratching noise on table] my mother said then, they're not going to do anything about this until it hits [banging sound] white people. When it hits [banging sound] white people, they're going to do something about it. So now, I am living in St. Louis, Missouri, to hear white people talk about getting rid opiate drug, which is heroin. My mother would be one hundred and something years old today, if she had lived, but she was right. Anytime something hits, like, hanging down pants they're kind of ready to do something about that now, but I wish they would. [laughs] — So, I got to renew my thought process. I got to [inaudible] for a bit.

(00:19:28:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

We're going to take a break right quick, and we'll be back.

[pause]

(00:19:29:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

Okay, we are back with Ms. Gini Morton, and she's going to tell us a little bit more about her relationship with her husband.

(00:19:39:00)

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

My Saint Louis 'venture! Yeah! So, now I have five children, I have a husband, and I have girlfriends all over Saint Louis. Then, I get a new girlfriend and she said to me, actually her name was Cookie. [laughs] Her real name is, I'm not going to say her real name, but she went by Cookie, and she still goes by Cookie. And, she was, in one of the historical black colleges studying to be a teacher. So, she, and she lived in Kinloch, a place called Kinloch. I think it has a different name now, but it was a black community near Kirkwood, Missouri, which is, was basically all white, but Kinloch was all black. So, Cookie came into the city, because her girlfriend was a bartender, on the same block I lived in there was a bar. So, that's how I met Cookie. She's sitting at the bar in my neighborhood. I went into the bar, and was talking to her girlfriend, and she wanted to know who I was; that was interesting. So, Cookie started coming to my house, and one day we're sitting in the living room, and she said, how many girlfriends did you have anyway? And I started, well maybe she said, how many have you slept with, and I started checking off how many, and then she left. Now, Cookie was only about twenty-three, and I was like, nine, ten years older than her, or eleven, I was eleven years older than Cookie. But, she was in college still, and she was grown. Once she left, my husband came in and said, you slept with fifty women? So, he was listening all the time to what me and this girlfriend were talking about. [laughs] So, that's how I knew he probably, I denied everything. I said I was just talking', that really didn't happen. I was just saying' stuff to her. So, see he couldn't make me admit that was the truth without force, so we left it alone.

And, but, Cookie became my ace squeeze, and this is sad to say; but she was twenty-three, I was thirty-three, thirty-four, and I had never masturbated. [laughs] She taught me how to masturbate. That was nice. [laughs] That was very interesting. [laughs] I never knew that could happen, but I

do remember touching, it, and getting so far and saying, oh I can't stand that, and stopping. She taught me how to finish it. And, that became my thing after that. [laughs] And, she went back to college and she would call me, and talk dirty on the phone, okay. She was very interesting, and as a matter of fact, I talked to Cookie the other day, this is 2017, I talked to her. And, she's still my best friend, one of my best friends.

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VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON

Anyways, when my children, then when I had more kids, my number six child, she said that's my baby. [laughs] And, so, he became her favorite thing. Taking him on different excursions to Forest Park, all kinds of different stuff that she would do with him. But, I still saw my neighbor. I don't know, what could you call me, a slut maybe? I was just into doing' it. And, even with my husband, a lot of that was, sexually, childhood, early child sexualization. Because, I'm going to back up, when I baby sat at twelve years old, one of the kids' uncles came over when everybody was asleep, and I was waiting on the parents to return him. He molested me and I was twelve years old. And, when he couldn't penetrate me, he used his tongue on my, can I say clit? Okay, there. [laughs] He used his tongue there, and that was good. I mean, I liked that. But, I won't say that I liked being molested necessarily by a grown man, because I stopped going there. I didn't want to go and I didn't want to tell my mother why I didn't want to go and babysit those kids, and they were right next door to my mother. But, I just didn't go anymore. So, what happened was she would bring the children to my mother's house and I would babysit them at my mother's house, and that's how I got around that.

The second time I was molested, by a grown man, was when I was babysitting my grandmother, and my aunt's husband, attempted to molest me. I was asleep in my grandmother's room, and I felt something on my private parts. But when I really fully awaked, I slept on a cot and my grandmother slept in the bed, when I was really awake I could see, it was still dark in the house, and I could see a body leaving the bedroom. And, I went to the bathroom, I had to be twelve, because when I went to the bathroom, my period had started. And, then I kept saying to myself, maybe it wasn't my period; and then I go, no that was his hands on me, he made this happen. He made me bleed. Actually he didn't make bleed, I had just started my period. I washed my pajamas out and hung them on the bathroom on the shower. My aunt, came into my grandmother's room and said, how many pads do you need, one or two, and that's all she said. I think she kind of knew.

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Okay, the next time I heard anything about this, uncle and aunt was when I lived in Oregon; Portland, Oregon. My mother called me, and she asked me if he molested me, and I stuck to the lie. I said no. So, I had told my sister that it happened. And she said, you need to tell mother the truth because aunt Leila's five-year-old granddaughter came to live with them, and he started molesting her, and he penetrated her at six, six years old; and for the whole time she lived there, he molested her, so, mother mother needs to know what happened to you, because aunt Leila doesn't believe her husband molested this girl, for her whole time. But when she graduated from high school, aunt Leila asked, what would she like, and she said, I would like to visit my mother and my siblings in Cleveland, Ohio. And, she let her go, and that's when she told her mother what had happened. My cousin had been molested by the same uncle that had molested me, and I

had lied about it. Well, I hadn't lied about it, I just hadn't mentioned it to anybody, but one of my sisters. And, that sister was talking to me and saying, you need to tell her the girl had tried to kill herself; she's on drugs and she insists that she did it and they are saying she's lying. Okay, I said put her back on the phone, my mother. And, by then I'm crying; everybody else is crying. And, my mother said, I wondered why when I said, c'mon you got to go take care of grandma; you fell on the floor and started kicking and screaming, I don't want to go and babysit grandma no more; I don't want to babysit grandma no more; and you just kept saying that. She said, I thought

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

something was wrong. But, I didn't want to go there. She said, you know you can tell me anything; my kids can eat chicken shit in the gutter with chickens and I'll still love them. So, that was a heavy. And probably a lot of what's going on today, where people won't tell and they wait so many years. Okay, by that time, I'm forty years old. This has happened when I was twelve. And that poor little girl, from five or six years old she had to go through, you know, what I went through briefly, and I didn't have to live with it. I could leave, so. And, for them not to believe her. Well, see that what they'll tell you. They'll tell you, nobody's going to believe you. And, that's why I told my one sister, and I didn't say anything to anybody else, because they're going to think it's your fault. You know? So, anyway, that was a lesson learned right there. I really don't know whatever happened to cousin after that. Whether she remained on drugs, or whatever; I never contacted them, so.

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CAMRYN PARKER:

Do you think that the relationship with your mother, though, that she said something, so caring about that, that it, transitioned, or translated into how she felt about your other side, your lifestyle in the LGBT community?

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

Well, she didn't know about that. I told her then. I said, no, after that, when I was living in Oregon, I overdosed on some medicine, because I couldn't deal with myself being a lesbian and having children and having lovers. And, allowing that to happen to one of my young cousins, and, so I overdosed; had my stomach pumped out. After that, I talked to my mother on the phone, and she asked me, why did I do that. And I said, because I'm a lesbian, and I can't deal with it. I also told her that I was in therapy, and trying to deal with the fact that there were two sides to me, liking men and liking women, and feeling like it was wrong. All of it. So, that's when I was living in Oregon. I was also going to college, and I was studying to be a programmer analyst, a computer programmer analyst and, I took five kids out there with me, and so, I was having a hard time, you know. I had come off of overdosing, lost my job, going to college. I had to get on welfare, briefly, which I didn't like at all, but I had to do that in order to go to college and get food stamps for my children to eat. So, but that was my first, when I got to Oregon in the 1970s.

But, back to Saint Louis and still being with my husband, you know, married to him and dating women. I had a sixth children, then I had a seventh child in 1965. That was the last one, when he was a year old, I left my husband. Because he was abusive, verbally and physically, and I didn't want my children seeing what was going on there. I didn't want them seeing us bickering and

learning how to be like that, so I left. And one thing I can say, once I left, he and I got along fine. Because, we both realized that there were seven children involved in this relationship, and that we needed to deal with their special upbringing and not deal with our problems that we had, with each other. But to me, it was so much better living away from him, and being who I was, than living with him. And all that stuff about me sleeping with different women had stopped when Cookie showed up. But, Cookie and I, we moved together. I mean, when I left him, she found a place for us to live, and that didn't last long. I got a job in a bar and met a woman, that I eventually moved to Oregon with.

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So, it felt like, and this weird, because my kids' father I called him my husband, because he was until he died. And, he helped me pack and leave. He helped me pack up my boxes, and he shipped my boxes via Greyhound. He even told me, you know the best thing for you to do is to ship this stuff via Greyhound. And my girlfriend, Kathleen, she had already gone to Oregon, and she had found the house, but she didn't have a job. I was the one who had a job and the money. I had a job here at Chase Park Plaza Hotels; I was a chef. And, I actually made thirteen dollars an hour, which in 1966, that's when I got the job, was a lot of money. But now, it's 1970 and every year the union, that's why I hate union busting, unions were, you know, that's how people made it. Now, you see too many homeless, because they can't walk out of high school and go to a job. If we still had unions, you know. I'm a union person, you know.

So, Kathleen had found a house in Oregon. So, that meant, excuse me, that meant we were shipping sheets, towels, kitchen ware, and, of course our clothing and stuff. We weren't doing beds and stuff; we would do that up there. When we got to Oregon, so, I guess, what I was going to do, I met a woman being a chef. She was the waitress. She lived in Seattle, Washington. She was telling me how wonderful it was in Seattle, Washington for black people. And, I never really liked Saint Louis, 'because it was too racist, and my husband brought me here. I didn't have the same problems in Detroit that I had in Saint Louis, Missouri, as far as black-white stuff going on. You know, segregated schools and all that stuff that my children had to go to. Plus, at the same time I decided I was going to move was when they started mandatory busing out of the school district you were in into the county. And, I had one of my kids was like just going to get started going to school, and I didn't want him on the bus. So, that was one of the reasons I wanted to move, I mean out of this state. The other one was I never really liked this place anyway. You know I'm here now, but it isn't because I like it, it's because of my children came here and I followed them. [laughs] My grandkids— Okay, I got to get back to where I was.

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Oh yeah! The woman who worked as a waitress in the Chase Park Plaza, she, wanted to go back to Seattle. So, she left the job. And, she showed me, Seattle on some maps, and some pictures of the waterfront. I fell in love, so I decided I was going to move. I didn't have a girlfriend at the time; we had dumped each other. And, I decided, okay I'm going to move to Seattle. Well, my girlfriend had gone to Portland, Oregon, and another friend of ours was there. She was going to Reed College, on a Danforth scholarship, and, she, they both started talking to me, about not going to Seattle, but coming to Oregon instead. And, that if I didn't like Oregon, Seattle was only a little over 200 miles away, and I could just go there. So, of course, I was still going to bars here, still running around with, gay people, meeting at homes, which was best for us then.

During that time, I, it was just better if you didn't get in public with what you were doing and the people you were doing it with. Because there was a tendency for, lesbians, so called butch to dress like men. And sometimes, yeah, you could see their boobs and everything, so, and cops were busting heads and stuff. So, it was better to do the in-home kind of things, as opposed to going out into public places. So, we had a lot of house parties, good food, good people, and privacy, so.

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CAMRYN PARKER:

Would you say that you were involved in the butch-femme community back then?

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

Yes.

CAMRYN PARKER:

Yeah?

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

Yes, and I was a femme. And, of course, nothing was public like it became during the feminist movement. Nothing was public. And even then during the, 70s and 80s when feminism came into being, you had a hard time. I think it was like hard for people, until, what was that movement they had in New York? [pause] That parade and everything, where the cops would raid the gay places. And, anyway when that came into being, it still was hard on people. When it wasn't quite so hard, was when President Obama came out with, you know, we were humans. [unintelligible] you know? Were not animals, you know, because we were lesbian and gay people. And, only then when we could really, there was a lot of openness, but people were losing jobs still. And, until this came about, and then transgendered, everybody could come out and be who they were even though, they are still kind of put upon, so to speak. [pause] Yep, life has been hard, but I want to tell you life is a lot easier now, than it was for some of us old people who, didn't really come out, so to speak, except to each other. You didn't come out to the public, necessarily, but, now you can. And, now its okay.

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Even when I moved from Oregon to Los Angeles, we were pretty free, pretty open, because we had, I even worked in a lesbian and gay community center. You know, where people could come and meet, and have talkfests, talking about your life without having to go and pay a therapist. And, I think my life has been pretty full, pretty good. And, as long we kept our mouths shut sometimes back then we were ok. And, we weren't afraid, not the group I was in. We were not afraid of anything. [unintelligible] But, there were lots of people who wanted you to say on your job that you were gay, and sometimes that just didn't work out that way. I mean, you could say that you were gay to different people you knew and cared about you, but people who didn't care about you, it was just best to keep it quiet. And, that's what a lot of us older people did. I think that most of the people who decided they were going to be out in public, were at that time, thirty, twenty years old, and in college. They didn't have jobs. They were going to school, and it was okay for them to do that. And, it was good too, because it set the stage for being open, starting a little something, that was during the eighties that the butch-femme thing became real prominent.



What they didn't know was that we were doing it back in the fifties or forties, we just didn't tell anybody. [laughs]

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CAMRYN PARKER:

Because of that discrimination, that you said with being open, and, the typical dress of a butch person back then, how did that dynamic work between butch and femme in the forties?

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

In the 40s, I don't know. What I do know is about the fifties and sixties. And, butch would get down; I mean, sometimes you didn't know it was a woman. Because, they had strapped those boobs down, so that their chest would be practically flat. But, now, if a woman had big breasts and was butch, you knew it was a woman in that suit. But, they would only wear men's clothing. There's a place here, across the river, called East Saint Louis, Illinois, and when I was with my husband I was, nineteen, twenty years old, we would go over there. Nobody would ask questions about age and stuff. Maybe I was twenty-one, I don't know. But, he didn't dance, and I did. And, I said we would always get this together before we entered a place, can I accept dances from someone, if they ask. And, he said, yes. So, here comes this guy in a short pants suit, and asked me to dance, and I said, oh sure, and jumped up, and my husband snatched me down, you can't dance with that person. And I go, why, gin you cannot dance with that person. So, I started crying and I go to the bathroom, and one of the older women that was with us with her partner, everybody was like thirteen, fifteen years older than me. And, I'm in there crying, and I said, why did he snatch me down like that; why did he do that; he said I could dance with anybody. The lady said, that wasn't a man, that was a woman. So, my husband's going to be all racist and shit, you know. He knew, well maybe, he didn't know then what I was doing. But, anyway, I could dance with men, but I couldn't dance with dykes. So, that was an incident, that I recall, about the butch stuff.

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Butches got into being butches, okay. [laughs] And, their thing about being butch was to be like a man. Which later on, didn't make sense. It never did make sense to me. If you going to, you're doing the same thing. We're leaving that lifestyle, that particular one of male-female, het. Why do you want to be exactly like them? I still have the same feeling about people who, they decide they're going to be exactly like men, and women. I really don't, had a serious problem about, marriage of two men and two women. I had a serious problem about that. It was about men so much as it was about women and wanting to have children and get married, and so, now you're being just like the heterosexuals. I got over it. But, initially, I mean, I welcome all marriages if that's what you want to do, because now it's legal. Before, you know, you were just making up to be, like a het family. Now, you're going to be like a family, family. You know? So, anyway, I've had my prejudices as well, but it wasn't about you shouldn't be.

(00:51:50:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

What would you say about the differences between the butch and femme communities in African-Americans and white women? Are there differences? Are they similar?

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:

I think I got into quiet a few fights with people saying, that our plight as African-American people was the same as their plight as Jews or as white people who were gay. Not the same. Because, you still got white privilege. Your skin is white; you got white privilege. But if you're black, no rights. And the thing that keeps coming back to me is, until JFK being president, we had no rights, zero. I mean it was on the books, and it's still on some of the books here in Missouri about how you should be treated. And then when Kennedy, yeah John Kennedy, was ready to change all of this and put it into law, when he was killed. And that's why he was killed, or that's my conspiracy theory. [laughs] That's why he was killed. I don't think that's a conspiracy theory, I think that's the truth. So, Johnson, President Johnson, who took over for him, he was actually carrying his, Kennedy's, wishes. It was written, so he just pushed through the laws that he had set up. And, that's how we had a so called Civil Rights Movement put into law in 1964. I mean, give me a break. You know? I had six children and was pregnant with a seventh. I had gone through my whole life not knowing that I was being discriminated against in Michigan. But I learned, I learned a lot after I got grown, and from stuff that I read what was happening. I even asked my grandmother one time, I said, grandma were you born a slave, because I was starting to read about slavery back then. And she said, I wasn't, she said this is her words, I was born free, but my parents were slaves. She said she was born free. I don't think so. [laughs]

(00:54:55:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

How would you say the impact of the African-American community had on the butch-femme relationship in the African-American community?

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:

I don't know about everybody. I can't say anything about most of the African-American community. [inaudible]— That's my letter carrier— What I do know, is [pause] Okay, [pause] I never believed that we should do that. Be one way or the other. I always felt that we were women, and not have roles. I did not believe in roles, for me. I don't know about other, you know, most black people even today are not going there. They will stay in the closet. Especially women my age, they will stay in the closet. They don't think that that's anybody's business, and that's for black or white. Because, there are some older white women who will not say anything, except that's my sister. Not! Not biological, okay? [laughs] So, I really don't know. I just know in the neighborhoods I grew up in and I lived, black people would not state their sexual preference.

(00:56:36:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

Why do you think that is?

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:

I don't know, I really don't. Except it was always a secret. There's a lot of secrets that are still held. You know, a lot of beliefs that are still.

(00:00:56:51:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

Do you think that black families, in general, do a good job of speaking to their children or family members about sex and sexuality, in general?

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:

No, I don't think so, not in general, no. But, I think that there are lots of families, black families — see you could put that on both sides, because sometimes I believe some white families hate it more than some black families about their kid, especially if it's a guy; you're not being a man, you know? And, the transgender thing, you know, I'm really glad, maybe I shouldn't be, but that some families are accepting children who say, I'm a girl not a boy, or I'm a boy not a girl. And, allowing them to go to school as whatever they think they are. I like that. I don't know how dangerous it could be for them. I know that there have been people who have been transgendered, became the other gender and went back to the other gender. See, I know that has happened. You know, I've known people like that. And, without it being some kind of thing where they, some church grabbed them and told them it was wrong and they should go back. I don't know. I don't know what causes it. I'm glad that it's over. I more — [inaudible] I know I'm swishing that and it's going to come, I just remembered—

Anyway, I am more for the young ones. One of the kids I was nanny for, that, Marcia was also one of their godmothers, he said from, when he could start talking that he was a girl, not a boy. And, that's when it hit me, that they're born like that. You know, that made a believer out of me, but I guess somehow you have to live with it in order to believe it, okay. And, I lived with that kid, and I saw him grow and him be her, you know? Now people like Jenner, Bruce Jenner, Caitlyn, privilege, total privilege, you know. And, look how old you are before, you're on Social Security, dude-tte! [laughs] [inaudible] You know, this kid, I'm looking at a reality show, *I am Jazz* that kid has been saying it since, she was born a boy she is now a girl, she was like two years old. And, her parents allowed her to be who she is; even gave her different name from the boy. You should see it, it's on cable *TLC*. And, she is now getting ready to have her parts fixed to become a girl, you know, instead of a boy. And, all about the [clap] toilets and everything is coming up in that. So, see I'm all for that, you know. —I got to sneeze. [sneezes] Did that come through loud and clear? [laughs]

(01:01:08:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

I do have another question for you. How do you, what would you say was the hottest spots, per say, back in the fifties and sixties for the butch-femme community, or just in general the lesbian community?

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:

I have to sneeze. [laughs] [inaudible] Hottest spots, meaning?

CAMRYN PARKER:

Where would you go? Where did you and your—

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:  
Oh, places?

CAMRYN PARKER:  
Um-hm, places.

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:  
Oh, oh.

CAMRYN PARKER:  
Spaces.

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:  
Yeah.

CAMRYN PARKER:  
Where did you go to meet people? Where did you find your community?

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:  
Well, we would meet in bars, mostly. But, we also, the house parties were the thing. [coughs] And, if you were at a house party, you had your own DJ there who was spinning the music, and you were dancing. The other thing was lesbian and gay, what were they called, oh they're having a dance at the lesbian and gay center, you know? And we would rent a hall, and people from the center — it would be posted in stuff about when it was happening, so we would all go there. And, Saint Louis had, I don't remember because I left here. And, the reason I left was because I could be more myself somewhere else, than I could in a place where I raised my kids and been a married woman. So, it was easier in other places. And the hot spots were those dances man. [coughs] I mean that was good; and they were mixed. You know, it wasn't just black dances, because if you really look at it in Oregon, there weren't that many black people. In Los Angeles, which that was during the eighties and nineties, we weren't even in the majority, black or white. It was like everybody. [inaudible] [laughs] It was like France, and Germany, Hispanic, Mexico.

(01:03:36:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:  
Speaking of your children, how would you say two people who feel as if that it's harder, or it's difficult to talk about sexuality with kids, what you say? How did you bring that up with your kids and talk about it? Especially, going through a separation with your husband.

VIRGINIA “GINI” MORTON:  
They knew that I was a lesbian. I lived with women, and they lived there two. And, we would have gay pride parades, and stuff and my children were in it. My grandchildren were in the parade, okay. My little grandson would be marching beside me signing, I'm gay, wait a minute, I'm black and I'm proud, I'm gay and I'm proud! That's what he would say.

(01:04:25:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

Do you think your children had a very positive experience with it, even growing up?

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

Yes.

(01:04:33:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

In the Civil Rights Movement, and, how do you think the Civil Rights Movement played an impact on the gay and lesbian community, especially the black gay and lesbian community?

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

I think that the one's who were out there, like me, being political, demonstrating, you know, protesting I think we were all fine with it. But, one thing I want to tell you, when I demonstrated as a civil right's worker, black people were kind of scared to come out, because people were killing them. And, so most of the people I worked with were white. So, it's a fallacy to say that only blacks spurred the Civil Rights Movement, because the majority was white. I'm sorry, but I have to go there. You know, same with apartheid. I wouldn't even get into it; these white women in Oregon kept trying to get me, were having this meeting and were blah blah. And, I wouldn't go. Until finally, I did decide to get involved when I heard about Nelson Mandela, but it was like I remember those women. I went to Oregon in 1970, and that guy, I don't think got out until the nineties. [laughs] So, I'm just saying that, a lot of what has happened to us, is because of other, races coming in to help. I mean, the voting down south, I tell you a good case and point of what was happening to us is to see that movie, *The Help*. That was in 1964, for goodness sake. That was not in 1924. And, see I didn't know that was happening down south. I didn't know that black people had to get off the sidewalk, and walk in the mud for a little white child to walk on that sidewalk instead of them, in 1964. I didn't know that.

So, lets just see where we came, you know. When we came from there, whether it was in the north or whether it was in the south. I kind of like the south now, especially Georgia. Atlanta, Georgia is wonderful. And Texas, some parts of Texas, even though they don't want us, they don't want us to, I get treated better in Texas than I do in Missouri. This is a stronghold for rednecks, Missouri is, and I don't know why. I even feel like that, that new governor, Greiten, I think he's racist. I liked him before he got elected, but I really think he's racist.

(01:08:07:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

How much do you think racism plays into, or is an addition to homophobia. Do you think they interplay? Do you think they influence one another? Do you think they're mutual exclusive?

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

I really don't know. Homophobia, I think is no where near racism. I think they're separate; you know? I mean, Neo-Nazi's are just plain racist. They are probably not homophobic, they're probably just, you know? It don't have anything to do with, they hate everybody that doesn't have blonde hair and blue eyes. So, I can't say that other cultures have had the same problems. I

know the Jews have had a hard time, I know that. But, it can't be compared to the situation that blacks have been in for 400 or 500 hundred years, you know? [knock on the door] Uh-oh that's probably [inaudible].

(01:09:33:00)

CAMRYN PARKER:

Okay, so that's all the time that we have to talk with, Ms. Gini here. Do you have anything else you would like to talk about, Ms. Gini?

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

No, I can later, but my little great-granddaughter has arrived. So, I have to give her some attention.

CAMRYN PARKER:

Okay, well, thank you so much for being apart of the interview.

VIRGINIA "GINI" MORTON:

Thank you.

[end of interview]

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