

My name is Jamie Wilkerson. I'm from Salisbury, North Carolina. I currently live here. I'm 54 and
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I'm a trans female. I am also an entertainer and an activist. Well Salisbury was very um,
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quaint (laughs), um like any other southern town. Um when you grow up trans you're really at the
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time you feel very um isolated of course. For me, I mean, I knew at an early age. So I just kind of
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didn't listen to the constraints that um society puts on children, male or female whatever.
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And I just kind of set my goals and and focused on what I wanted to do and just didn't,
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you know, let anything stop me. So um when I turned 18 um, I mean growing up obviously I had a
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very very close um relationship with my family and my siblings and cousins and that kind of thing.
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And they all knew something was different um but they just never really deeply questioned it. Um
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and of course as I started getting older um, well then they knew it wasn't some little phase that,
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you know kids go through. So when I finally told them they were like, well tell us something we
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don't know already. So they kind of figured it out but um I d- when I was 19 um, I,
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at that point um, started to you know go through the transition. Of course there weren't any
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doctors or any um resources here. So I just kind of had to wing it and do it myself.
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Um and I've, luckily I passed as female so I didn't really have any issues there. Um,
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but you know obviously you want to do, go through the right channels and um, and and do the right
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thing for yourself. But um, I didn't really get to go to a doctor until like I was in my late 20s.
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So because, and then I had to of course go out out of state for that because and there's still really
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not very many resources for trans people here in Salisbury or in this area. When I told a good
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friend of mine um, she told, she revealed that she was a lesbian. So we went to the local um gay
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bar and I was hoping that I would find people like me there. Because that's what, you know,
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I thought, well surely there'll be somebody. And there was one person. So um that was in 1984
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so I was pretty much out of high school and um, you know her goals and stuff
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were different from mine. But the basics were still there. So she helped a lot as far as um
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knowing things, as far as um educating me about hormones and that kind of thing. Even though I
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still had not started doing that because I didn't want to go through black market. And that was kind
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of what was available at the time you know. That I was nervous and scared about that. So I was like,
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well I don't need to do it right now. I'll just continue to, you know, live my life and
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and just basically learn to know myself and then eventually I can get that help. I knew as a kid
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like in elementary school. Like I felt like I was one of the girls and then I kind of realized that
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there is, there's some differences here. So once I figured that out I just, you know, I thought,
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well I don't know. I didn't really know what it was and why I felt the way I felt and what it was
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going to mean obviously. But I just went with my gut feeling. And you know, as I got older,
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and then of course you start you know seeing some things like in magazines and that kind of thing.
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And and then you realize, well there are other people like me so I don't have to and I won't
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be alone. But I'll just have to find the area where the people are and um. But I got into
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entertaining and so that kind of um, entertaining helped me because it gave me a way to make money.

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And I didn't really have to put myself out in public you know as a trans female because,
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you know, obviously back then you know they.. people get to know. They want to know your,
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you know, your license. They want to have all that information. Not that they don't do that now, but
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at that time my license still said said male. So I was like, um, and with the bars and,
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and I started doing drag and performing and um, so they didn't really question any of that. They,
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you know, you were who you were and they didn't care. Now there weren't a lot of trans people
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out and about in North Carolina at the time. So they had to get to educate themselves really
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about me. I helped educate them about, you know, who trans people are or who I was basically. Um,
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they didn't really have a lot of entertainers that were trans so I had to um, make them realize
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that you know, you're gonna have them eventually but right now it's me. You're just gonna have to
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um, get to know me as a trans performer. I think once you state this is how it is, you know,
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people at that point- they don't have to wonder anymore. So either they're going to accept you or
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they're not going to accept you. And um, my my dad he was not too clear about it for a long time. But
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once um, you know once I started the transition physically then he at that point realized,
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well, this is how it's going to be. And we actually became better friends and um and got a lot closer.
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Parents think phases are not always the best thing for their children.
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So, and it can obviously get him in trouble. So I think that was kind of where he was and he was
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worried obviously if I was gonna, you know, if people were gonna hurt me and that kind of
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thing. So I think that kind of played a role with him but um, he got over all of that. He was fine.
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Um but my brother and I are very close and he's very you know comfortable with me. So I was lucky.
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A lot of people aren't. You just have to know that you're not the only one and there are people like
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you out there. And it's okay to be who you are and you don't have to hide. Um you don't have to,
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you know, um disappear. Like a lot of the people did in in the 80s. I mean people would just
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completely get up and move to a different state and just start a new life and because they didn't
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want to have, you know, to deal with the people that knew them once and how they were going to
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react. I chose not to do that because I'm like, this is where I'm from and if I can't get the
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people that I already know to accept me for who I am then I'm not going to get anybody else to. So
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I kind of looked at it in that point of view and and stayed. And. and you know, kind of
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did what I could to change their minds and educate them on people like me. So I think it starts with
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the adults obviously, and you know the adults tend to- and because of the constraints that society
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um hands down you know- they're worried about religion just like my parents were and that kind
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of thing. But I think it starts there. Teaching your children that um, you know what I said
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before, everyone's different and it's okay to be yourself and it's okay to have gay friends. It's
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okay to, to like someone you know for who they are. Not necessarily um the group that they're in,
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like the clique group or whatever, or the the popular group. Um it's okay to have those
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people as friends and you'll learn something. I mean you know they're talented and wise and
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um, and lots of fun you know. Once the families um, teach their kids that,
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obviously society's gonna be much better because the kids are gonna, you know, obviously pass it
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on to their kids. And I think it's already started happening. I mean just judging the
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the crowd that comes to Pride. But it, you know, obviously we have a long way to go
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so if they just continue to keep doing that then I think it's going to get better and better.
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story please contact Rowan-Cabarrus Community College by emailing heresmystory@rccc.edu