

DiMambro Transcript

[00:02] Ashleigh: So today is April 12th 2018 and I'm interviewing [Luca] DiMambro, who is a student here at the University of Maryland, she is being interviewed by Ashleigh Coren, and we are in the LGBTQ Equity Center. [Editor's Note: The Interviewee's pronouns are he/him/his]

[00:16] Alright, would you mind starting by telling me a little bit about yourself?

[00:19] Luca: I guess it depends what you want to know. I'm a **food science major** and an **anthropology major**. I really like the combination of them. I really like working with people and stuff like food that brings everyone together.

[00:42] Ashleigh: Excellent! So what brought you to the University of Maryland? Why did you choose to come here?

[00:46] Luca: So initially I was between here and another college in Massachusetts and well...in-state tuition and I had come from a small town so I wanted to go somewhere bigger and more diverse, and just a lot different from where I had grown up and push myself a little bit more.

[01:14] Ashleigh: What is your definition of community?

[01:16] Luca: I think it's like family, which is kind of cliché I guess. But I consider a lot of people in my community like family- people who are there for me and support me. Maybe we aren't lovey dovey all the time like I would be with my partner, but there's just that, kind of shared bond of our sexuality or where we live or where we're from or whatever the particular community is.

[01:57] Ashleigh: So you mentioned that you're from Maryland and you're a student here on campus, so what is that like to be from the state and to be present here at the University of Maryland?

[02:06] Luca: It's been really interesting. I thought that it would be a little boring, you know, everyone in Maryland goes to University of Maryland, of course. But it's still been a lot different, it's been interesting meeting so many different people who all live in the same state. We all grew up in the same state and yet there are so many different areas of Maryland. Of course you know *facts*, but then meeting other people and really talking to them and knowing not only the population of **Baltimore**, but what it's like to walk down the street in Baltimore or not only that **Frederick County** has a lot of cows, but what it's like to go to school like that, what your friends are like and just getting to know so many different people and such a wide variety of people who all share the same state, it's been really interesting.

[03:15] Ashleigh: So what was your first contact with the LGBTQ Community here on campus and what was the nature of that contact?

[03:23] Luca: Well I had a boyfriend for the first year or so of being here, so I wasn't super connected. I knew I was bi, but I come from a really conservative family, and I was like 'oh

whatever, like, I have a boyfriend now, there's no need to deal with that." And then we broke up and I play **rugby** and there are a lot of gays, it's a good time. So I started trying to connect to the other gay girls on the team, just get to know them and hang out with them and go to bars with them and stuff like that. I think that was my first connection, it wasn't necessarily the most lasting connection with the community but it made me realize. I had never been in an exclusively LGBT place before and I remember going to **Town** for the first time. We all have our thoughts on Town, but just being somewhere that was only fellow LGBT people, and just for us, was a really important experience, and it was really cool.

*[04:44] Ashleigh: Can you talk a little bit more about Town?*

[04:47] Luca: So, initially we're just gonna go out and have a night like it was just any other party. I got there and honestly someone could have told me any old bar was a gay bar and I probably would have been similarly thinking real deep about it. But just being there, there was like a drag show -- so I guess not exactly just any bar. But seeing lots of gay couples around, not only being like "Yeah! We're gay and we're here!" just the kinda...relaxed, like we're just chilling. We were having a night out, and neither hiding nor actively trying to make a point [about being gay]. Just existing without having to make a point was really, really cool and really different.

*[05:57] Ashleigh: Are there spaces on campus where you feel like that? Where you can just be yourself?*

[06:02] Luca: Um, yeah actually. I got involved with the Housing Co-op, The **Maryland Housing Co-op** and it's not necessarily only gays, but we try our hardest [laughs]. Even though not everyone's gay, actually a pretty good amount of people are straight, but we have this very community-based living and I've never felt uncomfortable at home or doing activities with them. It's just kind of felt like having a family, which is really cool.

*[06:51] Ashleigh: So are there any other organizations or groups that you belong to and why did you decide to join these groups?*

[06:57] Luca: Like I said, I play rugby. I haven't played for the past year because of school and work but I really liked doing rugby partly because it was hanging out with like a lot of other girls. Most of my life I've hung out with guys a lot, I think probably because of being a weird closeted lesbian. It's hard to sort things out [laughs]. So getting to hang out with girls and other gay girls and girls who acted kind of like me, I really liked it. Especially with rugby, there's not many other sports for girls where you can just be intense and get really dirty and muddy and look kind of ugly most of the time. Just that intensity and not judging body size or anything. I did cross country and soccer and they were great but I just don't really have the body type for that and it just felt like I was trying to fight myself. Coming there and seeing other girls who were heavier than me and who were lighter than me, and who were taller and shorter and all different shapes and sizes. None of us are trying to overcome our body size, we just are, and we just have our own skills and we use them on the field and that's just that. We don't comment on like, I don't

know, oh you'd be better if you were just a little bit skinnier or a little bit bulkier. It's just like, oh wow! You're really big! So that's really good because you get to really take people down! Nice! So, yeah that's another place that's definitely a good community.

*[08:58] Ashleigh: Back to the LGBTQ community here on campus, in terms of civil rights, what challenges still remain for this particular population on campus and what are the things that need to get done to better support this community?*

[09:17] Luca: Hmmm. I think it's a little tricky here because I think there's definitely things that still need to be done but it's tough sometimes to balance between being proud of where we are and what's happened but not saying that we're done, that's enough. It's always going to be tricky to balance those two. Maybe this was something that people experienced earlier in the movement when things started to happen, but it almost feels like things seem pretty OK now, but I think there's always areas to strive more and to push more for more equality and more acceptance. I don't really know about specifics.

*[10:18] Ashleigh: This question ties into that. Has activism been a part of your story here at the university? What has that experience been like?*

[10:27] Luca: It's been a little bit. My best friend in the world is very much an activist I just haven't really gotten as involved. I'm a little bit cynical sometimes of the college queer scene. As someone from a very conservative town where a lot of things I struggled with was being the only gay person I knew and dealing with people frequently using slurs and talking about hating gay people, it can be a little bit tricky sometimes. It can feel a little bit alienating to go into a space where people are fighting over specific terms. Of course I think it's really important to still be discussing new things and be forging new paths, as cliché as that is, and talking about the next little thing, but sometimes it feels a little alienating. It feels like we're forgetting -- you know I live 45 minutes away where I know people who fly **Confederate flags** and are openly bigoted towards gay people. It's just....yeah. It's a little weird.

*[11:58] Ashleigh: So what would you want future UMD students to understand about being LGBTQ on campus right now? So imagine it's 20 years from now and someone is listening to this recording. What would you want them to know?*

[12:09] Luca: I would want them to know that it's still tricky to figure out and maybe it'll still be tricky then, and it's been tricky for a really long time. It's probably always gonna be tough to figure things out, until I don't know, 3000 something and we're all enlightened and genderless or whatever. It would be pretty great, but I think that's a ways off. There's always people before you that have struggled with this and there will be people after you and you're part of a long history -- a long, really complicated and painful, but really, really cool history.

*[13:02] Ashleigh: So we have some time left. Would you mind if I ask you a few supplemental questions?*

[13:04] Luca: Sure

*[13:06] Ashleigh: What are you majoring in right now and why did you choose it?*

[13:10] Luca: I'm a double major in food science and anthropology. I initially wanted to do culinary arts, but I realized I didn't want to be a chef forever. It just sounds stressful and I thought, if I go to culinary school then all I can do is be a chef, but if I go get a four-year degree then I can still go back and be a chef if I want to or I can find a different job. It's a lot more flexibility. I came here for food science and I really enjoyed it. I kept getting further into it and realizing how much I liked it. Then my first semester here I took an anthropology class and the teacher was giving extra credit if you helped her with some cataloging for her thesis. I came in and got three extra points and she was like, oh if you like get a certain number of hours then you can get a full credit hour. You're doing pretty well in the class, so if you wanna keep just coming in....And then I got three credits and they kept telling me that I would get sucked in. I said no, no, no, and then they sucked me in. But I love it. It's really brought out that I really like helping people and realizing that as much as I love food science, I really wanted to preserve that aspect of people and having an impact on people, and always relating my work back to helping someone.

*[14:56] Ashleigh: So has being LGBTQ affected your social or professional life here at the University of Maryland?*

[15:04] Luca: I think so. It hasn't been a negative impact, for sure. I think I end up hanging out with more gay people just because it's...it's more fun -- we're more fun [laughs]. It's nice to be around people that I can relate to and that I don't have to explain myself to all the time. I still have a lot of straight friends, but sometimes it's harder to relate to them. Sometimes it's easier to relate to them on other things. But I would say a fair amount of my friends are just because we hang out in the same gay circles.

*[15:51] Ashleigh: So I have one last question. You've been on campus for a while. Have you noticed any changes as to either how the University supports the LGBTQ community or changes in how they may not support the LGBTQ community? Have you noticed anything during your time here?*

[16:11] Luca: It's a little hard to tell for me, just because my involvement with the community has changed over the years. It's hard to tell what's changed and what I just didn't notice. I feel like there's been more outreach, more activities, and more ways to get involved, but also it's entirely possible they were there all along and I just didn't see them. Honestly I don't think I've seen a whole lot of change here in relation to that.

*[16:51] Ashleigh: Excellent. Well thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me this afternoon, um and thank you very very much for your contribution to the University Archive.*

[16:59] Luca: Thank you.