

Garey 5.18 Transcript

[00:01] Ashleigh Coren: Today is May 18, 2018, and I am with Madison Garey, 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.

[00:13] Ashleigh: So to start off, tell me a bit about yourself

[00:15] Madison Garey: Um, I'm a senior here, I'm about to graduate, I'm a double major in English and history, um, I do creative writing, I play the violin, love my family, things like that

[00:30] Ashleigh: So what brought you here to the University of Maryland?

[00:36] Madison: I originally wanted to go to a women's college so that I wouldn't have to be around men, but they're very expensive, and there's a lot of demand for them, so I ended up coming here. Which ended up being pretty cool, actually.

[00:58] Ashleigh: So what is your definition of community?

[1:02] Madison: I think it's people that you can trust and really be yourself around, people that you can rely on to support you, and people who share something with you in any sort of way. That you can relate to each other about and have that. It's a connection, I think.

[1:27] Ashleigh: Can you talk a little bit about your first contact with the LGBTQ community here on campus, and what was the nature of that contact?

[1:35] Madison: I sought it out, when I was in high school pretty much all my friends were in the gay community, like, with me, and when I came here everyone I knew was straight, which was super new for me. And I didn't have people to talk to about like specific issues like that, so I reached out, I think it was after the **First Look Fair**, and I came over to the **LGBT Equity Center**, well now there's the Q, **LGBTQ Equity Center**, and I started going to the **Women2Women** meetings every week. And I got the opportunity to meet a lot of really cool people, even though the club didn't last that long because people stopped coming. So it was a really cool opportunity because it was something that I hadn't had access to before. Especially with the library and having access especially to older members of the community, which is something totally new to me because everyone I knew was a teenager, and probably at least some sort of closet, closeted. So having people who like, this was their job, and they were doing this as volunteer effort to have this club to talk about specific issues relating to us was really cool.

[3:03] Ashleigh: Can you talk a bit about the Women2Women club, and sort of how you heard about it?

[3:08] Madison: I think I went to the **Quelcome** event in September that, my first semester, and they gave out a sheet with all these support groups, and there were like a bunch of different ones, and I was most interested in talking with other women. So I managed to get up the courage to show up and stick around and I was pretty quiet for a couple of weeks but everyone seemed to get along really well and it was really interesting just having other women openly talking about like loving other women and stuff like that, how it would affect their life and even how they would present themselves. And they would um, they would go on outings sometimes, talk about queer literature, that was the first time I heard of **Audre Lorde**. So it was a new learning experience, definitely. From an outlet that I didn't expect.

[4:09] Ashleigh: So you mentioned that your major is English?

[4:12] Madison: English and history, yeah.

[4:14] Ashleigh: Why did you choose those two subjects?

[4:15] Madison: Um, I've always been a writer. And I originally came in as a government and politics major, because I really wanna do something that helps people. I'm not entirely certain that I wanna do that in the government, but literature and art and writing I think is the way that I can do that. And I think it's one of the best ways, especially, that marginalized communities like the queer community can get our voices out there. So I, in the English major I got to read and learn about new forms of art that I wasn't familiar with. I took LGBT lit and film classes, and I read women that I didn't expect, and found out, you know, some writers that we never were taught about in school like, had lovers that just didn't make it into the record. So it was a very interesting choice I think.

[5:34] Ashleigh: So in terms of the LGBTQ community on campus, have you witnessed any changes, in terms of how this community has been treated, or in regards to the overall sort of reception here on campus?

[5:53] Madison: I think over the past few years it's.....improved? I mean it wasn't like negative when I got here in any way. Like 4 years isn't that long of a time but I think things are changing really fast like all around the country, so people's understandings and I think behaviors changed. And I think there's an emphasis by the university programs throughout campus. I'm a member of the **Jimenez-Porter Writers' house**, and they make a big emphasis on inclusivity, of asking people's pronouns and understanding of differences and embracing those differences. When I came here I was nervous to tell my roommates that I was queer, and I think that's becoming hopefully less of a fear for people, I think because we do a lot more outreach. I remember when I was looking at UMD I was, you know, checking all the scores to make sure that like, I wasn't gonna get murdered here. And um, the websites, they were, they had some information. But I still felt nervous when I came here. So I think that the new outreach that is being done is really critical. And I think that the students here on campus are a lot more like, the younger generations are just a lot more understanding in a way, because they're more familiar

with it. So I can walk past people, talking openly about like being gay, and just have it not be a big deal at all, just walking on campus. Which is something I didn't really expect when I first came here.

[8:17] Ashleigh: Can you talk a bit more about the organizations and groups that you belong to, and why did you decide to join?

[8:24] Madison: I was a part of a few organizations on campus, so I joined the public leadership program as part of **Scholars** when I first came here, which is where I met most of my first friends who were straight. And I was looking for more than that, so I started looking out for different programs that I could join, and that's how I found the writers house, because it was a community of artists and writers. So that was a place where I could really express myself very openly, even though I may have had personal, I was nervous about sharing it but having other people who were sharing a similar background, and expressing themselves in the same way was extremely cool.

[9:44] Madison: I also joined the **English Undergraduate Association**, and we put on these "**writers dead and gone**" events to celebrate dead authors, and a lot of them when I first joined had been focused on dead white men, there are a lot of them, but over the past couple of years we have tried to really diversify our events. So I got to push for an event specifically celebrating queer women in history, and women who did science fiction. And I got to teach other people who came to the event, you know I had this like Jeopardy game set up, but instead of having people knowing the answers, I could teach them all about these women that they knew about but didn't know about the fact that they were gay, or just aspects of their life. They didn't know they were women, they didn't know about gender theory, and it was something I'm proud of because the people who came aren't reaching out specifically to places like the **LGBTQ Equity Center**, so they're not specifically reaching out to learn about this. And I was able to sort of, advocate for my community in a way, and teach about our history through a medium that I wasn't expecting. So I think that um, having that sort of representation in non-traditional venues was, is, I think one of the most, one of the best ways to reach out to people who might not have access to resources or knowledge that everyone else does.

[12:12] Ashleigh: In regards to LGBTQ Civil Rights at UMD, what challenges do we still have, and what needs to get done?

[12:25] Madison: There are definitely still issues with um, you know, I think especially the acceptance of trans people on campus. Um, I uh, I know a couple of trans people who have told me they face you know like some, um, a certain amount of, not backlash per say, but just dealing with struggles that cisgender people don't. And not even from professors, but I think a lack of specific outreach is a problem. And I think that there needs to be more of a focus on not assuming gender, like in class. I have more classes that are discussion based where we actually do give our pronouns, and people respect them. But I know that not everyone on campus is educated, or comes from a background where they are even aware of trans people.

So I think that more education about who they are and what their needs are is kind of the most critical because they are a very vulnerable population.

[14:08] Ashleigh: What would you want future UMD students to understand about being LGBTQ on campus right now in 2018?

[14:19] Madison: It's a lot better than I thought it was going to be when I was a teenager. I remember like being 13 and being just like so freaked out I thought I was never gonna come out to my friends or openly talk about anything like that. And now, you know, like, the girls I live with now like, told me they just want me to have a girlfriend I can make pancakes with, and that's such a small thing, and it means so much. So I think having, there's, the people on campus, they care. And they, you know like, they advocate, even in like the smallest ways, so I think just the ability to just be open about it is one of the best things, and having these classes and having people learn was some of my favorite aspects of being here.

[15:38] Ashleigh: Is there anything else you would like to talk about, like a memorable moment you've had over the past 4 years? Or something that really will sort of stick with you once you graduate?

[15:52] Madison: Um, one of the most memorable things was the **2016 election**, and I remember the day after the results came out, we had the, I think it was, **Occupy McKeldin** it was called? But it was just a massive group of students who walked out of classes from all different backgrounds. There were communities of students of different races, gender, sexuality, all really coming together, and I think that was one of the most special things that I've ever seen and taken part in. I think especially because I remember there were professors who had walked out and were standing in solidarity with us. And I think that that was really representative of the attitude of campus, because it really shows that we do not approve of the actions of the president.

[17:03] Ashleigh: Anything else you'd like to talk about?

[17:15] Madison: No I don't think so.

[17:17] Ashleigh: Well thank you so much for speaking with me, and for your contribution to University Archives.