

Interview Summary – Trans Activism Oral History

Interviewee name:	Kimberly Nixon
Interviewer:	Evan Taylor
Date of Interview:	June 29, 2020

Summary:

Kimberly Nixon identifies as a white, privileged, heterosexual female. She is 62 years old and was born in New Westminster, BC. When she was growing up, her dad was working his way up to a senior position in a major railway and so, as he was promoted, they moved 22 times. She moved back to Vancouver as an adult, just in time for Expo '86. At a young age, she trained as a pilot and worked for a living flying planes for commercial airlines and particularly loved her work up north in Canada, where she worked for 4 years. However, the stress of living to lives - one professional, and one as Kimberly - was too much to cope with and so she made a decision to live full time as Kimberly and lost her job. She had been hoping to be the first trans person in Canada to get her airline transport pilot license, if anyone had been aware that she was a trans person.

Kimberly describes the difficulties that trans woman and other trans people and people of colour face in getting and keeping employment. As a woman pilot, she found to particularly difficult to get hired in her field. She's owned her own airplane, a 1946 war plane, for the last 12 years so that she could keep up her flying hours for licensing. She describes meeting her life partner and the time they spent together as a couple and enjoying family life. However, these days she lives alone in a "house full of animals" and, indeed, her parrot Morgan makes a few squawks and whistles throughout the interview.

Growing up, she was a good student and she learned to be proficient in sports to disguise her gender issues. As an adult, she had to out herself to the women's golf association to get them to include trans women in their policies. She had a good relationship with her parents and family growing up and was reluctant to come out for fear of hurting them. She recalls a story from childhood about her dad catching her cross dressing and reacting by saying "My, don't we look pretty". Kimberly was the 2nd person outside of Quebec to have surgery in the Montreal gender clinic, which was important to her sense of self. She kept up being a pilot as long as she could, working and flying in remote communities up North, but eventually couldn't live a double life anymore.

She had been in a long-term relationship for 3 years when she was violently assaulted by her partner, which led her to seek support at the BWSS where she attended a weekly support group through her healing. She saw that Rape Relief was looking for volunteers, so she signed up for the training and attended. It was at this training that the facilitators asked her to leave and said she wasn't welcome. While she did leave, she also returned to talk to the rest of the group and found no support. The next morning, Kimberly filed a human rights complaint that she ended up pursuing, with the help of Barbara Findlay, over 15 years. As each phase of the case came up, the case would be in the newspaper again, and Kimberly would be fired from her jobs - a hardship that she endured 6 times over the case.

Kimberly hopes that, in the future, the current momentum around the Black Lives Matter movement will be taken up more by white people who are willing to educate themselves and that LGB and trans rights also take this up. Throughout the human rights case, which she devoted the middle years of her life to, she managed to keep her home life and public life very separate, which helped her with the stress of the ordeal. She wants to be remembered as an ally to people of colour and Indigenous people and as a woman who was believed and made the world better for women and other survivors of violence. She reflects on the importance of visibility and compassion in organizational change.