

[00:00] *Ashleigh*: Today is April 19th, 2018 and I am here with Kayla Reagan, who is a student, being interviewed by Ashleigh Coren and we are in the **LGBTQ Equity Center**. So to start, tell me a bit about yourself.

[00:18] *Kayla*: I'm a neurobiology and physiology major with a classical mythology minor. My mom is in the military so I've moved, I think eight times. I have a brother and a dog who I love, both dearly, but if I had to pick one, I'd choose the dog. Um, I consider myself a huge nerd and I watch way too much TV.

[00:51] *Ashleigh*: So what brought you here to the University of Maryland?

[00:53] *Kayla*: Well, I currently live in Maryland, so in-state tuition is nice and it's close enough to home but not super far away. My brother is in, he goes to school in North Carolina. That's like a five, six hour drive. I only have a two hour drive because I live in the very Northern part of Maryland. But, um, I like a big school, it's a nice campus. They had something that was really tailored to what I wanted, which is neurobiology and physiology, because I wanna be a forensic pathologist, so it matches pretty well with what I want to do.

[01:36] *Ashleigh*: What is your definition of community?

[01:39] *Kayla*: Um, that's hard. I guess, a group of people with, even if they're not... there's like two levels of community, I guess I would say. Because there's a level of community of people in the community who are the, or have the specific experiences, like in this case, the people who are actually queer. And then there is the supportive community, like the allies. So I guess it's, on the one hand, it's people who share something about themselves and then the bigger circle is people who support those characteristics and people I guess.

[02:25] *Ashleigh*: What was your first contact with the LGBTQ community here on campus and what was the nature of that contact?

[02:31] *Kayla*: The first thing, um, I don't remember exactly which one came first but my freshman year, I'm a sophomore, so my freshman year, I had two friends on my hall that were bi, so that was one of the firsts. I mean I, it's not like the first interactions I had with the community at all, it's just the first I had on campus. But, I can't remember, if I, I think that one actually came first, but I'm asexual, so I come to **Ace Space**. So that was probably one of the more organized affiliations I came into contact with.

[03:21] *Ashleigh*: So what other organizations or groups do you belong to and why did you decide to join?

[03:26] *Kayla*: I am in **pre-med society** because I am pre-med. I am in **sign language club** because I've always loved sign language and haven't really had the ability to take a class in it so I thought it would be easier to learn some of it through a club. But I am planning on taking the classes here, just not until my senior year. And I'm in **Terps for Animal Welfare**. Um, like I

said, I love my dog and I love other people's dogs as well, and other animals, so I definitely am a fan for animal welfare. And then I'm in **Ace Space** for aforementioned reasons (laughing).

[04:13] *Ashleigh*: Would you mind talking a little bit more about **Ace Space** and sort of what it has meant to you as a student?

[04:17] *Kayla*: Well as an asexual person, it's a very small percentage of the queer community and so it's hard to find fellow asexuals because they're... the approximations are about 1% of the entire population is queer. Oh sorry, 1% is ace, 5-6 is gay. So, we contribute a lot less to the, not less, but like less people to the community, well I guess it would be fewer people. And so that is one positive thing and also a lot of ace people, they pass as straight really easily, so that's another reason why it's kind of hard to find them, because it's not like we're always talking about our girlfriends or our boyfriends because, not that you can't have them or you don't have them, but it's more likely that you will find an ace person that doesn't have one, so it's hard to find them in that situation.

[05:29] *Ashleigh*: Could you talk a little bit about civil rights for the LGBTQ community at UMD, what challenges does the University still have and what things need to get done?

[05:45] *Kayla*: I think it's kind of a (pausing) I think it's a fairly accepting campus, which is always nice, but it's kind of like, unless it's brought up, it's not mentioned at all. Obviously, it's mentioned here because it's the nature of this office but if it's not here or at a related space or situation, it's typically not gone over and, I mean, that kind of makes sense because most of the population on this large campus is probably straight, but, I would still like to see more recognition that it's a thing even if you're not talking about someone specifically. But also I don't want it to be a big thing, like just accepting that people are queer and they're just still a person, not like saying, 'oh this person is a queer person' versus this 'this person is a person who is also queer.' So, it's probably better than most, well I don't know, it's probably fairly liberal but always room to improve, I guess.

[07:18] *Ashleigh*: Has activism been a part of your story at all here at the University?

[07:25] *Kayla*: I wish it were a bigger part of my story and I kinda try to do it towards small actions just by myself, not necessarily with a group. So, kind of going along the lines of how I said that it's really easy to pass as straight when you're ace. I try to bring it up more in conversation, like just to tell people I'm not straight, but it's still hard because even if I know, or if I'm pretty sure they'd be fine with it, it's still hard to bring it up. So, I try to do little victories like that, I wish I would do more of those as well. But, yeah, I would like to have a bigger role in, say, the, oh what's it called, the board I guess for here. Unfortunately though, I don't think I have the time to spare which makes me sad (laughing).

[08:32] *Ashleigh*: Are there other things the University can do to support you as a student here at the University?

[08:43] *Kayla*: Well, I feel like that can be answered a couple different ways, especially since a lot of things have to do with the fact that aces pass as straight, so I'm saying that a lot because it comes up a lot. So, it's not really so much that I'm discriminated against, or at least not nearly as much as other members of the queer community and things like that, so it's not like I need to be fought for in the same way that gay people do, but I kind of imagine it as two different levels. So, the gay community, specifically homosexuals and bisexuals and those types of sexualities, they have reached the recognition point and now they're working on the acceptance point. But asexuality is still working on the recognition point so a lot of people don't know that it's a thing, or a lot of people don't, even if they know about it, they don't think it's a thing, like 'oh you're not ace, that's not a thing.' Or, something like that, so it's kind of a different situation than a lot of the other queer community. But it's getting better. I know a lot more people know about it than when I was even in high school, which wasn't even that long ago. And part of that is probably due to the fact that asexual is a relatively new term actually so, it's not like the sexuality is new, but the term for it is new. Not like 2015, but like 2000 or something. But, gotta work on the recognition before we can work on the acceptance.

[10:53] *Ashleigh*: What would you want future UMD students to understand about being LGBTQ on campus in 2018?

[11:10] *Kayla*: I don't know if it's something that I want them to know differently from what they already know per se, but like that's a hard one. Um, because like I said, the campus is fairly liberal so it isn't as big a problem as in other areas. I think, if I want them to know anything, I would want them to know different circumstances so they can say, like 'yeah, I support the queer community' but there is lots of things about the queer community they don't know about. They're probably fine with it, they just don't know about it. So, speaking to myself in particular, I'm asexual and aromantic, but I also am interested in something called a qpr, or a 'queer/quasi platonic relationship.' It's kind of like in between a friendship and a romantic relationship, because I am not interested in kissing or having sex, but I am interested in holding hands and cuddling and companionship and things like that, so a lot of times people will think 'oh you're asexual' and they automatically kind of assume aromantic and for some people, that is true, and for some people, because they are aromantic, they don't want a relationship at all, they're totally fine with friendships, but it's a huge spectrum in the asexual part of the community, that I think, even as people recognize asexuality, like demisexuality or gray ace and things like that, they don't really follow as much because they're even, I wouldn't say rare, but coming out, as ace tends to come with a thirty minute 'what does this mean?' and if you were to add on romanticism, qprs, gray ace, demi ace, and all that stuff, that's just like another thirty minutes. So, a lot of times it's not necessarily that people don't want other people to know, it's just that they're tired of explaining it a million times a day. I want them to have more exposure to it and there is sort of a debate in the ace community about whether it's a part of the queer community or like it's own community and I kind of agree that it's its own community because the other part of the queer community, they have romantic and sexual attraction, like to different genders and things like that, but in the ace community, they have no or limited sexual or romantic attraction. Having said that, I do think it should stay in in the queer community even though it is like the least common relative, to bring in biology (laughing), because otherwise, I don't think anyone

would know about it, so yeah, I'd just want them to have more experience, specifically with the lesser known sexualities and romanticisms and all those buzzwords of the community.

[14:54] *Ashleigh*: This is actually a follow up question, how often do you find yourself having to educate people?

[14:58] *Kayla*: Well, I for those that I have like a sit-down conversation come-out, I did that with my parents and my brother and some other friends like that. I try not to do that as much because I feel like that makes it a bigger deal and it's also more stressful on me. But, when I have like a sit-down or even just like a, more formal I guess, I frequently have to educate, and even if I don't, I feel the need to say, 'oh, what do you think it is?' so I can say, 'oh yes, I agree with that' or 'that's not exactly true.' So even if they say 'oh, I know what that means and I'm fine with that,' I feel like I still need to, if not further educate them, but at least know where their education level lies. And then if I have a less formal, like I say off the hand, like 'being ace, don't have those problems' or something like more casual, I try to let it slide and if they have questions, they can ask about it, but I try not to make it a big deal, but then I also kinda wonder, well did they get what I was saying? So, even if I don't actually have to educate people, I feel the need to because it's so unknown and under the radar that I just kinda have to go with the assumption that they don't know anything/

[16:44] *Ashleigh*: Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience so far? Anything memorable that has happened to you?

[16:55] *Kayla*: This isn't particularly related to the campus per se, but I have even just myself getting exposed because you can always learn more with other people and, not related to my sexuality, but more my gender, I've always been kind of conflicted on that front, and I have made several different decisions and gone back on those decisions and had to rethink, but as of right now, I've come to decide that I'm non-binary and I prefer they/them and it's fine if people call me she, I honestly don't mind it, but if you were to ask me, I would tell you they/them, but if you'd call me she or her, I'm not going to scream at you. And I've discovered that really recently, so if it comes up in conversation then I would say it, but I haven't gone up to anyone and said like, 'oh by the way, I'm non-binary please call me they/them' because I'm fine with people calling me she/her, I don't feel it as big of a deal to, but that's just me, that's not really, well it's not because of the campus, but I feel that it was kinda like a catalyst because I see more queer people, I've interacted with more queer people, heard more stories in different versions and things like that. Because, in high school, I was trying to peg it down to a specific thing, like a gender or demi or something like that. But now, I'm fine with just saying non-binary. That's a broad term but I'm fine with that now. But who knows, maybe I'll change in a year again or something.

[19:23] *Ashleigh*: Well, thank you for taking the time to sit and talk. I really appreciate you sharing your story, and thank you for contributing to the **University Archives**.