

LAFAYETTE COLLEGE
LGBTQ ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview of
Paul McLoughlin
Conducted by
Mary Armstrong
June 17, 2017

Special Collections & College Archives

David Bishop Skillman Library

Lafayette College

2018

McLoughlin

MARY ARMSTRONG: So that should be rolling. Okay. So, this is Mary Armstrong. I am Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, and Chair of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Lafayette College and it's June 7, 2017, and I'm here with Dean Paul McLoughlin. Hi, Paul.

PAUL MCMCLOUGHLIN: Hi. (laughter)

MA: Thank you for being here. There's the usual formalities, so we're going to ask you to state your name and confirm that your participation is voluntary, and you've given your informed consent.

PM: Absolutely. Nice to be here. Thank you. My name is Paul McLoughlin. I'm the current Dean of Students here at Lafayette College. It is June 7, and I am voluntarily, and happily, participating in this project.

MA: That is marvelous, and we thank you for it. So formally to remind you that if there's any answer you don't want to -- or any question you don't want to answer, just don't answer it. They're just prompts to try to get you to places that you might not think of when you were here, which brings me to my next point. If you're like me and you think of things [00:01:00] later, and you're like, "Oh, I should have said X or Y," the interview is not formally bounded so

if you want to write something down, send an e-mail, follow up and say, "Oh, I was thinking of this one thing. I forgot this great story." Or whatever. Please send it. That's fine. And maybe, most important of all, if you think of something I didn't ask about, or you want to just keep going, just don't worry. Just elaborate on anything. Or say, "That reminds me of this one thing." So personal pronouns you prefer?

PM: He, him, his.

MA: Okay. And you've already said you're the current Dean of Students, and how do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ community?

PM: As a gay man.

MA: Okay. And I think that's about it there, so when did you come to Lafayette? When was your first year as Dean of Students?

PM: Two thousand twelve.

MA: Two thousand twelve? Okay, so you have five years?

PM: Yes.

MA: Five big years. Actually.

PM: And, in fact, the way I -- I didn't mean for this to happen, but it's [00:02:00] 1826 days, which is the year of our founding.

MA: (laughter) Is that right?

PM: Isn't that funny?

MA: How on earth did you figure that out --

PM: Because they -- Kristin Cothran was doing this thing about [my time at Lafayette], sort of the -- and she, they did this whole big poster for me about the impact one man can have. And it was all these things that I had done during my time [at Lafayette], but they counted up the days from July 1 to the end of my time, and it was 1826.

MA: Oh, my gosh. That's crazy. That's absolutely amazing. That's fantastic. Where's the poster?

PM: In my home right now. It was a gift to me. From the Division of Campus Life.

MA: How nice. How lovely. If it ever occurs to you to take a photo and send it, we'd love to have it for the archives. It would be so nice to have it permanently here, if that would be something that you would like to share.

PM: Yes, in fact one of the things that's in it is the day -- it's like the 300th and something day when we had our first LGBT rally, when we all donned our t-shirts, and it was, you know, on the steps of Skillman. [00:03:00]

MA: Yes. Fantastic. I'm glad that's on there.

PM: Isn't that fun?

MA: Yes, that is fun. Well, you have so much to be proud of. Really you do. Yeah, send it to us if you'd like to be

part of the record. I think you deserve to have it part of the record. So, five years. A lot of differences for the queer community on campuses of which you have been a part of making those differences. Like I said, a lot to be proud of. So I guess to start, the idea would be to have you to describe how was it when you got here? So, you were out when you arrived?

PM: Mm-hmm.

MA: Sort of how that was, and then sort of take us through the last five years of how you've seen it change. You interact with students so much. I mean, you're a really rich crossroads of these issues on campus over the last five years.

PM: Yeah, the world obviously has changed, too. I mean I'm sure you hear that from so many people, but I mean, Lafayette has changed a lot, so again, too, has the world. So, I arrived in 2012. I [was] married [when I arrived]. Jason, [00:04:00] my husband, and I -- who, he is the current Senior Associate Director of Financial Aid at Lehigh -- we were married in 2003 -- October 25, 2003 -- at his parents' farm in Maryland. With 150 of our family and friends, and we never believed that it would be legal. At that time, Vermont had a civil union, but we -- and we had met in Burlington, Vermont, by the way -- and we just

thought, "Well, who cares? We're just going to do this thing. We're just going to call it marriage, and we're going to do it." And then that May -- eight months later -- it was legal in Massachusetts. So, we were one of the [first married couples in MA]-- we got married the very first night at midnight in [Cambridge]City Hall. So, when we got here we were easily eight years into our marriage, and there was no way in my mind that we wouldn't -- I wouldn't -- have entered this search as a gay -- out gay man [00:05:00] -- not that you could hide it anyway. In some ways, the social media presence was big enough then. So, when I got here, they invited Jason for the second visit -- my second visit as a part of the search process. And so, to the extent that I would say that the institution was really open and even affirming, one might say, of having -- flying Jason here from Boston and letting him see Easton and all of that. I thought it was really good. But then when I arrived -- or not "but," but "and." And when I arrived in July, it was interesting because I found that the institution wanted to be open and I think even affirming, but there were things that I saw pretty quickly here that were -- that didn't match that. So, I think I might have mentioned to you even a story that I had gotten from the then -- the person from HR -- all the paperwork

that you complete when you get a job, right? [00:06:00] So what do you want? And what's your healthcare? And all that. And the list was "employee" -- I could check that box. I could also for health insurance check "employee plus" -- let me think about this...oh my gosh, how was this? -- it was really, really fascinating to me. Oh, no, no, no -- it was "employee," and the second one was "husband plus wife." That was the words, and then it was "husband plus wife plus children." And so, I remember thinking, "Well, what the hell am I going to check?" Because Jason didn't yet have the job at Lehigh and I don't know what it was. But maybe it was because Jason and I kind of always have been maybe a little bit bold about -- not always -- but we, I would call us, in some ways we pushed the envelope [00:07:00], like we were going to get married before it was marriage. We were going to get married on the very first night. We were asked to be in a movie, and we're in a movie called *Saving Marriage* and we were one of three couples featured. And so, we were the cover of the *New York Times Magazine*, and so we were willing to do, be there. And when I got here, I thought, "I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to go from Massachusetts, where it's legalized marriage, to a state where there were" -- so we had to give up our marriage to move here. But I wasn't

willing to go that far to check the "husband plus wife" box.

MA: That was it.

PM: That was it. I was like, "I'm not doing that." So, I remember going into Chuck Bachman, who was -- is -- the person in HR who helps you with all your retirement planning. And I went in under the guise of, you know, "I have some questions about my retirement." And I said, "But I also don't know what to check here." And he said, "Well, are you going to cover your" -- I think he must have said "spouse," or "husband," or something. And he said, "Yes, well, you would check the box," and I go, "But I'm not a wife and this just doesn't work." And I said, [00:08:00] "It's just not acceptable." And I know that -- well, the very next morning I got a call or an e-mail, one of the two, from Leslie Muhlfelder, the VP in HR and General Counsel, and saying, "You know, Chuck told me about your concerns about the language, and we're really sorry. And we're going to change that." And so they had changed it online, and -- which I thought was great and it was one of the moments where I was realized, "Oh, this isn't going to be -- this is not Harvard," which is where I had come from, where like, if you wanted to change something, you need 17 blessings and like four committees. And here it was

changed overnight. And so that was that. And then the very next year in open enrollment, out the brochures come and back in that language was. And I remember at that point being really frustrated and writing to Leslie, and being like, "How? I don't understand how this language is back in this space." [00:09:00] Now the good news is that it was changed immediately again online. The print was already out. But it's never come back. It's always now been "employee," "employee plus spouse." So, I mean, I think in a lot of ways my experience when I first got here was that it was an open and affirming place. I know that's not the case for so many people who are a part of this project. And yet it still, then and today, has a lot of room to grow, but it doesn't seem resistant to the growth. It just seems sometimes ignorant to it. In the places that it needs --

MA: It's stasis more than proactive.

PM: I think so. And even the fact that it was like back in the language a year later, it was just sort of like, "That's just the way it is." And it takes sometimes, I think, a couple of years before that history is rewritten.

MA: Interesting. It's more heteronormativity than homophobia, right? It just slides back into heteronormativity. It

doesn't mean to be homophobic, but it feels that way when, you know, because it erases you.

PM: Right, and I think for me, it's sort of -- sometimes this is my personality, but I'm impatient. And so, when it came back a year later, I'm like, "No. [00:10:00] We did this. What?" It's even more annoying than when I saw it the first time.

MA: That's a really telling, and it's a very sharp, description, right? Because it's a kind of institution you're describing, which is one that -- it isn't hostile, but it's just not happening sometimes. It's just not moving forward.

PM: And folks like you yourself and others were here presumably seeing that same set of language. But it -- and feeling really good about this place probably in a lot of ways -- but it does feel like new people can come in and see it and then move it, and then like anything, when you're here for a while, and you stop seeing it, too. You sort of just become assimilated.

MA: Yes. That's very, very true. Yes. Yes. Or it misses you -- or like, so for example, my partner and I are both always employed by the college, so I -- she's always had our own. So, I've never seen those documents. So, I've

literally never seen those documents, because she does hers
[00:11:00] and we're not married, and I do mine.

PM: Oh.

MA: So, I've never seen those documents in my life. When you
tell me that story, I have no idea when you're talking
about. She does her thing, I do mine. We have no legal
relationship. It's just like, "Oh."

PM: Single, single. You just check the "employee" button.

MA: Because we don't want to get married, so we're not. So, it
doesn't bother us. But it would take a different kind of
person who is married to the same-sex person to see that.
Not all same-sex couples would see that, in other words.
So, it's an interesting -- yeah. That is an interesting
issue, right? Because we're different in that way.

PM: Yes, and it was -- and to give up -- maybe I was
particularly sensitive because I had given up the marriage
that I felt like we had gone through.

MA: I could just imagine how that must have felt, or maybe I
can't.

PM: Yes, and now we have it back. Weird, right? You're not
married, then you're married, then you're not married
because you moved across the state line.

MA: Oh, my gosh. So many people I know have gone through that,
repeatedly. Married in this country, not in this country,

married in this state, not in this state, whoops. No.

Wait. Yes. It just is [00:12:00] really crazy.

PM: Yes, that year to file our taxes was a nightmare.

MA: Oh, gosh. (laughter)

PM: We were filing both single and married tax returns.

MA: (laughter) There's a thought. So as a staff member, right, sort of talking to faculty and staff, that's a different thing from being a student, but did it feel welcoming and safe over the five years as an employee here. I mean you're at a time when, did it feel like --

PM: It did, and boy, I am so grateful for that.

MA: That's really nice.

PM: I think Jason always was made to feel welcome at events and by the then-president and our current president, and my boss.

MA: Yes, nice. Nice.

PM: I think that if there was going to be any place that I was worried about it, it was going to be with faculty and staff more than students. Just because I think that I was making some assumptions about generational differences and stuff. But I didn't -- if there was hostility, I never saw it. [00:13:00] I felt it sometimes, but I think -- back to your point about just heteronormativity there, remember, I worked with -- well, not remember, but -- I worked with a

lot of gay people at Harvard and lived among a lot of gay people in Massachusetts, and I came here and I was like, "One, two," and I could, like, count them on my two hands. And it was awful. I remember sort of feeling, "Oh my gosh." There's so few gay people we knew, and even fewer gay men we knew. And when we moved here for almost a year and a half, we knew no other gay men who were married -- or like in a partnership even, not even married. Well, we went way far back in time, and in some ways, we felt that way. And I remember going to our first -- we went to the Allentown -- or the Lehigh Valley Gay Pride when we got here that first summer in August and I was like, "Oh, my God. [00:14:00] This is the Gay Pride we must never miss, because our presence here really matters." Like, really matters. And in Boston, it was crazy.

MA: That's really interesting.

PM: But I think from -- there were times when I felt like we were in rooms and were the only gay couple. We were in rooms and everybody was -- I don't know, maybe even moreover, being friends here with other male colleagues, and the talk turns to wives or to spouses or -- the times when I felt like the only gay person, or I felt very different. Now, in the end, it was more in my head than in theirs, because they were asking me to go golfing on a

Friday just like they would have any other guy and all that. And that made me feel good, but I didn't love that that there weren't a lot of gay men. And there still is not. I'm trying to, [00:15:00] like, sit here and think of some.

MA: It's amazing. I'm sharing your experience. It's like -- I have the fewest gay male friends I have ever, ever, ever, ever had, by a thousand per cent.

PM: Yes!

MA: It is so weird.

PM: Yes! And right now, with me leaving this Dean of Students role. MA: The numbers are one hand. Like, gay men, one hand -- adult gay men on campus.

PM: For sure. And in Campus Life now, none. None. In a profession, mind you, that is a lot of gay people. In higher ed administration and student affairs, of the men, at least a -- you know, a good 25 percent to 30 at national conferences. So, there's the national conference called the American College Personnel Association, or ACPA. We call it "Gay-CPA." (laughter) Because there's so many gay men -- and lesbians, but [00:16:00] -- you know, where our name tags at our conferences have "he, him, his," or "she - - hers" -- like, we have our -- and have for, like, 15 years.

MA: It's really something that we are off the national scale, not just black or white, being weird, but we're, like, off the national scale now.

PM: Yes. So that's where I felt it, but -- because I thought, like, what is it about Lafayette? Or is it about Easton? Or, like, why don't gay people come work here? Why aren't they living here? We've since met some, but it's still -- I can count the number of gay friends we have on two hands.

MA: Wow. Well, that's a challenge, right? I'm trying to think of what you just said as describing the difference between being left out or marginalized, which is not the case, but still, when you're the only one, you're the only one, and that feels different. It's not that you're being marginalized --

PM: No.

MA: -- or mistreated. [00:17:00] It's just that you're the only one. Isolating in some sort of psychological sense, in a way. The shared experiences aren't there or whatever.

PM: Yes. Which makes it then -- you know, we have, almost every year we've been here, made a moment in the summer to go up and spend a week in Provincetown with all of our old friends from Boston. And when I left the week in Provincetown, I actually had a real, noticeable depression for a couple of days. And it wasn't like, "Oh, I want to

be on the beach again." It was, "Oh my God. I was with other gay people in a community, feeling really good" --

MA: And then it was, like, crickets. (laughs)

PM: Yeah. And that was hard for me.

MA: That's powerful. It's such an extreme -- to come back here.

PM: Yeah. Like, P-town to Easton. (laughter) Yeah.

MA: Wow. [00:18:00] Powerful.

PM: So, when students say to me -- you had mentioned students and the intersection that I have with them -- I think I've received, actually, a lot of notes from students since I announced that I was leaving. About four students came out to me in their email. They had never come out to anyone, and they said to me, "I just want you to know as you leave, you've been an incredible role model for me. I'm not out here, but having you be here has made all the difference for me." Well, it's been so powerful for me --

MA: That is powerful.

PM: -- because I don't --

MA: That is powerful.

PM: Four people!

MA: That's incredible.

PM: Like, right? And then some people who are -- our current student body president, who is not out in his home country,

but here, he is, and talked about how important me being here has been for him. And I think that's got to be true for you [00:19:00] and for others of us who are here. We probably don't even know who looks up at us or from a distance and finds our presence here very comforting for them. It's probably like a student of color would feel when they have a black teacher or a black administrator or -- we just don't maybe always know that connection, because it's not so obvious, but --

MA: And you being one of the few out gay men probably really magnifies -- amplifies -- the effect that you've had.

PM: And Jason and I have eaten in the dining hall during our whole five years here. We both have meal plans. We go. We'll hold hands when we walk across campus on purpose. One, because we feel safe enough in the middle of campus, but two, because I think it's important for students to see that -- both straight and non, and anywhere in-between. And, you know, I do a little bit worry about my departure for that reason.

MA: I could see that.

PM: Like, who else will do -- like, who's going to do that for now?

MA: It's huge.

PM: Someone will. I'm not worried about someone taking over as the Dean of Students. They'll find someone.

MA: No, but the other work that you're describing --

PM: The other work [00:20:00], which is just me living my life openly, outwardly.

MA: The representational --

PM: For a lot of students, that has made a huge difference for them.

MA: It's a tribute to the power of being out -- the power as an out adult that you can have -- just to simply exist and walk around.

PM: And I remember -- I mean, I didn't come out until my senior year in college -- we may get there in the conversation, but I remember looking upon other gay people at Miami of Ohio and being like, "I think they're gay." Or, "They're gay."

MA: Yeah. How much you needed them.

PM: Like, there was this one guy [name redacted] who was bisexual (laughter), and I was like, "Oh, he's bisexual!" (laughter) I didn't even know what that meant!

MA: But you were, like, "Yay!"

PM: But I was like, "Wow!" (laughter) So, you know, I do know how those kids feel. I just think it's interesting I'm talking about being at Miami between '93 and '97. We're

talking about 2012 to 2017. And when I leave this summer, it's 2017, and there really isn't a senior [00:21:00] out gay male in a leadership role.

MA: In all of campus life. Yeah.

PM: Yeah. That's 145 people in the Division of Campus Life. So that's something that I think they should pay attention to.

MA: Yeah. Absolutely. And those emails are a testimony to the impact that it has. Because if you're getting four emails, there's really, like, 40 people. You know, because that -- it's just like advertising. The two people that call represent 2,000 people, you know? I think a lot more people -- if you're getting four emails, you've affected a lot --

PM: A couple of them -- well, one of them was in a fraternity, and I thought that was really fascinating, too -- like, a place where were you would absolutely expect some of that heterosexual majority.

MA: How is it for students here, from your perspective as Dean of Students? What have you seen?

PM: You know, I have a few different thoughts and answers to that in this moment. I think about it a lot. Because [00:22:00] -- well, I think about generational cohorts in the work that I do, and certainly gen-Xers are different

than Ys, different than millennials. And I can see that, and I feel that my practice changed -- like, I -- more issues today around resiliency than I've ever had, for instance. And there's a little bit more -- I mean, this is stereotypical in this day in age, but it's actually true -- there are students -- really quick aside. We had a student who was upset that we were doing "Weigh Your Waste" at the dining hall. So, you just weighed your waste, and then you got to -- you know, and the whole point was just to catalog how much waste we have of food. Well, he was upset that he was made to feel bad because he had waste on his plate. Well, it's just interesting. I'm sort of like, "Well, that is kind of the point." Like, kind of the point is -- but he was so upset that he wrote to tons of people. He was really unhappy. He wanted us to not have these events. But there's some of this around today, [00:23:00] in today's age. But I think in some ways, our LGBT students who are out are stronger and more vocal and more united and more -- I love seeing the students at the rally who are describing words that I don't even know what they mean. And there's a part of me who feels really happy that they're comfortable saying they're pansexual or ambisexual or all -- you know, whatever, because God, it was hard enough for me to say "homosexual." And that was, like, in

the language, you know? (laughter) So I love it. And then at -- there's a part of me -- this is, like -- like, talking out of both sides of my mouth here -- and then there's a part of me who thinks, like, do they know what this m-- like, do they -- is the label -- is it faddish? And it's not the same as me saying -- like, I know that there are people who used to say -- when people would say, "I'm bisexual," like, "You're on your way to gay" -- like, or whatever. And today, I would never think that. I would be like, "No. Legitimately bisexual." But there's a part of me who thinks, like [00:24:00], Am I just like those old people who used to say that bisexual wasn't real when I hear these words? But I also think, how must they know? Or, how can they know? Or, did I know? So, I find myself, like, being like an old person at the same time I'm working with these young people. But I'm -- I think differently. I'm really -- I like it. I'm excited by it. I suppose that's why I'm in this field. I like being in the cutting edge: where are we going with this and what does this mean? Initially I did resist a little bit -- the "he, him, his" -- like, when I would introduce myself, and then I thought, why are you resistant to that? Just, like, do it. Like, if it's "he, him his," like, why -- but I think it's funny how, even as we were where they are in some ways identity-

wise, we're -- but there's a generational overlay to that, which I think is fascinating to me. And I'm trying -- you know, as a 42-year-old, I'm trying to remain contemporary with our generations, [00:25:00] because I think that's how I do my work effectively, if I can be. I guess just acknowle--

MA: It changes as it gets further from --

PM: I think so.

MA: -- the current -- the generation you're in.

PM: Yeah, so, like, to go home and do some Wikipedia searching after the rally.

MA: Demisexual, pansexual -- like, that's -- the spectrum of identities has quadrupled.

PM: I'd just like to see a graph -- like a chart --

MA: I need a pie chart.

PM: I do. (laughs)

MA: I need a linear -- like, something.

PM: Yeah. I don't know.

MA: I can't keep up with the flags anymore, either.

PM: I know.

MA: There used to be three. Now there's, like, 14. (laughs)

PM: I didn't even know there was 14. See? (laughs)

MA: No, I made that up. (laughter) But there's really so many. I just -- I can't remember them. I've got, like, little

cheat sheets so I can -- you know, I'm trying to be respectful and I'm confused --

PM: But I think I'm happy about that.

MA: It's a very cool thing.

PM: Because then it does -- it sort of feels like, yeah, like, let's push the boundary.

MA: Yeah. They own it.

PM: Why is there -- like, it's not even -- we used to fight about the gender binary. Now it's like -- there's, like, seven genders, and it's, like, not even a binary. It's, like, whatever it is. And I like it. And then I also still find myself [00:26:00] going, "But I don't, like, get it." And, you know, that's probably always been -- that's probably true for why there were times when we would meet older gay male couples who were wondering, why were we getting married?

MA: Yeah. Or would never use the word "queer." Ever.

PM: Or would certainly find it odd that I introduce Jason as my husband. Right? So, it's interesting. It's sort of just, like, one more generation where I'm asking some of the same questions --

MA: Yeah, that's right. I remember being at my first queer conference, and this older gay man had a meltdown, because people kept saying "queer," and for him, that was the word

he had been baited with his whole life. He didn't want to hear it.

PM: Right. It'd be like if I start using the, you know, "faggot" word or something. Right.

MA: Yeah, and it's really -- you know. So, these generations have these really powerful -- they have reasons for what they -- we have reasons for what we do, and they have reasons for what they do, and it's interesting to keep the conversation going. And it is challenging -- and great. I mean, and it's their story to tell, right? [00:27:00] So it's exciting to hear them try to tell it. But it's really -- so you see the student experience. There are very few - - relative to the size of the college and other colleges like this -- very few students out here.

PM: I think so. Yeah, I do.

MA: Is that your experience as well?

PM: Uh-huh. I do. There's a lot of allies, but there are few out people, and it's pretty homogenous archetype of the "out." One of the reasons it took me so long to come out is because I thought to come out, I needed to be like Boy George or like Michael Jackson. I just didn't have a lot of, like, gay -- and I don't even think Michael Jackson was out (laughs) or whatever, but I think I couldn't find myself in what I could see at Miami in the early '90s. And

it took me going to the AIDS Memorial Quilt in Washington, D.C. in '96 -- to be on the Mall with gay men and women, and a huge -- I mean, there were gay men who were holding hands or pushing [00:28:00] strollers. And in that moment, I thought, Oh. Oh. I could do this. I could be gay. Because I didn't see myself as Boy George. And I think in some ways when you look at Lafayette, it feels a little bit less representative of the LGBT society.

MA: Narrower?

PM: And maybe that's why there are fewer people out -- because it's sort of like me and not being able to identify with Boy George. They just don't have what you might see at a larger institution or maybe a more urban institution. I've often wondered, like, what is that? And I've often wondered, is this, like, the engineering thing? Is it that we have more sciences here, and less humanities? Like, I'm interested as I go to Colgate, right? Even more rural than here, but no engineering. [00:29:00] Will I see more LGBT people?

MA: Where the arts is very --

PM: Yeah, right? And so, there's something about Lafayette that actually does feel like 20 years behind in terms of the number and the diversity of even the LGBT population.

MA: Yeah. So maybe our more conservative history, the engineering -- there's a lot of things that keep people in the closet here?

PM: And also, potentially, that there's really very little anonymity here. You can't really try it on. Or you can't -- like, there's -- I mean, people know the last three people you dated, the last three people you slept with, who's breaking up with who, who -- I mean, it's just like a big high school in some ways. And so, let's say you -- we know a lot of -- well, this isn't probably even true anymore, but in my generation, a lot of people came out in college. Because they tried -- they could get away from their old and they'd try something new. And in some ways, maybe because [00:30:00] of how small this is, maybe it still just feels like a high school in terms of how much people know about your business, and there isn't that ability --

MA: And the costs of them knowing it are a little higher than -
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PM: Right. And so then when you look at the people at the rally who are willing to use these labels and say what they are and whatever, it -- well, for sure, I can say this -- in the five years I've been here, there -- if you were go to Provincetown for a week and you would come here and you

would look at the gay men, our gay men are a tenth of what the population could look like. You know, it's hard to imagine. You know, I'm the faculty advisor of the baseball team. Hard to imagine there isn't one gay man on that baseball team, but there isn't. Not, at least, out. But my guess is -- (laughs) -- there is. And you can do that with all 23 of our Division I sports. You know, we have one "out" tennis player. [00:31:00] But we parade that poor man out --

MA: Yeah, he must be exhausted.

PM: -- too much, right? And so, there's got to be 15 more of him -- and athletes. But you don't see that here. And I think that could potentially -- remember, you just said this earlier in the interview -- the power of being out. When you don't have other students who are out -- it's like, who gets up and starts to dance?

MA: We don't have a culture of outness, and so no one feels like they know what to do. So, everybody sort of stays closeted -- or they just tell some friends, maybe, but they -- even if that. It's an interesting -- but it keeps the silence going, is, I guess what we're sort of --

PM: Right. Unless some students would say to us right now if they were sitting here, "Yeah, you know, Mary and Paul, we just don't come out. That was what you guys did. We don't

do that." (laughs) And then I'm like, Huh. (laughs) So then I don't know. Like, is it we who --

MA: Are we looking for something that isn't the right thing [00:32:00] to look for? That's certainly very possible.

PM: But the rally should be more representative. That's what I do know. And for whatever reason, it isn't.

MA: Do you get the sense that the gay community for the students is really modulated by race, by ethnicity, by those -- by other intersectional factors that are -- they make a difference in the experience? Or does it seem pretty consistent?

PM: Yeah, I feel like it does. If there's anything that has ever been disruptive in terms of ideologies or identities, it's been political. Like, I can think of times during my five years where people were in or out of Spectrum because it was either too political or not political enough, or it was too vocal or not vocal enough, or that doesn't seem to be the case right this moment, I don't think. But I've never heard of -- it's, like, "the spectrum doesn't have any people of color."

MA: You mean Quest?

PM: I meant Quest. Yes, yes, yes. Sorry. [00:33:00] Spectrum is at Lehigh.

MA: It's often called Spectrum at other places.

PM: Well, and it's partly because we -- you know, I'll do our laundry home and I'll be washing Jason's Spectrum t-shirts, so then I've got, you know -- yeah, it is Quest. So, Quest at this moment doesn't feel like that, but -- and when, again, I saw the diversity at some Quest meetings this year or the rally itself in April, it felt from a male-female, people of color -- like, it felt like pretty --

MA: Yeah, like, a good ratio, a good mix.

PM: Didn't it?

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

PM: It felt at least representative of Lafayette as a whole.

MA: Yeah. That's fair. I could see that, too. So, the students -- I want to talk more about you, but I'm just thinking about academics. One of the questions we ask folks when they're alone is about their academic experience around LGBTQ issues. Do you have a sense that the students are getting some of that here, or does that not seem -- does that -- something that doesn't cross your [00:34:00] radar screen?

PM: I think they want more of it and could have more of it, and more people could have some of it. So, you know, like -- I think that -- you're probably -- for some of our students who we know by first name and who undoubtedly pop up in your office often -- I think they are probably getting a

lot of it, because of folks like you who are really, I think, providing some incredibly good scholarship to them. I think that the institution -- there's not enough people getting exposure to that. And, you know, one of our -- do we have a human sexuality class here?

MA: There was one in Psych. I don't think it's taught very often.

PM: So, we had that at Miami, and it was, like -- tons of people took it, because it was, like, human sexuality, right? It was just, like, something you took. But there was a lot exposure to queer theory, to queer development, to bisexuality -- to whatever -- for kids who were as heterosexual as they could get. They still got that exposure. I don't feel like [00:35:00] that kind -- that happens here. And so, you have some people who have a lot of intellectual sort of exposure to that work, but mostly people don't. I think that's a shame.

MA: Yeah, that is a shame.

PM: And I don't know if it -- again, I mean, we're at this liberal arts institution, but it's probably because there aren't enough of you -- you know, people who really know what they're talking about.

MA: A lack of faculty. Yeah.

PM: This is what I think. And it's not fair to compare Miami to Lafayette. There's 16,000 students there. But even if I compare it to Harvard -- 6,700 students -- they have more than five times what we offer, and they're only three times as big.

MA: Yeah, we have almost no LGBTQ studies, or even, like, human sexuality or even the -- it's -- when you describe it, you see what a big gap it is. Students aren't exposed to it by chance [00:36:00], which means the vast majority -- you have to go get it. You can avoid it your whole-- learning about anything like this.

PM: Oh. Definitely. Yeah, that's too bad, I think.

MA: Yeah, that's too bad. So, one of the things that we are interested in are sort of -- you mentioned the t-shirts and the library's steps in the first Equality -- sort of the big moments. Were there others on campus that really struck you? So, we've had an Equality rally recently. Other big things? It could be personal things like, just -
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PM: Yeah, speakers. Yeah, I think that there's been some really good speakers. About two years ago, I think, we did -- we made a really good, concerted effort to combine the Social Justice Speaker Series -- even before it had that moniker -- with the work that LAF was doing to bring some

folks. So, I think about bringing, you know, Piper Kerman from *Orange is the New Black*, which, for a lot of people, that was exposure to sort of -- you know, same-sex. I mean, that's a -- it was, like, a popular show, and for a lot of people, that was interesting exposure to female-female sexuality. And so, bringing her -- or I'm looking [00:37:00] up here with Janet Mock on -- but I think we did a good job of bringing people who could expose more people to some LGBT or to some enlightened sexuality topics. So, I feel good about that. Yeah, sometimes, I guess I would also say, when I look back and I think about sort of what's most noteworthy, sometimes I think back at what I didn't see here. And I didn't see a lot of "faggot" or "queer" on people's whiteboards or in bathroom stalls -- and I would get all those, right? So, I get every police report, I get every bias report. Did we have a few? A few, but very few. [00:38:00] And we had probably more swastikas --

MA: Right. Well, with that, yeah, terrible period --

PM: It was like, N equals -- yeah, like, whatever -- I'm convinced it was one person doing that. But then we did homophobia. That's impressive -- based on what we just talked about, which is like there's not a lot of us here. There's not a lot of people out. Like, so you might guess that you would have seen more of it. And, you know, I did

have one student who feels like he might have been taunted for being gay on his floor. But by and large, like, I was -- that was noteworthy to me. And I was expecting to manage that a bit more than I had to, which I'm so grateful for.

MA: Wow. That's marvelous you didn't.

PM: Yeah. I'm sure this is one of those times where you said earlier, "If you think of something later." Like, I think there were really probably moments here that were happening nationwide. Same-sex marriage [00:39:00] was legalized across the land during my time here. Huge. Although I still think we as an institution probably didn't fully leverage that. Because I don't still know that people understood that people who are married somewhere else or not married now, or that you had to -- the taxes, and -- like, we could've talked a lot about that moment for some people, but we didn't. We just -- it got -- it happened, and then we moved on.

MA: A lot of that goes by. Right.

PM: But that was important.

MA: Well, that's an interesting point. I mean, big national things happen, and often this is the case -- that we don't talk about them.

PM: This is so true here. Yes. Not just LGBT, but I feel like, Oh my God. Like, Ferguson and all the stuff that was happening around race -- we just, "Whoop." Like, "Move on." Weird.

MA: Yeah. We are a bubble in that regard. Very, very powerfully. And things don't enter -- the common current events where everybody's talking about it. And that's true for LGBT and race stuff. I think that's very much the case. [00:40:00] Yeah. Huh. That's an interesting -- it's an interesting characteristic of the institution that we don't really pick up on --

PM: Right, and you can't -- and I'm not even sitting here saying that I think it would've been possible, because who would lift that conversation? It would be you, over and over and -- there's such, again, a small number of people that that isn't fair, either.

MA: Right. We lack a critical mass of faculty and staff -- that's sort of what's emerging from your comments, I think, very clearly -- to do a lot of this work -- the critical mass --

PM: Like, in 2017, I absolutely do think that we lack a critical mass in terms of race, in terms of religious diversity, political and sexual orientation diversity. I do. And with 230 faculty, 700 staff, we could do better.

MA: Yeah. It seems like it. With some many resources. A little more will, because our hearts are apparently in the right place, but we have to sort of drive it. So, what does the college still need to do, do you think? I mean, you're in the catbird seat [00:41:00] to ensure that the community thrives at Lafayette. That could be the staff, the faculty, the students.

PM: I think there's still a resistance in some ways to just some of the education -- I find it ironic, I guess, is the right word here, that we know, for instance, faculty and staff need more education and understanding around issues of Title IX. It's an easy one, because there's so much that's come out about Title IX, and particularly sexual violence on college campuses and all that -- even sexual harassment. And then there's this real resistance on any training on it by people who are in education. Like, we could go to Staples corporate -- or, like, whatever -- Abercrombie and Fitch -- and they would probably have more will, appetite, or just -- I don't know -- maybe they were just sort of forced [00:42:00] to just do these trainings. Our educators don't want to be educated. But that is just an illustration of what I think needs to happen around diversity education writ large. So, the critical mass could be here if more people were just enlightened and

informed. Because maybe you don't need to be LGBT to lift those conversations or to make different comments in your classroom. I know that our students of color say this, and I -- not being a person of color, I'm sure I don't hear it often -- as often as they do -- but they describe it in the classroom all the time. And because I'm not in the classroom here, I bet there are all sort of heteronormative comments and assumptions that are made. It could be eradicated through education by people who presumably value education, but people say a lot of times, "Oh no, the faculty will never do that. Oh, no, they'll never have that training." [00:43:00] And I am the kind of person who's like, "Well, so what? Do it." "Well, then, how we will get them to" -- don't pay them for their next paycheck until they do it. I mean, I don't know, but sometimes there's a part of me that's like, we sometimes play to the lowest common denominator instead of, like, where do we want to be? What can we --we don't aim high enough. And I've said this -- I mean, I love this place in so, so many ways, so I don't want the interview to come out like I didn't, but sometimes I say, "We almost got there." It is crazy. But it's like, we run -- we will run hard at something, and we almost get there, and it just peters out. That's what I want us to do is, like, follow through, be

bolder. There are a few of us here who I think are bold, but again, by and large, the institution sometimes is afraid to take a bold step. Like, required diversity training [00:44:00] for all faculty -- I don't know why that doesn't seem -- like, maybe I'm missing something here, but it just doesn't seem radical. We even talked about -- in our office -- about having everyone have background checks four years ago. "Well, no, we do background checks on staff, but we don't do them for faculty." And I'm like, "Oh, my God. Has anyone paid attention to the *New York Times*, what's happening across this country?" At boarding schools. At universities. Like, faculty are with students as much as any staff member. But it's, "Well, we can't get faculty." Now, today, new faculty have background checks, but there's no willingness to go and get background checks on older faculty. Fine. Fine, fine, fine. But it is interesting to me, again, how we won't just say, "Here's what we think we need," and then do it. We're afraid sometimes, I think -- or some of us are afraid. [00:45:00] With alcohol, when I got here -- you know that the high-risk alcohol use was abhorrent, in my mind. And there was real resistance for me to make a bold move in that area. That there -- everything from public safety, who said, "They'll riot."

And I go, "They're 18 to 22. They are not going to riot (laughs) if we come --" like, no. And so, it is true that that first homecoming, we brought a lot of police to campus, because people thought that we were going to have a riot. Oh, they were totally -- they just followed the rules. And over five years, you know, the number of violations, hospitalizations -- all of that's way, way, way down, but that first 18 months, I ran up -- honest to God, Mary, eight times out of 10, people saying, "No, we can't do that. Oh, no. That'll never work. Oh, no we can't do that. Oh, no." And I think even some faculty -- you remember a year -- no, probably two years ago -- I stood up on the floor of the faculty -- in my, like, remarks, I had said to Annette, I really want to get up and speak [00:46:00] during the dean's and vice president's reports. And they go, "Oh, no, no, no, no, no. No dean of students has ever spoken on the floor of the faculty." And I go, "Oh, I find that hard to believe. Maybe in recent history that's true." I said, "It says, 'Deans and Vice Presidents,'" like, "Yeah, but no one does." I go, "Well, but I'm going to." And I stood up and I sort of said, "I think we all need to realize that the narrative around high-risk alcohol use has changed. You may think that it's 2012 but let me show you some data that it's not."

MA: Yeah, I remember that. That was great.

PM: Well, that worked, because then I think some people realized it was a better place, and whatever, whatever. There's always, like, this fear of, like, taking bold moves around where we want to be. So, I guess when you ask me, what do we need? Guts. Courage. A little bit of bravery. A little bit more radicals. Something. Or a little bit of all of that. [00:47:00]

MA: Yeah. Follow through on all of the -- those high ambitions need that kind of boldness to really get there, to really arrive.

PM: Yeah. But I'm not sure exactly what people are afraid of. And maybe that's my naiveté. I mean --

MA: No, that's what I'm sitting here wondering. It's an interesting problem.

PM: It is, isn't it? Does it need leadership? I mean, this is something I've thought a lot about. Like, does it need leadership, because it's sort of like anyone -- there's a great video on YouTube of this, like, one guy at a -- like, it's like a big music concert, and he gets up and he starts to dance. And everyone is just kind of watching him, and they start to film him on the cell phone and then, like, he's there for like three minutes, just dancing on his own. And then, like, a second person joins him and starts to

dance. And then, like, two becomes four. And then this video keeps going, and in over four minutes, the entire field of people is dancing. And so, you know, the whole point is, like, it's not [00:48:00] the first dancer that's the most important one. It's, like, the second and the third who joins the dancer. And I think sometimes we need the dancer, and we need, like, two and three. So, is it the leadership? Is it the next level? Where does it come from? But it does seem to me that that's what it needs. As much as any infrastructure, I think it needs something that comes from within the current people who are here.

MA: It's hard to explain where the fear comes from. I've seen it here, too. Being also relatively new. And I've got eight years here, but -- yeah, I can see that. That makes a lot of sense. So, what haven't I asked you that you would like to talk about -- about your time here or -- you've covered a lot of ground.

PM: I think it is about [00:49:00] -- I would like to see -- again, back to sort of more LGBT faculty and students here. And I believe that they exist in the world in larger numbers than in any other prior generation, so I think that there is more people to pull from. And so then is it that there's, like, no one here dancing? So, like, if you come here -- is it that we don't do a good job of recruiting?

Is it that when people get here, and they look, they don't find warmth or welcomeness? Or is it like me? Like, I came, and I couldn't find any other gay men. I knew I wanted this job, and it was a good job, so I came. But, like -- and I was married -- that's another thing. Like, I think that in some ways --

MA: That changes things.

PM: It does. Well, but, like, maybe I wouldn't've come if I had been single or if -- something like that. So, then there's like this [00:50:00] never -- and I think the same -- true for students in terms of coming out and whatever. We're not in the LG-- you know, we don't go to the LGBT-Friendly Admissions Fair that every year is in New York or Boston. There's always one. And dammit, I wanted to do that, and I've talked with our admissions staff -- like, "Let me go represent. Let's have a table with Lafayette on that banner." Or maybe we should ask gender identity on the Common App because it would signify something. Or maybe -- like, I want us to -- I just -- I almost want a strategic plan for more diversity for LGBT people the way there is, I think, a good strategic plan for socioeconomic diversity. Right? We're in march of being need-blind. And I think that that won't happen, but I think it's a good goal. Like, I think it's just too expensive. And I think

there's probably a similarly unspoken rule about more diversity in terms of students of [00:51:00] color.

Where's our plan for LGBT diversity? Because I think it's actually really important, if for no other reason than that somehow, I think that the world is probably -- whatever, just use your old -- old stat, which is 10 percent. Well, we don't have 10 percent here. We don't have 23 faculty, which we should have, and we don't have 70 staff, which we should have. So -- like, that's not good. Because then it's not representative of the world. And that's bad for our graduates, who will enter a workforce and be unprepared because they won't know what pansexual, demisexual -- or whatever --

MA: They need to know. They seriously need to know.

PM: They need to know.

MA: It's part of their education. It's for the real world, because that's the new real world. There's always a new one, and we're supposed to get them ready for it. Why doesn't admissions go to the events?

PM: I don't know.

MA: I've heard that so many times from different people, that there's just this sort of shoulder shrugging --

PM: There's a book that's, like -- you know, there's websites [00:52:00] on --

MA: There's all these things about how to do it.

PM: -- like, the most LGBT-friendly space. If we care so much about *U.S. News and World Reports* [sic] and all the attributes that make up that rating, then, like, let's figure out what it is that the *Advocate's* looking for to become an LGBT-friendly campus. And, you know, even this summer, our residence life staff has been asking -- pushed -- to become more contemporary in their gender-neutral housing policies, their gender-inclusive housing policies. And they need to be. And again, it's this fear. Like, "Oh. We can't imagine parents moving in and freshmen, and there being a room next door with a boy and a girl in it." And I'm thinking, "Well, then, they'll get over it."

MA: Yeah. It's the same old fear.

PM: I don't know. Just do it. (laughs) We're not the first.

MA: Is it a fear of alums?

PM: I think sometimes it is. It's almost a fear of, like, just made-up things, because -- yes, were the alums initially resistant when we changed and went down this [00:53:00] path of becoming harder on alcohol use on big weekends like Homecoming at Lafayette? Oh, yeah, they were pissed. Not happy at all. Too bad. Because it is not justifiable to come back here and drink a case of beer for that day -- and, like -- or whatever it is. Like, that's just gross,

and it's not what we want to be. And we can be better. And so, I think in some ways I just kept saying, "So if they get upset, we're going to comply with high-risk drinking?" Like, "We're good with high-risk drinking?" So, it's sort of the same thing, I guess I would say -- like, so they're resistant to what? Gender-neutral housing, because both people are agreeing to live together? Like, we don't have all-male dorms and all-female dorms anymore, either, and I'm sure that was a huge deal. In fact, I just had dinner with two alums, class of '69 and '70, last week, and they were the last class of men before women, and they described -- you know, I intentionally asked them all kinds of questions. [00:54:00] "Tell me about that year, and what was it like when people were talking about women gonna start in the next class?" The world was going to fall. Like, it was going to change Lafayette. It was going to be terrible. People couldn't imagine -- you know, all that stuff, you know, was on campus. And we're -- you know, what a wonderful place we are. Thankfully, they took a bold move then. But that's what I want for here.

MA: Yeah. Maybe some of these moves are seen as political as opposed to -- with alcohol, you can argue that it's the safety of students. But these can be argued as, like, oh,

a bunch of liberal people want to have, you know, gender-inclusive housing, or whatever --

PM: Right. What's next? Dogs marrying each other? Or, like, whatever people say that drives me crazy. Yes.

MA: That's the stuff -- maybe we have a strong tradition threatening retribution upon the leadership, the president, the faculty -- you know, for trying to do something bold.
[00:55:00] It's not an easy place to take chances.

PM: When we were at our recent development event together in New York City -- one, I loved that night, by the way --

MA: I'm so glad you could come.

PM: I didn't even know I was going to love it. Like, I was invited, and I thought, Oh, should I -- yeah, let me go.

MA: I'm so glad you came.

PM: Like, it was like, I should go. So, it's one of those things -- you're like, "Oh my God. I'm so glad I didn't miss that event." And, you know, that alumna who got up and spoke about her experience here was powerful.

MA: That was very powerful.

PM: And the anger -- maybe we should recognize that in every angry alum who's conservative, we could just imagine there's one angry LGBT alum who's just as angry about it staying the same. And now whose voice is more important? You know?

MA: That's well said. [00:56:00]

PM: Anyway. Let's see if we can end it there.

MA: It remains for me to say, first of all, thank you for the interview and your wonderful thoughts. And also, thank you for being here for five years and making the huge difference that you have made -- being yourself, which is no small thing, I know, for an LGBTQ person sometimes -- and that you and Jason were able to really have the power of being out -- as well as just being a really awesome Dean of Students.

PM: Thanks, Mary.

MA: You made a really big difference. You've made a difference in a lot of lives. So, we're very proud you were with us for five years, and very glad you could do an interview.

PM: Thanks again for the invitation -- and moreover, for doing this.

MA: My pleasure.

END OF AUDIO FILE