

LAFAYETTE COLLEGE
LGBTQ ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview of
Ha Vu '17
Conducted by
Mary Armstrong
May 16, 2017

Special Collections & College Archives

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Lafayette College

2018

Vu

MARY ARMSTRONG: OK, we are recording. This is Mary Armstrong, and I am a professor of Women's and Gender Studies and chair of the Women's and Gender Studies program. It is May 16th, Tuesday, 2017, and I am here with Ha Vu, a graduate of 2017, so that's very exciting. Congratulations.

HA VU: Yeah. Thank you.

MA: Who has kindly agreed to do an LGBTQ oral history interview with us as part of the Queer Archives Project. So, Ha, we start every interview the same way, so we ask everyone to state their name and to confirm that their participation is voluntary and that they've given their informed consent.

HV: All right. Yeah, so I'll state my name.

MA: Please.

HV: Yeah, so my name is Ha Vu. I voluntarily reached out to be interviewed for this project.

MA: Great.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Wonderful. Thank you. Would you mind if we took a picture of you after this?

HV: Of course.

MA: OK, that's very much appreciated. [00:01:00] We like to have a face to a name, and I'm going to put my cell phone right near me so I don't forget to do that.

HV: OK.

MA: And we appreciate that. So, as we started, I wanted to tell you that any question you don't want to answer, you could just say you don't want to answer it. It's entirely up to you --

HV: OK.

MA: -- or it might not be something that you have anything to say about, which is fine. It's really your story, right, so we're not trying to get any particular story that we want. We want to ask questions that'll help you tell your story. So if there is any question we didn't ask or if there's something you think, "Oh, I'd love to tell this story," that's what we're here for. (laughs)

HV: OK.

MA: So it's all about you and not about me or the project. If you have any additional comments or information -- that might be your friend.

HV: Yes.

F: Hey, thank you.

HV: See you later. [00:02:00] All right.

MA: OK, that was easy. If you have any additional comments later, you know, sometimes you think of something, so anything you'd like to email us, if you think, "Oh, I remembered this one thing that happened," or an occasion --

HV: All right.

MA: -- or, "I had some extra thoughts I wanted to share," go ahead and email us anytime.

HV: OK.

MA: We're happy to -- this is not over when it's over. You can add anything any time.

HV: All right.

MA: What personal pronouns and name do you prefer?

HV: She, her, hers.

MA: OK. So you define yourself as a -- we're going to say you're an alum of 2017 because you're officially done and the grades are in, and commencement hasn't happened, but you're all finished up.

HV: Yes.

MA: So how do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ community?

HV: I identify as bisexual.

MA: OK. Go ahead.

HV: But I am a female -- cisgender, female-identifying.

[00:03:00] Yeah.

MA: OK. OK, cisgender, female, bisexual. Anything else to add about who you are to sort of describe yourself, not even, I mean, as LGBTQ or just generally?

HV: Oh, wow, that's a loaded question about who I am.

MA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just the easy answer for now, and then, you know --

HV: Right. Yeah, I mean, if I have to define myself in some way, I'm Vietnamese, but I studied in Singapore for four years in high school before I came to the US to study at Lafayette College. So, in a way, I guess I have taken some sort of -- although I am kind of iffy about the word -- cosmopolitan identity.

MA: OK. I see.

HV: Yeah, at least transnational would be what I would say. Yes.

MA: Yeah. OK. So did you come to us from Singapore out of high school to Lafayette?

HV: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MA: Wow. OK. All right. So a complex global identity.

[00:04:00] All right.

HV: Yeah.

MA: So we'll start out generally just with questions about your experience of being a bisexual woman, cisgender woman on campus.

HV: OK.

MA: So you can answer that any way that makes sense to you.

Did you feel like people with your identity were -- the LGBT community -- were visible? Did it feel safe? How has the climate been for you during your years here?

HV: Right. So, coming from Singapore, which is a very homophobic, legally, institutionalized homophobic nation, it's definitely -- when I first came here, it feels a lot more open. It's talked about a lot more, and I did go to Quest, actually, my first year for the first meeting, and I actually even got intimidated by how open it was to talk about sex, and I was not ready for all of that. [00:05:00] After a while, I think it got -- I realized, and especially there has been a lot of transformation in how I think about the climate around me after this year, I suppose, with the political climate and with the stark realization of how big of a bubble Lafayette is for me and that most people outside of the college are not like this. I mean, I think there have been several phases. There's a phase where everybody rejoiced when the same-sex marriage was legalized, and I am glad that I lived -- I was staying in the United States throughout that period. Yeah, so --

MA: Yeah, an exciting time.

HV: -- that was an exciting time. At that time, I just thought that everybody loved that -- I felt absolutely [00:06:00] safe in here, but I think now I am not sure if I feel as safe in the United States. But it's still -- I guess, as -- yeah, as a bisexual woman, the identity that I occupy is still a lot more accepted than a lot of other parts of the LGBTQ spectrum.

MA: So it feels like a safer spot, but the US feels less safe.

HV: I feel like it's less safe now.

MA: Since the election of 2016, there has been a big shift.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: OK, so that's interesting, because you can actually feel a difference over this time.

HV: Yeah.

MA: And you described Lafayette as a bubble. What's your major? What was your major?

HV: Anthropology and sociology, and computer science.

MA: OK, so you had a double major in A&S and computer science.

HV: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

MA: OK, so that's a full schedule.

HV: Yeah.

MA: And those are different worlds --

HV: Yes. (laughs)

MA: -- right, too?

HV: Definitely, yeah.

MA: So can you talk a little bit about that?

HV: Yeah. So I actually came in as an anthropology [00:07:00] and sociology, and film and media studies double major. Then, I switched into computer science, actually, in my third year of college.

MA: Oh, wow.

HV: Yeah, so I have a kind of unusual major path.

MA: Yes.

HV: But in A&S, I would say it's very -- I mean, obviously, it's very supportive. I love everybody in A&S. All of the faculty are very wonderful. There's definitely a lot of awareness in the scholarship that we do. Queerness is very much relevant, I mean, although, especially for sociology, the three big categories, race, class, and gender are talked about a lot more. But there's still a lot of queer visibility.

MA: Yes.

HV: In CS, it's a very different environment. In a way, [00:08:00] it's a very close-knit community because there are fewer people, and people take all of the same classes, so everybody knows each other. But there is a higher degree of close-knittedness. Yeah, actually, this semester

I'm pretty sure we had the first ever sort of a queer CS people dinner.

MA: Yeah. Wow, great.

HV: There are four of us.

MA: There's four of you? That's great.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: That's wonderful.

HV: Yeah, and we kind of talk about that, whether it's safe for certain people to come out in the department or not. I think the verdict is pretty much -- it's definitely not safe among students, and it might be safe among faculty but to varying degrees, and it's also questionable even when it is safe or how much it could be contained because of how close-knit it is.

MA: So word would travel quickly.

HV: That sort of thing, yeah. Yeah, pretty much, the other day [00:09:00] I got a job. I told one professor. The next day, all of the professors know, that sort of thing. Yeah.

MA: OK. OK. It's like a small town.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Instantly, everybody knows everything.

HV: Yeah.

MA: That makes a big difference. So, in a way, you sort of were at two different Lafayettes because you had two different majors.

HV: Oh, yeah.

MA: Yeah, that's a funny thing.

HV: Yeah.

MA: And the classes in A&S covered some content with queer studies and --

HV: Yeah, I mean --

MA: -- those issues came up.

HV: Yeah, definitely, although actually, I definitely learned a lot about sexuality and gender and forms of gender expressions even from my first intro class in A&S. Yeah. The class I delved a lot more in, though, was when I was in London for my study-abroad trip to Goldsmiths. So there were two classes -- I actually did it in my sophomore year fall semester, so --

MA: That's wonderful.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: Wow, that's great.

HV: Yeah, [00:10:00] I took a sociology class there. We talked about representation, and we read Judith Butler and yeah, it was kind of a shock for a sophomore. (laughs)

MA: That's pretty heavy.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Yeah, that's serious. That's serious stuff.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, so there's definitely -- and I had to read Foucault, *Genealogy of Sexuality*, yeah, so it was --

MA: Very serious theoretical things.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Wow. And was that helpful, the class, the classroom?

HV: Yeah. No, yeah, that semester definitely shifted -- it's almost like a paradigm shift for me from --

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

HV: -- yeah, because before, even in the intro class in A&S I still have -- I feel I have some connection with sort of the previous frameworks that I internalized as I came here. But yeah, after that it's a totally different story.

MA: That's some big changes. Now, during your years here, [00:11:00] these are differences between majors. Did you feel like there were pockets of LGBTQ life socially, or how did it sort of work?

HV: Yeah, it's funny, because I'm not out at all during my first three years here. I was in the closet entirely. In a way, because I do not make myself visible, I do not really gain access to queer visibility. So I only start seeing it a lot more this year when I start, you know, becoming much more vocal, a lot more public about my

identity. But even -- well, I think before, there has been -- there will be -- I know a few of my friends are gay, things like that, but I was treated more as an ally, I guess. [00:12:00] And I was also very -- so, in Singapore, I went to a boarding school, and I lived with all girls, so it's very messy. And with all the teenage girls together, there's definitely a lot of dramas. So when I came to college, I was trying to sort of stay above the fray in a way. I do not gossip. I do not talk about relationships, so, in a way, I'm also not privy to that information because I do not ask for that. I did not really know in the first three years, but after -- yeah, in my fourth year, I broke up with my girlfriend in the summer. And then I would just kind of start talking to another -- I came out to -- actually, I started coming out after I broke up with my girlfriend, and I came out to [00:13:00] a friend who is a lesbian. And then, there were four of us who are either lesbian or bisexual who all just went through breakups, so we just kind of started talking together. And then, yeah, it's just kind of interesting, I guess, because we started kind of forming a group and then talking about it. It's my first time having, like, a group of friends who were queer, and I could actually talk about that. After that, I think, I started hearing a lot more

about what the campus climate is like, and, yeah, I hear a lot more about the casual sort of -- yeah, the queer people hooking up with one another, just like what you hear from normal heterosexual couples all the time.

So it was kind of [00:14:00] weird because there would be certain stories of people I know who are in the closet or that go to my -- like, I know, certainly, that my friends can out certain people to me as well. And it's interesting, because I think there's still a lot of that kind of dynamic of, say, people -- I don't know -- meet up or go to parties and then hook up. But there's that -- and then, news travels. But then, when news travels to me, it's like there's another layer where I have to reflect on whether it's even ethical for me to hear all of this.

Yeah.

MA: Yes. Yes, absolutely. Yeah, so the hookup culture, being out has a price to some degree where your privacy or respectfulness about people's private lives -- you kind of -- that's the cost.

HV: Right. Yeah.

MA: You hear things and -- yeah. Yeah, so you entered the -- you found a gay peer group, [00:15:00] a queer peer group -

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: -- towards the end of your time here, and that's been -- it sounds like you were all supporting each other during a difficult --

HV: Yeah. In a way, it's almost a very normal kind of --

MA: Absolutely. Yeah.

HV: -- yeah, we talked about love lives a lot. Somebody wanting to chase after another girl or something.

Yeah, but I think in a way, it's even blown up a little bit compared to, say, a coed friend group. I'm not sure -- I mean, obviously, I wouldn't know what it would be like in an all-male peer group, whether they talk a lot about, yeah, dating. Anyway, but what I meant to say was that personally, I felt that it got played up a little bit, that aspect of talking about relationships, talking about love, just because we had never really had that experience with other people. We don't really get to have people curious about [00:16:00] our dating life, our love life, also because it's just that it's so invisible. Just the act that we talk about it and make it more -- it's a form of resistance, in a way.

MA: So you think on campus simply having queer friends and talking about your identity --

HV: It's, like, normalizing my identity in a way. I don't feel special anymore when I talk about it. Yeah.

MA: And that's nice.

HV: Yes.

MA: And that's good, right, to have friends to talk about what matters to you.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: That feels great. Yeah.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Yeah, sometimes it's bad to be special in that sense, right? (laughs) You like to fit in and do what you need to do. So it sounds like your identity only really had more of a -- I don't want to say "public," but you were out to friends and established relationships around it and supportive relationships towards the end of your time here. Did you get a sense -- [00:17:00] I mean, you said, "I wasn't really privy to the different organizations so much," although you did go to the Quest meeting when you started, but it was too much too soon, it sounds like.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: I wonder sometimes if there are services here for students who need it, mental health services, support services, not just even health or illness but just support.

HV: Yeah.

MA: You had to build your own. Did you get a sense that there was enough support for queer students here or --

HV: Also, I guess it might be rapidly changing as well, but not when I was in the closet, although, I mean, I did go to counseling services and talk about my -- and I was -- I came out to her, my counselor, at that time as well. But, obviously, if I do not reach out to services in the first place --

MA: You don't know. [00:18:00] Yeah.

HV: Yeah, and I guess I wouldn't be able to say for myself because I did not really face too many major psychological issues when I was at Lafayette, but especially related to queerness. I was in a stable relationship for two years, relatively stable, so, yeah in a way my troubles, most of my troubles, are not related to my bisexuality.

MA: Yeah, that's more regular.

HV: Yeah, but I think after I -- I did go to Behind Closed Doors.

MA: I wondered. I was going to ask that.

HV: Yeah, I did go to Behind -- well, not when I was in the closet.

MA: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, sure. Sure.

HV: That's the thing.

MA: Yeah.

HV: I mean, I kept seeing it around the campus, and I --
[00:19:00] in the first three years, I kept thinking that

maybe I should come and join, and it seemed cool. But I guess the way that it was phrased as a - to call it a support group. And at that point in time I didn't really feel I needed support, if that makes sense. Yeah, so I'm not sure what people are going to talk about over there and whether it's going --

MA: Yeah, that's an interesting observation, because there is a difference between support and community.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, so I actually went to Behind Closed Doors twice this year, and the way I understand it, it actually feels very different from a support group. I mean, if people need support, they would receive support, obviously. But in a way it feels almost like an advocate group or an activist group rather than -- so it's kind of interesting for me that way, because [00:20:00] for myself, I would absolutely join or want to be involved in an advocate group but not necessarily a support group. But yeah I'm sure people need different kinds of services. Yeah.

MA: Yeah, different things. Yeah. Yeah, and we're talking to different alums, and it's just interesting to me. Alums who are older, they can't even think of any services at all or support or advocacy or community or anything. And then, it changes, and now you have multiple places that you're describing, Behind Closed Doors and also Quest and also

just friends, because there's more of an out population. So it's an everyday, average community, and that's interesting, to see that develop. Do you have any thoughts on specific challenges that the queer population still faces here or particularly today?

HV: On the Lafayette campus? [00:21:00]

MA: Yeah. What the college is struggling with.

HV: Yeah, so there are a lot of -- I would say definitely through it's transgender students, that -- yeah, it's a lot less friendly. So for queer sexuality groups, I think there's already enough. The acceptance is normalizing enough, but for -- yeah, so it's -- I'm a W.A.[Writing Associate]. I'm a W.A. for the journalistic writing class this semester, so it's a writing associate, and the one -- I think a student was writing -- a student reporter was writing about the bathroom initiatives by the campus administration and about how -- I don't know. It was something about transforming [00:22:00] all bathrooms into gender-neutral bathrooms.

And that includes multiple-stall bathrooms. So I -- yeah, and I think she may actually interview you. I think --

MA: Oh, is that the student that stopped by?

HV: Yeah, I think I saw your quote in that.

MA: Oh, good. OK, then I remember this. I'm forgetting her name, but yes, somebody did talk to me.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, so she was also quoting a few other students who were opposed to it, and I guess, with the communities I hang out with, I do not really see all of this hostility or aggression or microaggressions. But yeah, through all of that article, it's kind of eye-opening, I think, to see the kind of rationale that people can have for keeping what they do in a private stall anyway gender-segregated. Yeah, there's a lot of misconception about what [00:23:00] transgender people are it is also a stark contrast to -- I went to Tufts to visit this semester, my friend's place, and she pointed out her bathroom. The multiple-stall bathroom in her dorm is gender-neutral, but there's no sign. There's not even the sign of gender-neutral. People just kind of go in and out, and yeah, so it's just so normalizing that there's no --

MA: Wow. No one even thinks about it.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: That's amazing.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Yeah. Well, that shows that we are right now struggling with being at a certain place in time.

HV: Yeah, and that also reminds me of the new Oechsle building used to be -- there are two single-stall bathrooms on the third floor, and for some reason, at the beginning, they were gendered. Yeah, and [00:24:00] at some point they crossed it out, and they just pasted a piece of paper over it that said "Toilet." There's no gender-neutral. It says just "Toilet," and I think that's -- yeah, that's wonderful.

MA: That's great. That's a big change.

HV: Yeah.

MA: I'm glad somebody thought to do that.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Were there other things you see us currently struggling with?

HV: So, personally...yeah. There was one -- so, basically, over the summer I came out to a friend, a male friend who said he liked me at that point, and then I told him that I am bisexual and that I had a girlfriend. So before that, he invited me to his house, and [00:25:00] then, that night, he said he liked me. And then, that's why I told him, and he just -- several things - he does not comprehend, he cannot believe it that I'm bisexual or that I can date a girl. He doesn't think that could exist.

MA: Right. Classic, a classic problem.

HV: You know. Right. Yeah.

MA: Yeah. Oh, boy.

HV: Another thing, he said that, "At least it's not a boyfriend, because that would be so weird that you accepted my invitation to come over."

MA: Classic hostility to bisexually identified people and also homophobia and -- wow.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, and at that point I'm still -- that was before the election, so I think I'm -- I'm still not fully out on campus. I guess I was not jaded enough for -- and he's a friend. He was a friend, so I was just taking it as, like, "OK, that's shitty, but he's ignorant, and I could use [00:26:00] moments to educate him." So I was putting up with a lot of that. Yeah, and the last fallout, I think, was actually right after the election with that same friend. Basically, he's a Trump voter. He didn't tell me right away who he voted for. He was trying to keep that hidden, but I was just telling him that I was upset because of the election and how upset I was, and he was asking me, "Why are you upset about the election?" And then, I told him. "So what is it about being female, being queer, being a foreigner, all of these, why wouldn't you see that I would be affected by the election?"

MA: Doesn't it seem obvious? Yeah, yeah, yeah.

HV: Right. Right. And then, he said that, "But you are
[00:27:00] bisexual, so you're only half-queer," so...

MA: Oh, that's very insulting.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Wow. OK. There's a deep misunderstanding and anti-bisexual accept-- there's a real problem on this campus from what I hear from other bisexual students and faculty. There's classic bisexual invisibility or even hostility. It sounds like that's what you're describing, that people won't believe that identity or they won't take it seriously. That's a problem on campus that you've seen as well.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, I think that the default if anyone who hears that I'm going out with a girl would be like, "You're a lesbian," or, yeah, something like that. Nobody would think right away that I could be bisexual even though, just from anecdotal exposure, I feel like there are almost more bisexual people on campus than lesbian from people who are out.

MA: Yeah, identifying -- agreed.

HV: Yeah. [00:28:00] So that's definitely -- but a lot of students, bi people, could pass for straight. A lot of -- if they just go out in a heteronormative relationship, it would not be perceived as bisexual, and you wouldn't know.

Yeah, and even the person I'm dating right now -- actually, the first time that we talked about relationships that was when he was in a relationship, and I was in my relationship, so we hadn't dated at that time. So he asked me, "Do you have a boyfriend?" And I said, "I'm in a relationship," so I was in the closet at the time. And then, he asked me, "So is that a girlfriend?" I said, "Yes," and then we kind of left it at that. And then, when I asked him out that was way later. Yeah, I [00:29:00] asked him, "So would you like to go on a date with me?" And he looked at me, and he was like, "Are you bisexual?" That was the first thing he said. Yeah, so it was just like he took me for a lesbian up until that point. He was just -- I think it's even -- it's just the invisibility of it. That's not a default rationale that people go to.

MA: Right, right, right. So straight is the default first, and then, if you're doing something else, gay or lesbian is the next default, but bisexual is sort of two steps out to the -- yeah, so you're always re-declaring that in a sense.

Yeah.

HV: Yeah.

MA: And that's the particular burden of that identity in this culture.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Interesting. I mean, one of the things -- you made me think of this other idea, the way that other aspects of identity, like gender, race, ethnic identity, religion, class, these tend to be [00:30:00] -- age. These tend to be big factors in people's experience as a queer community member, so how about that for you? Did you see any or some or all of those intersectional having a --

HV: Oh, yeah. I mean, there's a lot of it. So queer, I mean - - Quest, one of the things about Quest I've always found problematic, even though they're probably aware of it and try to rectify -- I'm not sure how much they try to rectify it, but that they are too white.

MA: They're notoriously white. (laughs) Yeah.

HV: They're notorious, but what I've heard is that they even get whiter throughout the year, that --

MA: Yeah, it varies a great deal. Yeah.

HV: Yeah, so I talked to the board about it at some point. We were having a discussion, and I was kind of bringing up that I felt uncomf-- because I went -- so, this year, I went from the first meeting -- so I went [00:31:00] for almost all the meetings in the first semester. And it was kind of interesting, because at the first meeting there were a lot of other people of color who showed up. Yeah, so there's quite a fair amount of people of color, but they

just kind of drop off as the semester goes by. I think that there's one point when -- I mean, I was kind of pulling all my friends, going -- so my friends who are queer are people of color, so we are international students. And in that session, there were us, and there was another black girl, and that was all the representation, and, I think, probably [name redacted], yeah, in Quest. And that was that -- and it's just obvious at that point because they were playing some sort of game, and it was a pop quiz about bisexuality, I think. It was all the [00:32:00] organizations, all the facts, very American. The stories of coming out, for another example, are very -- it's very different from -- I've never even come out to my parents, but a lot of stories here are very kind of silly, gentle almost. There's maybe some hostility or maybe some sort of ignorance, but they kind of eventually came to accept it. I'm sure there are people with a lot harder stories, too, but I think the majority of stories of coming out that I've heard, the trouble seems relatively milder in the United States. Yeah, and I cannot relate to any of that, I guess. Just because in the communities I live with it's different. I think during that Day of Coming Out session there were -- there's [00:33:00] [name redacted], and then, when she started

retelling the story, she kind of almost had to apologize beforehand for bringing the mood down. And I think it's not on purpose from people in Quest that -- but it's just how the degrees of separation are still starkly different because of the kind of struggles that people are concerned with right now. It's also, like -- it's so different. I think a lot of queer people of color cannot identify with it as much.

MA: So literally how privilege works.

HV: Yeah.

MA: You're so privileged. You can't help it, but there are other experiences you don't really allow for.

HV: Yeah, and I think at some point I brought up that with the board, and they said that they know it, but they're not sure what to do about it because they don't want to tokenize people of color. [00:34:00] So, I think that is fair, but I also respond that's one of the reasons I tried to attend Quest in my first semester, because I felt like that's --

MA: Yeah. That's hard. Yeah.

HV: -- one part of representation that wouldn't get represented if I didn't come. I think their response was basically, "Oh, you don't have to come if you don't want to," which I

felt -- yeah, it's like it had kind of gone over their heads. Right?

MA: Absolutely. Wow. Wow. That's a little frustrating indeed.

HV: Yeah.

MA: Yeah, that's a real struggle. I'm interested and really struck by everything you've just said, and this is just so helpful, and I appreciate you being here and your time. The idea that international students -- and this is something that we've talked about, wanting to talk about the experience of people with transnational experiences, very broad, or who identify as foreign or however people do, [00:35:00] and there are different ways to talk about it. The sense in which serving the community of people who come from cultures that are not American or even Euro-American and how to make their experience at this institution not shut down, I mean, it's just shut down by the American experience. That becomes the narrative. And then, other people's narratives -- and my sense, from what you say, that we don't really attend to international students', for lack of a better phrase, experiences as queer students on campus, and that's an interesting problem to work on. I wonder how as an institution we could attend

better. I mean, I'm not sure if we as an institution serve our international students, period, well.

HV: Yeah. Oh, sorry?

MA: If we even serve not just queer international but just the international students more generally, right?

HV: Oh, international students. Yeah. [00:36:00] I think the support system for international students, actually, has been worse than before because their population essentially doubled compared to, like, four years ago, and there's no increase in staff. Yeah.

MA: OK, that's a problem. That's a big problem. I didn't know that.

HV: Yeah.

MA: So all right. Well, that's really important for us to know and think about. And other intersectional experiences or reflections you might have to share?

HV: Let me think about it. I mean, it goes on daily, so --

MA: Sure. Sure. It's a lot up close. I understand.

HV: Yeah, race, well I think one thing, I guess, to kind of continue [00:37:00] on that aspect of say, why are there no people of color in Quest, I remember one of the discussions, one of the rationales that kind of came out at that time, that period in time, there are bigger concerns for people of color than their queerness, than queer

identity, which is sort of like the -- that was the time of Black Lives Matter.

MA: Oh, yeah, sure. Sure.

HV: That's what they were trying to say. So they were trying -
- it's like there are only so many courses that you can go to, and in a way Quest, which is a dominantly white organization in the first place --

MA: That wouldn't be the choice. Yeah.

HV: -- is kind of, like, lower on the hierarchy.

MA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Got you.

HV: Yeah, because I think there are people who drop by from time to time, but they either wouldn't say anything or would leave. [00:38:00] I remember having a conversation with, yeah, a Puerto Rican friend who was also -- he was also talking about how, in his culture -- that's what he said. In his culture, in his household, people are fine with lesbian but not with gay. Yeah, so that kind of masculinity is always prized over -- Yeah, so, right now I could think of that, but I'm sure there are more things.

MA: Yeah. Sure. No, that's fine, whatever you want to share. One of the things we're interested in, too, is the way that language has changed over the years, sort of the phrases that get used, the way people talk about it, so it's "queer" a lot. Has that been generally your experience

that queer is sort of the identity, that a lot of LGBTQ people just go for the Q? [00:39:00] Do you hear homophobic language on campus? I mean, how are the issues sort of talked about during your time here? A lot of silence, but also --

HV: So open hostility, I think it's sort of like it's not visible. I don't think actual homophobia is the --

MA: Right, so overt is -- yeah.

HV: -- yeah, it's not actually sanctioned nowadays, but yeah, definitely lack of representation is always -- invisibility is still a problem. There was a sexual assault survey that was sent out.

MA: Yeah, recently.

HV: Yeah, the climate survey by Amy O'Neill, and I was -- when I was doing it, I realized that there's a lot -- the language is very gendered. The scenarios are very focused on alcohol, and it's always a guy and a girl, and yeah, the way that it was phrased. [00:40:00] I think it's a national survey, because I think that when they release the result they compare it across campuses, so it's a standardized survey. But I remember talking to people about how this will erase some of the, you know -- yeah.

MA: Yeah. What a fantastic example. I mean, that's a great example. So that sexual assault campus survey was earlier

this year. It was, like, January 2017, and they had a really good response from students. I haven't seen it. It was a student survey, but I heard it was going out and encouraged people to take it. And I'm thinking, "Yeah, right, that's a classic example where it's not homophobia. It's just heterosexism." Right? It's just this idea that everybody is straight, and you go from there. That's our problem right now in a lot of ways.

HV: Yeah.

MA: OK. So what are the things that -- general categories is the idea of the sort of social scene, so you've described it [00:41:00] a little bit, right? So if people are out, there's -- in 2017 at Lafayette, there's a hookup culture for queer people like there is for straight people. Is that how you'd describe it?

HV: I guess I wouldn't say it is the same as straight people. I feel like, in a way, it feels more like word of mouth, because so unless you go to Quest, it's not clear whether you're queer or not. And even in Quest, people do not have to proclaim publicly what they identify as. So it's, like, very informal. Someone tells someone their identity, or I would hear from people that so-and-so is gay or is bisexual or they have a girlfriend and that they would be -- and then, they would hookup once they know each other, but it's

not as visible as, say -- they go to the party, and they could just -- I don't think that would be how it works. You would at least have to know whether [00:42:00] the -- what's the identity of the other person. Since it's not public, it's really not easy. I've had conversations with friends who were kind of complaining that there is nobody, that the dating pool is too small.

MA: Yeah. Yeah, because people aren't visible necessarily.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: The whole pool isn't visible the way heterosexuality is assumed to be.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, in couples, it could either be somebody who is very visible -- it's often people who are -- so I'm talking about it for people who are female-identifying and attracted to women. You know, people who fit more into the butch stereotype, who present more masculine, will often serve as, I think, their attracting point, because other girls will come to them. I think a lot of the stories I heard is that that was how it works, sort of like the [00:43:00] more masculine-looking person -- they may -- because they kind of wear it as a signifier even though they -- obviously, that is just a proxy that is very imperfect.

Yeah, and then other girls will come up to them and, like -
- yeah.

MA: OK, so this is really fascinating, right, because there's the question of visibility around the queer culture that intersectional culture doesn't have. You have a sort of gender role performance that signals sexuality in some way, right? So if you choose to present or you do present as -- if you're female and you choose to present as butch or somewhat masculine, and you're not male-identified but you could sort of present and signal as lesbian or maybe signal as trans or whatever it was, but you would have to signal it in some way.

HV: Yeah.

MA: And that's how other people who are interested may find you. But without the signaling, [00:44:00] which is really just gender signaling and not sexuality, you can't call up that community the same way.

HV: Right.

MA: So visibility is taking those other forms, and that makes a lot of sense, that then the social scene depends on friendships and community that is built in different ways. So there is a hookup scene and a dating scene, but it's not the same scene.

HV: Right.

MA: It's not even really a parallel. It's just another version that has these other issues going. And it's really fascinating because from my perspective, when I talk to folks who graduated in 1980, they're like, "There's nothing." (laughs)

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: So now there's something. It's not the same, but it's the same. So you mentioned that for a time you had a long-term partner who was another woman, so what was it like to have and to try to maintain a same-sex partnership at Lafayette?

HV: So it's not at Lafayette. It was long distance.

[00:45:00] Yeah, so --

MA: Oh, I'm sorry I assumed that.

HV: Oh, yeah, no problem. But my ex-girlfriend, we went to high school together.

MA: Oh, OK. So you had a same-sex relationship in high school.

HV: Yeah, so it started from the last year of high school and lasted through -- and we both went to the United States, so that's why we -- I mean, otherwise, I'm not even sure if we could even maintain it for that long, because we at least were on the same time zone. So, yeah, but it was not at the same school.

MA: Oh, OK. All right. So it wasn't really here. So you were maintaining a long-distance relationship, which is a big commitment.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: Yeah, absolutely. Do you have a sense of other people who were in same-sex relationships maintaining them at Lafayette? Was that something that was particularly challenging?

HV: To maintain a same-sex relationship at Lafayette?

MA: Yeah.

HV: [00:46:00] I'm trying to think of the few couples I know.
(laughs)

MA: It's hard to say. That's OK. That's fine.

HV: Yeah, based on personal experience and what other people have been telling me -- yeah, the few couples I actually know some details of seem to face very similar problems to heterosexual couples. I don't see, yeah, major differences.

MA: How about Greek life? Has that had any impact on your experience or notably around the queer community around you?

HV: Yeah. I mean, well, I kind of went through Lafayette staying as far away from Greek life as possible.

(laughter) [00:47:00] But yeah --

MA: Well, that's a decision, too, right?

HV: Right. Yeah, I mean, in my --

MA: (laughs) That's a decision.

HV: I think it tells something.

MA: Yeah, it does.

HV: But, yes, I guess socially we - in a way, very informally, I think Greek life in my social circle is often made fun of and targeted as in the -- so even, like, when a friend of mine heard, for example, that a sorority girl has been admiring her from afar. And in a way, it's kind of funny, because of how sorority girls, I guess, are so stereotyped as very straight and just always with frat guys.

I remember hearing [00:48:00] -- seeing the rumors -- no, I guess, the reputation of Phi Psi, the fraternity, as -- and this is really recent, but relatively queer-friendly or gay-friendly. Yeah, so I think that's interesting, but I mean, overall I have very little to say about Greek life.

MA: OK. All right. All right. Well, there's an opt-out option that I think a lot of queer people take.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: How about athletics? That's a big thing for many people too. How about you?

HV: No. (laughter) I was in taekwondo for a while, but, now I'm not a big --

MA: OK, that's fine. Sometimes that's the organizing factor of their lives here at Lafayette.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: Other clubs or activities or --

HV: Yeah, so I'm in TEDxLafayetteCollege. That was, like, my main kind of, yeah, club activity for four years, and then there's -- I'm a WA. [00:49:00] I'm also a Pardner, so I help mentor young students.

MA: Oh, great. Yeah. Yeah.

HV: I was in the Emile Durkheim A&S Society, and I was working with admissions for a while to promote the -- when I was a freshman, obviously, because I cannot imagine doing that afterwards, but to promote the school and to help prospective students, answer questions, and whatnot. Yeah, I was also a student associate on the board of trustees. That was also an interesting, I think, experience for the financial policy committee.

MA: Oh, wow, that must have been interesting.

HV: (laughs) That was interesting for me, personally. I don't think they get anything out of me being there, but --

MA: But for you it was good.

HV: Right. Yeah. (laughs)

MA: I think they'd be glad to hear that.

HV: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: That's very good. That's great. [00:50:00] The many things you've been involved in, have they been associated with your experience as a queer person? I know you haven't been out for a lot of your time here, but have they been formative in that way or just different, not connected?

HV: Yeah. I mean, so I think my first WA assignment ever, it was kind of interesting. One of the things I realized after doing WA is that writing is really political.

MA: That makes me glad. As an English professor, that makes me glad.

HV: Yeah.

MA: That's very true.

HV: Yeah, so I was a WA for Professor Gilligan's "Maleness in Contemporary Culture," FYS.

MA: Yeah, great. That's great that you got that assignment.

HV: Yeah so there's a lot of things that -- I think the first assignment, actually, ever is that -- is about reflecting on the experience of masculinity in their life. They had to write a three-page [00:51:00] paper, and there are, like, two students who pretty much came out right there in their paper that they are, you know, bisexual. I did get to have conversations with them and even tell them that there are all the organizations on campus that cater to queer people. I think in a way, the way I engage even in

my organizations is very intellectual. Yeah, in TEDx, I tried to push for -- so, yeah, we invited Dr. Kleintop [Lizabeth Kay Kleintop] from Moravian College.

MA: That sounds familiar. Yeah.

HV: Yeah, so she's transgender, and she came.

MA: Yes, yes, yes. Wonderful, yeah, I remember that. Yeah.

HV: Yeah, and I think we also had -- when Leah Wasacz came out.

MA: [00:52:00] Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Leah, right, right, right.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, so we also invited her. She also reached out to us, and then we kind of had her as a student speaker.

MA: Wonderful, yeah.

HV: So, yeah, I think every year it's a lot of talks about conversation around sexuality. Even this year, we got Megan, and she was talking about conversations about sexuality in middle school and that that was --

MA: Oh, wow.

HV: -- yeah, and then she was also talking about her experience as asexual. Yeah, most of the things I've been involved with, it has always been kind of educational.

MA: Got you. Wow. So you find your own special way to -- you have your own worldview and your intellectual interests, and, yeah, they touch on your different clubs, and it all connects. That's great.

HV: Yeah.

MA: So we talked about this a little, but just to make sure we covered it -- how the classroom climate was [00:53:00] relative to LGBTQ and queer issues. What you talked about was content, but sort of the climate in the classroom and not just your majors, but the whole classroom experience, how that was.

HV: The classroom experience was -- in computer science, there's nothing, I would say. And, in a way, I even got -- the only one political -- well, I wouldn't say that, but, yeah, mildly political moment was when Professor[Amir] Sadovnik was showing the statement -- there's a value statement that so many faculty signed, and he was showing that in class the first day. And he was saying that, "I hope these will be one of the values of the class even though I'm not sure we're [00:54:00] going to touch on any of this. This is something I really believe in." And in a way, that's very endearing to me, because it's just how -- yeah, in computer science, it's so invisible in computer science. Yeah, but --

MA: That's a big thing to do for Professor Sadovnik.

HV: Yes. Yes.

MA: That's a real commitment in computer science. That's impressive.

HV: Yeah.

MA: That's great.

HV: Yeah, no, I mean, I've been impressed sometimes because I've seen him showing -- that was -- oh, God, the new process. He actually showed up to that, and so it was kind of interesting when you see professors from STEM who actually show up to events other than their own field. But yeah, in the classroom climate in A&S, yeah, it's -- [00:55:00] in a way, I think -- we touch on a lot of that in Professor [Rebecca] Kissane's class, not a lot though, but it's about inequality. I also have discussed sexuality numerous times in many A&S classes at Lafayette.

MA: Oh, yes. Yeah.

HV: Yeah.

MA: She's social and class inequality studies. Yeah, so who gets what and why.

HV: Yeah. Yes. Yes. I don't think it touches on sexuality that much, but yeah, it doesn't really touch on sexuality as much, but I'm just trying to think of -- because, yeah, the two classes that touch on sexuality the most that I took were the classes I took in London. Then, when I go back in -- even though every time that -- I think it's pretty homogenous in terms of the students who take the

class and the faculty, so most of the issues came up almost noncontroversially. [00:56:00]

MA: OK. Yeah. Everybody is used to talking about it, and --

HV: Yeah, so the person I'm dating right now, I mean, he takes an intro to WGS class, and he was almost, like, complaining about that one, how there's almost no attempt to disagree, but in a way that's an attitude of acceptance, accepting whatever is thrown at them.

MA: Yeah. Yeah, not engaging with the material.

HV: Right. In a way, there's not a lot of further examination, trying to tease out the complexity or the nuances in the theories. Yeah, so I think it's also kind of an interesting dynamic, because a lot of A&S classes I took are relatively silent when, yeah -- [00:57:00] or it's -- yeah, so at least it's good that there's not a lot of microaggression that happens inside the classroom. I don't think so. I cannot remember any instance in my classroom when I had to actively question what's going on. Yeah.

MA: Yeah, so it's not so much that there's homophobic or even covert anti-queer sentiment. It's more like, maybe, a silence around content a little bit, a relative silence around content.

HV: Right. Right. Yeah, see, I'm also not sure if there's just invisibility in way.

MA: Yeah, it's just informative in many ways.

HV: Right.

MA: So the curriculum doesn't have a lot of places that explicitly -- in your experience, the curriculum doesn't have a lot of places that explicitly focus on queer content, experience, history, cultures, social [00:58:00] issues, social movements, whatever it would be.

HV: Yeah. Yeah. I guess, in a way, I think Professor Kissane's class should have been a space to talk about it more because it's very much a class on social inequality. But she, also, herself said that she's going to focus a lot on certain aspects, so --

MA: Yeah. Yeah, there are limits to what one class can do, which is part of --

HV: Right. Yeah.

MA: -- the problem, I suppose. We need more classes.

HV: Yeah and also she has a class on sex and gender so she said, "If you want to talk more, go to that class."

MA: Yeah. Yeah, no, that's important. So you've probably touched on this in some ways, but one the things we're trying to do as we do these interviews is think about sort of moments. So you named Leah Wasacz coming out, the TEDx talk, the professor at Moravian. What was her name again, the professor at Moravian?

HV: Professor Liz Kleintop.

MA: Thank you. And other events or moments that were, you know, good or bad [00:59:00] that you sort of thought of as part of the queer history while you were here?

HV: I mean, definitely the rally that we had.

MA: Oh, yeah, which you spoke at so beautifully. Yes.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, actually, so I'm going to talk about that, and I'll also mention -- and you might not think -- it's kind of funny, but, yeah, the ISA Extravaganza grand finale. It's for international students. It's an event. It's a concert that is put up by international students, mostly, and this is basically -- it's not -- well, I guess you can call it almost like a talent show. But this year, I really wanted to enter that this year just because it's my last year, and that's one of the things I wanted to do.

MA: And you had not done it before.

HV: I had done it in my first year but as part of [01:00:00] group performances. Yeah, so this time I kind of -- I really wanted to do it by myself. But, I mean, just based upon pure circumstances, kind of, eventually we -- there was me, and then there were three other friends who are queer of mine who are also international students. We all decided to just attend that together as a queer group.

MA: And when was this?

HV: That was in April. Yeah, and we call ourselves Queerromantics, so in a way, it was even nerve-wracking for me because I was not fully out at that time, at that point.

MA: Wow, you were brave. Wow. Wow.

HV: Yeah. (laughs)

MA: You were brave.

HV: So we called ourselves Queerromantics. We sang, and one of our group was dating another girl, so we sang "Baby" by Justin Bieber. You can sing any song [01:01:00] to a girl. And then, she was rapping to her girlfriend at the time. She was shouting out her girlfriend's name in the middle of the performance. I'm not even sure how much of that other people actually get. People enjoyed that a lot. That name actually sticks. People remember that name. I still have people coming up to me and saying that they enjoyed it a lot. Nobody said anything about, like, "Why is it Queerromantics?" or anything.

MA: Wow. Wow.

HV: Yeah, so it's just --

MA: That's interesting. Wow, that's amazing.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, so --

MA: You were brave to do that. That's fantastic.

HV: Yeah.

MA: It was well received?

HV: Yeah, it was.

MA: It sounds like people loved it.

HV: Yeah, people loved it. I mean, it's silly, because, you know, "Baby," I think people had a great response to that. But just privately, for me, it's definitely a moment where it almost felt like coming out at that point to a public space.

MA: Yeah. Yeah, that must have felt triumphant after being in the closet here. You must feel very victorious. That's wonderful.

HV: Yeah.

MA: That's really great.

HV: Yeah, and then after that, [01:02:00] the equality rally is actually after that. I think just -- yeah, speaking at that event was definitely the first time that I ever spoke publicly to strangers about my stories in this --

MA: That was impressive.

HV: -- in a space where I do not -- I know that it's not necessarily -- there could be people who are not -- it's not like Quest where it's a safe space.

MA: Right. Right. It's a public space.

HV: Yeah, it's a public space. Yeah.

MA: That was very brave.

HV: Yeah. Actually, and I talk about that in the equality rally, but one of the events was actually during orient-- during my orientation.

MA: Oh, please tell that story.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, so that was, like, the story in high school, and that was -- I first went out with my ex-girlfriend at that point, and we lived in an all-female boarding school. So there were very strict [01:03:00] -- and this is probably even among boy-girl couples, heterosexual couples, that there's a very strict -- you know, no dating.

MA: No anything. (laughter)

HV: No anything.

MA: Yeah, and this is in Singapore in the boarding school.

HV: But, I mean -- in Singapore, yeah. But, I mean, they still are dating. There are people who date as long as they do not do anything more. They can kiss and stuff like that, but, yeah, we were kissing, and then a house mistress saw us, so she told other house mistresses on the floor. We were gathered to be spoken to individually about what happened, and it was very scary because if I got expelled by the boarding school -- and I call it "boarding school," but it's kind of a hostel. I went to a different school. The school, that itself is just a place where we lived.

[01:04:00] Yeah, but they call themselves a boarding school.

MA: Oh, OK. All right.

HV: Yeah, but it's Methodist, so they are religious. I don't know if you heard about what happened in the United States Methodist church recently.

MA: No. Recently? No.

HV: Oh, yeah, there is a bishop who was -- she was elected as bishop, and she was publicly lesbian, and they were kind of contesting whether that was valid.

MA: So we have conservatives. OK, so you're in your boarding school.

HV: Yes.

MA: Were you brought in individually?

HV: Yes. And we had to come up with a story to justify that because if we acknowledge it then we are in danger of being expelled from the hostel, which would lead to expulsion from the school and -- not the school, but our scholarship. We would lose our scholarship, and that basically meant that we would have to go back, and that was three months [01:05:00] before graduation. Yeah, so --

MA: Oh, that's so scary.

HV: Yeah, so it was really one of the scariest periods in my life. Then, basically, my girlfriend and I would just

agree that we were just going to say that she kissed me sort of, like, out of nowhere but that it wouldn't happen again and that there was nothing really going on. So during that meeting, that was what I told them, but then I also told them that I personally believe that there is nothing wrong with homosexuality, and I hope that you could respect me and my belief. And they were trying to tell me how sinful it is and how this is not what God intended. But I'm atheist. [01:06:00]

MA: They're going to tell you anyway, apparently. Yeah.

HV: Yeah, they're going to tell me anyway. Yes. And then, after that, they asked me to pray. They asked to pray for me in the end. And they said, "Oh, dear Lord, please guide this girl off the stray path." Yeah. Yeah.

MA: Wow. And then they let you stay, and you graduated?

HV: They did let us stay, but they said that we cannot be alone. Yeah.

MA: Wow. That is amazing.

HV: Yeah.

MA: It seems like a hundred years ago somehow. Wow, that's scary. That's --

HV: I mean, that's in a country where there's still a law that says that two men -- that sodomy means that you can be jailed, so -- yeah.

MA: Yeah. Yeah, the context, the cultural context is very important.

HV: Right. Yes.

MA: So you came here with that story behind you when you came to Lafayette.

HV: Right, so I actually wrote [01:07:00] -- not that story, but I actually wrote about my experience with LGBTQ communities in my Common App, but the Common App was a confusing time. It was like, "I'm not sure if people can talk about their sexuality." I'm also, like, from a different country in a way that I'm not sure what is acceptable and what is not. So I was kind of writing about it as -- it is an issue and as it was, like -- as if I'm an ally. Yeah, and I was writing that story, but in the third person.

MA: Like, in a different voice, a different voice --

HV: Yeah, so, like --

MA: -- from another perspective. It's not you.

HV: Right. I was tell-- yes. I was telling it sort of like, "My friend told me." Right. Yeah. So then, after I got admitted, I think they -- Kaleidoscope, I believe, sent me -- messaged me asking if they can use part of my admission [01:08:00] essay for their -- they were going to put up a

skit that showcased, I guess, poignant moments from students' admission essays.

MA: Wow. Yeah. They did it at orientation.

HV: Yeah, that's what they did. They reenacted it. Yeah.

MA: Oh, wow.

HV: And they'd reenact that part. Yeah, and they reenacted that part out.

MA: How did you feel to see that, your own life?

HV: Yeah.

MA: That's so powerful.

HV: Yeah it was very -- it was definitely -- I mean, I cannot really remember how I felt at that point when they did that. I mean, I did feel very anticipatory almost. I was wondering if there was going to be any reaction to that, but I don't think there was much of a reaction afterwards. It was funny, because they actually asked the students who wrote it to stand up, who wrote the stories. Yeah, so I did stand up, [01:09:00] and then my floormate in my orientation group was asking me, "So what did you write about?" And then, I said that that was that part of the performance, and then she was like, "Oh, I wish that my essay got chosen." And I'm like, "Oh, OK."

MA: Oh, boy. (laughter)

HV: "That was what you've got to tell me?"

MA: "That was your comment?"

HV: Yeah. (laughter)

MA: Oh, OK. All right. That's a really powerful story. I'm thinking of seeing you at the equality rally and --

HV: Yeah. I feel, in a way, it's kind of full-circle because I'm telling that same story, but I actually get to say that that was my story.

MA: That's beautiful. That's so powerful.

HV: Yeah. Yeah, and that's one of the things that I think -- in the first three years at Lafayette I'm in the closet, and I was still very much engaged with queerness and queer identities but sort of [01:10:00] in a very intellectual way through my classes, through the literature I read. It's very distanced, in a way. I never attempt to really try to connect it to my own story because -- I guess it could be a cultural thing, sort of, that my story is private. I've always felt a very protective sense around my story, so I don't tend to tell personal things to people. But yeah, especially after this election -- definitely this year, but after this election in a way that I felt that there's a bigger sense of almost responsibility to politicize my story, that it's even -- it's not my story anymore and how much representation [01:11:00] matters and that these things need to be out there. In America, I am

Asian, so in a way, I guess, it's an Asian queer story, which -- you probably see very few on this campus.

MA: Yes. Yeah.

HV: So that was also one of my motivations. Yeah.

MA: Yeah. Wow. I'm deeply sensible and really appreciative of your sharing your story with this project.

HV: Yeah.

MA: I can see how deeply felt and how meaningful it is to share it but how -- I appreciate also how thoughtful you are in thinking about what it means to do this for you as who you are, from where you're from, from where you are now in these political times, that you recognize this as a political act, because we want this to be a political project about social justice. But I just deeply appreciate how [01:12:00] much you've reflected on what it means to tell this story. Not everybody does reflect on it, and the fact that this is your story as you leave Lafayette, although I hope you come back many, many times. As you leave, as a student, as a brand-new, fresh alum, it's great that you leave telling your story and also leaving your story for others. That's very powerful.

HV: Thank you.

MA: Yeah, well, it means a lot. So what do we still have to do as you leave, as Lafayette College? What would make things

better? You've made a lot of discussions and comments, but I don't want to leave without you having the last word.

(laughter) What would you like to see happen?

HV: Make better?

MA: Yeah, what could we do better?

HV: At Lafayette? I would say to have [01:13:00] -- sometimes, I was wondering if we should make -- yeah, so, say, a problem with Quest, I still feel that there is a problem with visibility and representation on campus, in spaces on campus. It's important, and in a way I feel -- I think that social justice resources on this campus are already highly segmented into many different channels, and in a way I'm not sure if it would be better to, say, try to make an existing institution like Quest more inclusive or create a new space where people --

MA: Yeah.

HV: -- yeah, obviously, there is -- you know, you can say pros and cons for both, but things like this -- so there's NIA now, which is -- what is -- [01:14:00]

MA: The support group for women of color?

HV: Yes. Yes, so that was a very intersectional organization by itself, and it's separated from ABC [Association of Black Collegians]. And I'm not so sure -- and there are in other schools, like in Moravian, I've heard that they have

their own trans organization for example. So I was wondering if it would be better served if there could be more intersectional spaces on campus.

MA: Yeah, right, that tension that you named between people needing --

HV: Yeah.

MA: -- their own space but the fact that people are made of many different parts, and they need them not to be separated. (laughs)

HV: Right. Yeah.

MA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's a great point. I'm jotting it down for myself so I can make a big deal of it now before we -- that's really helpful. So any last words?

HV: Yeah, no, thank you so much for spending this evening with me.

MA: It's for me to thank you, [01:15:00] and we have a lot to be proud of including you, as you graduate. Thank you. What are you off to now? You said you're going to work in the city.

HV: Yes. Yeah, I'm going to be --

MA: What will you be doing?

HV: -- I'm going to be a software engineer for the near future, and then we'll see what happens afterwards.

MA: Wow. OK, good. Well, congratulations on your job.

HV: Thank you.

MA: And congratulations on your graduation.

HV: Thank you.

MA: And most of all, thank you.

HV: Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE