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Interview with Melissa Drain

Melissa Drain

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LIVING TOGETHER: SEXUAL ORIENTATION

INTERVIEW WITH MELISSA DRAIN
AT THE RURAL LIFE CENTER
NOVEMBER 4, 1998
PERFORMED BY: KATE HITCHCOCK

K -- This is Kate Hitchcock interviewing Melissa Drain in the Rural Life Center, November 4th, around 12:20.

Just to start out with, can you give me some basic biographical information, where you're from how you go here, obviously you're a student -- but just so it's on tape.

M -- I'm actually, I grew up for about 10 years in Oklahoma -- in different parts of Oklahoma. And then moved to Indiana because that's where my mom's family is from, and then we lived there for like 6 years and I became a student here at Kenyon.

K -- Okay, in terms of your coming out experience -- that's a very broad question -- how was that? Who are you out to now?

M -- Um, I first came out, kind of on accident, it's kind of a traumatic story, actually. My sophomore year in high school I developed quite a large crush on my best friend who happened to be very conservative Christian. Um, and that obviously didn't go over well because she figured it out pretty quickly because she had a boyfriend at the time and we did not get along very well. A lot of it was because, you know, I was jealous. Um, so, I basically lost a best friend through that, but I started talking to another girl, um, that I didn't know very well, but who I knew would be supportive just because she's very open and understanding. And I started talking to her a lot more than I had been and she became one of my really good friends. Both of their name is Robin, which is just kind of weird. Um, but then, um, my best friend graduated at the end of my sophomore year and I changed schools to go to a residential school. Um, about 2 hours from my home town, so it was actually so nice to get away from that because even though she was the only person who knew and no one else at my school really had a clue. Um, it was very stifling community. It was very small, basically all white, protestant, wasp. Um so I moved out of there and once I got to the Indiana Academy, my new school, um, the other Robin went with me.

K -- Oh really?

M -- Yeah, it was really bizarre, um, we didn't even know we were both applying, and we both went, it was really funny. So, we're still good friends now. Um, anyway, when I got there, I played it straight for an entire semester -- which, looking back on it, I don't know how I did it -- I have no idea.

K -- You already -- accepted that you were, but you just decided to play it straight

M -- But whenever I lost a really good friend, basically, it kind of just threw me back in the closet. And I was like um, well, I was just being stupid, and I didn't mean it and you know, that

kind of thing. So, um, I was back in the closet for about a semester, um, I dated one boy for like seven days or like nine days -- nine days. I couldn't handle it, I mean he was so much like a brother to me, it just -- it was terrible. And so, I got rid of that, um, and then I dated another boy and all of the guys that I've dated since high school have been guy friends of mine who had crushes on me, so I dated them. Which just -- it's a bad idea whether your straight or not, it's just a bad idea. Um, so I dated another one like that and we dated for almost 3 months and I actually took him home with me for Christmas to meet my family. And then as soon as I got back, I dumped him. It was so cold hearted, so cruel -- it's the worst thing I've ever done and I guess I can like laugh about it now because, because he's still one of my best friends. We had a really hard time the whole next semester and then um, we just slowly started like, talking to each other again and now like he's definitely one of my best friends ever. And um, it's just one of the things you just have to remember that you did so that you never do it again.

K -- Right, right.

M -- But it was kind of interesting because he started dating one of my best friends right after, like -- 2 or 3 or maybe 5 days after I dumped him. But they had my permission, so like, I thought she was really nice even ask it because I had just completely dumped him. It was really cold-hearted, but... And then 5 days after that um, I started dating my first girlfriend. So it was all just very, very quick, very um, painful, actually because I felt really guilty for hurting him because I knew I had. And um, and at the same time I was like lying to my parents like I had been lying to my parents and one of the main reasons that I started dating people was because my parents were really on my back about why didn't I ever date and was I lesbian and my mom would just like scream at me. And I would always like deny deny deny.

K -- Right

M -- Um, they actually start -- my mom started asking me like my freshman year before I even had any clue. So. So I played like 3 years of denial and um, my first girlfriend lasted almost about 3 months, my second girlfriend lasted almost 3 months, and then I was single for a really long time.

K -- Were you out at your school?

M -- Um, the first one I wasn't, the second one people started figuring out because she went to the school too and we were just together all the time and she was my director in a play. She was a year older, and um I stayed in her room a lot and her roommate, like the 3 of us were always together, um, and people knew that she was gay because the year before, she had come with a girlfriend. And um, they were roommates, and they like pushed their beds together. And um, her roommate um, was really depressed all the time and had a lot of like, problems with her mother. Like, one of the things that will all ways stick out to me is um, she said to me once -- my girlfriend said to me once. Um, were you abused by your mother? And, I was like, no, why would I have been abused by my mother, and she said because my mom says that um, only women who are abused by their mother are lesbian, and I've never met a lesbian who wasn't abused by her mother; so I didn't know. And I was like no, no, that's not true. And it was really disturbing to

find out all at once that like, my girlfriend has been abused by her mother -- her mother is insane. And then her ex-girlfriend had been like majorly abused by her mother, um, physically and mentally. And the girl took like an entire bottle of IB profin or something. And now has like um, the mentality of like a 4 year old. So basically, she sits at home watching Lion King all the time. And my girlfriend talked about going to visit her and how hard it was to like see someone who you had cosidered spending your life with, now doesn't know who you are. You know -- like her whole world was in Lion King for awhile, so it was really disturbing. So, my lesbian family tree is a little scary.

K -- When did you come out to your parents? And how did they...

M -- I came out to them my senior year. Basically, um, I had my first, like healthy lesbian relationship -- it was so exciting. Um, and my new girlfriend Jamie, was a college student at Ball State, um, and I lived on that campus. And she was like 2 years older. It was really strange because she had connections with Robin, the best friend before. They had played in the same, um, youth ensemble in Indianapolis. And she remembered her -- like it was just really weird, but um, most of my people are really musical, which is strange. But um, she took me home for like Thanksgiving and then I had to go back to school and then was coming back that night to stay with me. Um, because it waslike a break I had to go home and then she was going to take me back afterwards, and um, there was a big wreck on the highway and she was 2 hours late -- she didn't get back to my house until like 2 am. And so my dad and I were waiting up for her. And I was so worried because it's a really bad highway and was like November, cold, I didn't know what the road were like because she was north of us -- it was just a really bad scene. And that's when my dad figured it out. They didn't say anything to me until I told him, like months later -- I told him before my mom. And then that same weekend -- the next morning actually, my mom walked in and we were in the same bed. And she was royally pissed off because there was another mattress in the room for Jamie to sleep on. So, she was royally pissed off and um, took me into the car. The car is like a common motif. It seems like every gay persons life, when their parent wants to trap them -- because you can't leave when your in a car when your driving down the road at 70 miles per hour.

K -- I think in anybody's life that's the way it is.

M -- Yeah, yeah. The car is kind of a motif -- we didn't even fo anywhere, we just sat in the driveway. And she just fired accusations at me and I denied, denied, denied. So I didn't coem out to her until, um, after I came out to my dad, we were -- I was home -- my dad's a Baptist Minister. I guess that's kind of important.

K -- Yeah, Wow.

M -- Yeah, my dad's a general baptist minister and my mom's really active in the church and her father is a general baptist minister; and her mom is really active in the church. So with that background laid; that would explain why I went to the alter, cried a lot, on my dad's shoulder -- I didn't say anything, I just cried. And then like, I went back to my seat and my mom took me to the back of the church. I came out to her in the back of the church! And then we went over to my

dad's office and talked about it. And she was upset because I had lied to her for so long. And I was mad at her because she had, you know, like -- I was like, you know, how could you expect me to come out when you're constantly screaming at me. Like, that's not gonna happen. So that's my parental coming out and it was -- it's kind of shaky. Basically, it was, um, my dad didn't want me to, I guess, give up on being straight; but at the same time, if I'm gay I'm gay. You know, he just didn't want me to make that decision right away. And my mom, um, I don't know, I can't figure her out. But at the time I told her not to tell anyone because I still didn't know what I wanted with like, people that I barely knew, and people at the church, and family members and all that. So, that was a hard one, but then, like telling my friends -- at school was really, really easy. By senior year, or even, yeah -- very beginning of senior year, I was the out senior lesbian. Like, people in the closet came to me and talked to me all the time -- even junior year. Um, and then we got a new junior girl that year, um, because it was a junior-senior high school, who was a really out lesbian. And then together we, um, we started taking groups over to the IYG -- the Indiana Youth Group. Um, it's like a gay youth group -- counselling group kind of thing, um, for under 21, um, queer people. And my first girlfriend started it, started the chapter, um, because we really needed one. And then this other girl, Elizabeth, and I started taking people over. And, it was really interesting; so I was out to everyone -- everyone knew that Jamie was my girlfriend, even if they didn't know me, they knew that that girl was her girlfriend.

K -- Right, right.

M -- But the thing was, Jamie was still in the closet, like, on the same campus. So my high school knew she was out -- or knew she was a lesbian, because she was around me so much. But her people weren't allowed to know. So it was like, it was really, really awkward -- really hard. Um, and we ended up breaking up after 5 and a half months. So, and that was really painful, but then I was single for a very long time, so... but, I don't know.

K -- And then you came to Kenyon College?

M -- Um, I was almost automatically out. Like, I was a little nervous when I first got her because I didn't know -- I couldn't remember how I came out in the first place because I'd been out for so long.

K -- Right, right.

M -- So I wasn't sure, like, how to do it. So, at the, um -- I remember at the Voices thing, there was a queer girl there who saw me come in -- and I used to wear this revolutionary hat -- it disappeared over the summer -- I think my mom stole it because she hated it. And she saw me come in and she said that she thought -- wow, I really hope she's gay.

K -- Oh wow.

M -- Just because she thought it would be really cool to have someone who would -- anyone who wear that kind of hat had to be gay. Like, that was her theory. And it was so funny, um, I think it may be true actually, I don't know. But then whenever to my, um, community forum thing, there

was just, by happenstance; there was this boy there from, like 45 minutes away from where I live, and he was gay. I just -- it was just so obvious to me. So we had to pick partners and introduce ourselves, and then introduce each other. So we did that, like, together, and that's when we found out that we lived really close to each other -- we knew people in common; it was really funny. And um, then we had to go around the circle and pick 2 colors to define ourselves, um, and each color meant something. And he picked something and sexual orientation. And I was like, hell, if he can do it, I can do it, and so I picked gender and orientation. But, so that was like my first coming out thing, and then at the, at the um... big, activities fair, the girl who was my community forum mentor, um, Vanessa Chan, was standing at the ALSO table and saw me and recognized me and was like "hey come here!" I was like, I was with someone else and I was so nervous, I was like um, and she was like "come here! Come over here." And so I went over there and like, with the co-presidents jumped into this speal about how ALSO is for all sexualities and, and not everyone in ALSO is gay. And it was just like -- it was just funny to me. Because I was like, I was like, okay she knows I'm gay, I'm sure they know I'm gay, and they're going so far out of their way to try to make me feel comfortable. I was like, this is so nice of them. So I signed up and I'm a really active member. Um, so... to coming out on my hall, I actually put a note on my door that said "Melissa is a lesbian." And almost everyone in my hall came to me and said, um, brought to me and said "Melissa, somebody put a sign on your door." And I was like, I know, it was me. And they were just so confused. So I figured like that was the easiest way to do it.

K -- Get it all over with in a one-shot deal.

M -- Yeah, so after that, I guess I don't really tell people anymore, but people just... I guess I make comments... that maybe only a lesbian would make, I don't know. I'm not sure, but I guess it's pretty obvious sometimes.

K -- Do you feel there's certain stereotypes that people tend to....

M -- Oh yeah -- short hair, um, I drive a truck actually. Because I like it, not because I'm gay, that's all. There's still a butch-femme stigma the like, the 1930s, 40s, 50s; the 1980s -- I'm so gay history, I'm sorry.

K -- That's fine.

M -- Like, the 1980s feminist lesbian movement, um, completely like, I don't know what the word for it is, not denied, but attacked the stigma of, or the butch-femme construct. Saying that lesbians were trying to be heterosexual couples. But if you look at the butch-femme, it's not at all that. It's basically because in a heterosexual relationship, um, historically, the masculine role is the role that is to be pleased. The feminine role is the role that serves. But in a butch-femme construct, the butch role, which is more masculine, so they say, maybe it is, I don't know, is the role that serves. And the femme is basically treated kind of like as a princess. Like one of my friends has this saying, um, "femmes are a dime a dozen but you can never find a femme-butch. Which it's so true, it so is true that femmes are a dime a dozen. Especially since the eighties when lesbians didn't want to be seen as trying to be men because that is how they've been seen for a really long time. But now there are all these other things like, um, androgen. There are a lot

of androgenous lesbians. And that's what most people consider me. Like cross between um, butch and androgen because even where, even when I wear a skirt, like a long skirt, I can still sometimes be confused with a guy. Like with a young man. Like, 15 to 17. So.

K -- Do you find that you changed your manner of dress and stuff when you finally did out yourself, or was it always

M -- Um, actually, hmmm. In the last year or two, I've actually become more comfortable with wearing dresses, which is really strange. Um, but I don't know if that's due to anything, I'm not really sure. Um, it may just be due to the fact that I feel more comfortable as who I am and like as my body and things like that. And I used to have this major fear of people hitting on me. Like I have really nice legs. And I never really noticed that until like guy friends started hitting me whenever I wore a skirt. So I used to never ever wear skirts. And I started like, and I always wore baggy clothes and, but once I like got over that. So now, I do pretty well with skirts and stuff.

K -- To shift a little bit okay. What are your impressions of Mount Vernon? Or actually Knox County, just this rural lifestyle.

M -- It's, most of the people here are very closeted. Um, And with good reason really. There are some not nice people here. A lot of them actually. There's a group called the rebels in Mount Vernon, have you heard of them?

K -- Heard of them, yeah, I don't know much about them though.

M -- They harass people, um, people of color, people of not white, heterosexual male, um, status, basically. Anyone not like them.

K -- Have you come across any discrimination.

M -- Well, um, last year a girl who was in ALSO, who was also black, um, was almost ran over by them.

K -- Okay, I remember that story.

M -- She was crossing the street. But, um that's the contact I've had with them. I don't think I've ever seen them driving around.

K -- With the general community, do you feel like that you're looked at differently if you walk -- you're not out to community -- the Mount Vernon community?

M -- Actually, I kind of have like a happy story about Mount Vernon. Um, my girlfriend came to visit and not only are we very, very obvious together, but even when we try not to be, we're very obvious together. Um, she's also black, so that puts a little twist in it. I took her to Ikes for lunch one day and the waitress -- waiter was so so nice. He was just a flame -- just a flame. And he was great, um, and then when she paid the ticket, when she went up to pay the ticket and I went to

leave the tip, the manager; I found out that it was the manager later, was um, was running the cash register and she said "You girls have nice day... and a nice night." And um, Keisha laughed and I looked over and I didn't know why she was laughing and she told me when we got outside and I just thought it was hilarious. Jus hilarious. So. So like basically, all of the whole Ikes, um, regular wait staff knows that I'm a lesbian. And after last night, because a few lesbian friends of mine and I went to Ikes, I call it "Dikes." Just because I slipped up one day so now that's what I call it. So we went last night and um, we were talking and like, um, we were kind of like a regular night crowd. Um, and we didn't have our regular waitress so it was kind of weird. So I didn't feel terribly comfortable. The other waitress was kind of a bitch. But the people around us all kind of know us by sight, or know two of us by sight, the other one, um, had never been there, so, I was playing with this lady's baby and the little girl was so cute. And um, the girl comes with, I think its her mother, um, and we were talking and I know she was listening. She was actually interacting in part of our conversations -- it was really funny, but um, it was just really really strange because I got the idea that um, most of the people in Ikes knew that we were all lesbians, and, then one of our gay friends came in later and it was so funny because he was sitting across the room and like I went over and got a cigarette from him and then I came back and then he came over after awhile. And came and like gossiped for awhile and then came back. It was so funny. But um, they were just laughing at us, but I got the feeling that maybe the night crowd at Ikes is a lot more queer than we thought it was.

K -- really?

M -- Yeah. Like this girl was really kind of just -- I couldn't figure her out. 'Cause for a while she was flirting with me and then she wasn't flirting with me anymore and I was still playing with her baby and her grand -- the other woman, I think it was the girl's mother, um, was calling the baby a tease. For playing with me, she's like "you're such a little tease, you're such a little tease." I thought the baby was a boy, the baby's a girl. I was so confused for awhile. I was so confused because actually, I think they switched gender pronouns -- I'm not sure. But we could have swore they were saying "he" first, but then the mother was distinctly saying "she." It was very distinct so I, I had no idea what's going on -- no idea.

K -- That's funny, I should go over there.

M -- But Mount Vernon is just hilarious. Go late at night, like, one-ish.

K -- Do you find that there is a large out gay community. We talked about it briefly on the way over, but do you notice one?

M -- In Mount Vernon?

K -- Mm hmm.

M -- No.

K -- No?

M -- I think a lot of people are out to a few people around them. I know the, I talked to Ryn Edwards about this and I know that the lesbian community, in Mount Vernon is incredibly closeted. Like incredibly closeted. They are small, close-knit groups of friends. Um, I also know that there is one transsexual in Mount Vernon, I don't know who she is, I will probably never meet her, she is incredibly closeted. Like, incredibly closeted.

K -- And you think that's fostered by the rural-type deal? Or what do you think?

M -- I think it's fostered by the fact that, um, this is a very conservative area, excuse me. Um, there isn't a terrible lot of understanding. Oh, I know something else actually, There's a family in Mount Vernon or Howard, I can't remember where -- somewhere around here, that all of the children are grown up, they're all 5 girls right? The mother is a lesbian, the father is gay, there were together for awhile and got divorced and both realized that they were gay. Right. Or realized they were gay and got divorced. Four of the daughters out of the 5 are lesbians.

K -- Hmm. Interesting.

M -- Yeah.

K -- All they all out?

M -- Uh, I don't know. I just know, uh, I don't know how out they are to the community, but um, one of my old bosses here on campus is friends with them all.

K -- Oh really?

M -- Yeah, and she told me about them. And I also know that the Methodist Church -- I think -- Methodist Church in Mount Vernon is 75% gay.

K -- Really?

M -- Basically, all the Christian, Knox County People go there. It's, I don't know where it is, all I know is that it has a rainbow flag on the door and any time you see a rainbow flag on the door of a church or basically anything, it means they welcome gay people. And um, that's where those women go to church. And so I was told that, it's like 75% gay. I'm gonna have to try and find it too because, um, to see what their services are like.

K -- Right, right. I have to see if I can somehow get into that in the next few weeks. Um, so you don't find, I mean the only communities are -- or activities you get involved in would be on campus, I guess, in terms of...

M -- Yeah.

K -- Um, In terms of problems you've faced, experiences of discrimination?

M -- Umm

K -- In generally, or especially in this area.

M -- I've actually been the most lucky of all of my friends. I can't think of any time when I've had -- I can think of one time I was actually at a restaurant in Indiana with a couple of my friends. Um, Renee, who is just incredibly butch, and her girlfriend at the time. And there was this, this guy, and his family yelling at us, calling us "leg-lickers" and talking about how "wouldn't daddy be upset to find out that he was paying for his little girl to go to college and she was...."

-----END SIDE A -----

SIDE B

M -- Nothing I can think of right now. I can't think of any...

K -- In terms of --

M -- Which may just be me, I don't know, maybe I have and I just can't think of any.

K -- Yeah. In terms of your view of homosexuality, do you think it is something that you chose or is it something that you were born with?

M -- Um,

K -- Actually, if you could talk a little about the religion aspect of your father and stuff.

M -- Okay, yeah. I don't think I chose it because why in the hell, would I chose it -- that's just crazy. I do know people have chosen it. I do know um, political lesbians. Like not political as in I'm political too, but they chose to be lesbian for a feminist political reason. As in, the reasoning is, men will never be truly feminist because they have never experienced um, being a women. Therefore, by dating men, you're buying in to the patriarchy. Right, I was just kind of like, you scare me. I'm gonna go somewhere else because I don't like this. Because it made me very nervous and she actually made a lot of nervous. Um because a lot of people felt like, like you could walk into a room and spot her almost immediately. And it was almost like an outsider coming in kind of thing. So, kind of strange. Um, and a lot of the people, like for awhile, I felt this way and I don't know -- I don't think I do anymore, but um, for a while, a lot of us felt that she was demeaning us. Because it's a big struggle to come out. It's a big struggle to admit it to yourself, to admit it to your family, to basically, start a new life with the -- with the like pieces of what you had, and be a gay person.

K -- Right, right.

M -- And here she is, like, deciding on the basis of political beliefs that she's going to be a

lesbian, kind of like, anyone can do this. You know? And she didn't grow up in like junior high and have to, you know, it's just, is one of those things that just really bother a lot of people. And I don't know if it still bothers me because I haven't met anyone like that in a long time, so I don't know if I'll still react the same way. But it's kind of like, not a normal thing -- not a normal thing -- not a prevalent thing. She's actually the only person I've ever met who's said that they chose to be gay. Um, I don't know if I was born with it though. Um, I know some people who are absolutely sure that they were born gay, and they knew when they were, like they have memories of being 4 and 5 and 6 and feeling gay. Now, I didn't have, I don't think any sexual like motivation for like a long time. I dated guys in junior high and high school, um, mostly because that was what people in my crowd did. Um, I hung out with the "bad boys." Um, so I don't know if it's nature of nurture or, I know it's something I didn't choose. Um, but it's hard to say that it's nurture because, um, my sister's not gay. You know? And that would be kind of like saying my parents made me gay and I just, I can't do that. Because that was what they were afraid of, you know, that they had done something wrong. "What did I do wrong?" Is one of the most commonly uttered phrases in coming out stories it seems. So I like to lean towards biology, but maybe it's not biological at all, just kind of like one of things like personality. You know? I don't know if they can say that that's biological. Like, do you inherit your personality? Well, I don't know, it's a bunch of different things. So maybe it's like that, like personality.

K -- In terms of um, growing up in a religious family, how has religion affected you? And are you still in any ways religious?

M -- Um, actually, the funny thing is, when I was growing up, we were very non-religious. We went to church every once in a while, my dad was incredibly non-religious. Um, not until we moved to Indiana, to be with my mom's family, did we start going to church again, um, like regularly. And my dad still didn't go, and I didn't want to go, I hated going. Um, But I kind of like, felt forced to go, you know? Um, my dad, I guess, got back into it after a couple of years in Indiana, and started going to church and then was called to the ministry and started being the assistant pastor under my grandfather and then, and then my grandfather retired and, and now the church is really growing and it's become a lot more liberal, which is really weird, my dad has all of these liberal ideas, but he's a conservative republican. And it just baffles me really. He teases me about Rush Limbaugh, he's like, "I love Rush, Rush is my man, I would vote for Rush." I'm like "You would not, you hate him almost as much I do." He's like "Yeah, you know you listen to Rush." I'm like "yeah daddy, I sit alone in my room with my radio on and my earphones on listening, just so no one will catch me. I'm a closet Rush friek" Right. But, he's so funny, um, so it was kind of weird. It kind of felt like, um, a betrayal almost, because suddenly everyone's religious and we have to be religious too. And I was like very bitter. Very bitter little girl -- junior high school student, whatever. But, basically I played at being religious, you know? Played at being, um the pretty sweet girl, you know hostess-thing. Because I actually like to take care of people and to serve people and stuff. So it just kind of fell in it. So I just kind of, you know, never told anyone what I personally believed, let everyone believe that I believed what the church believes, that kind of thing. Um, I'm not really out to anyone in our church now. I was out to one woman who I actually worked with, and she was almost like another mother to me. Um, but she stopped coming to the church. Uh, so now I'm just out to my parents. Um, one of my aunts knows, actually one of my other aunts was spreadin rumors -- no she wasn't spreading -- she

came up to me during Thanksgiving last year and told me that there was a rumor going around about me in the family. I was like "what's the rumor?" And she said "well, they're saying that you're, um, well, you're, um," -- I love it when people can't say the word.

K -- yeah.

M -- "you know, that you're, uh, a lesbian." And I was like "oh, okay, well, thanks for telling me I guess." I didn't know what to say, I mean wasn't going to say, "well, I am," and I wasn't going to say "well, I'm not." I didn't know what to say, so I just kind of left it up to them. Which is really silly of me, but it's okay. Um, and then, I'm out to one of my cousins. Um, she's absolutely wonderful, I adore her. She's a senior in high school this year. I can't wait to go home to Thanksgiving, like see her again. And my family decided we're not having Thanksgiving with the family this year. Like, one of the things is my mom e-mailed me and told me that I was gonna have to let her know if I was going to bring Keisha, my girlfriend, home for Thanksgiving. So that she could talk to the family about it and let, um, my Uncle Robert know that she's black, and if he doesn't like it, we'll just have Thanksgiving somewhere else. I was like "Woa." My mom's actually standing behind me on something, this is so weird. So I haven't actually told my extended family, but basically, everyone knows except my grandparents, and nobody's talking to my grandparents about it. So. I don't know. I think I could probably actually tell my great-grandfather, and I don't think he would mind. And I think if my Great Aunt Georgie were still alive, she wouldn't care, and I think if my other Great grandmother was still alive, she wouldn't care. But like, those two people are dead, and he's like in his eighties and pretty sick -- I think his wife would care. I have a step-great-grandmother. How many people have on of those? Just cracks me up. But my grandfather and my grandmother are both very bigotted, it's really strange.

K -- Has that been a problem, like not only being lesbian, but also having a inter-racial couple? Like how do you find the prejudices of that versus..

M -- Um, Keisha and I have only really gone -- we've been together for almost 3 months, but we've known each other for like 3 years. She was actually Elizabeth's roommate, the other out lesbian. She was her roommate for a really long time. Um, but, let's see, we've been together at two Lilith Fairs and at a club and in Nashville -- in Louisville, and here and at Earlem. And, I don't think we've had any problems. But we really only -- she did come to my house once, um, I don't live in a very good neighborhood for blacks to be in -- or especially didn't then -- we've moved since then, so I don't now. But um, we weren't at my house for very long, it's kind of like, she came into the house, we went out of the house, we left. So, so we actually haven't had any problems um, either way really. Except for at Lilith Fair, this guy following us around. This middle aged man was flirting with me the entire time, like following us around. I'm wearing a big yellow button that says "I like dikes," he asks me who dikes is and I say "her." You know? And then this guy and the 2 women with him actually moved their blanket to sit by us. We were just really annoyed. And then we had these like older lesbians watching out for us, it was really funny. Um, because they're from the same area, we'd never met them, but we had clove cigarettes and..

K -- Do you find a bonding that sometimes if you

M -- Yeah, especially if you at place like Lilith Fair, um, where there is so many people, so many lesbians, and that one was in Cincinnati, it's a terrible place to be gay. But the people there were from all over. Like I'm from Indiana, Keisha's from almost in Louisville, these women were from Louisville. Um, there were people from like all over Ohio, like all over the Tri-state area -- it was really funny. But, so like we were giving them clove cigarettes, they were watching our stuff, we were watching someone else's stuff, it was just like, this big, almost, like a family reunion. Is a lot of times what it gets to be like. So, it's really nice.

K -- Um, and then another shift. There's been a change in Kenyon's view of um, sexuality and people have said, kind of a paralleling change in the Mount Vernon community, I know you haven't been here for that long, but what you do you feel like the direction for that is?

M -- There's been a change in Kenyon? Since when?

K -- Um, last year they actually just passed

M -- Oh right, they put sexual preference in the thing, and it's no longer minorities, it's under represented groups. Right, I forgot we did that. Um, I don't know, I don't think I've been here long enough to really say.

K -- Right.

M -- I do know that at ALSO, every once in a while we'll talk about trying to do something with Mount Vernon High School, but then everyone wimps out. So, I think maybe one of these days I'll go over there alone and like wheat paste their walls or something.

K -- Right.

M -- I don't know.

K -- Um, in terms of where you see yourself in the future -- whether it be here in Mount Vernon, or uh, just do you, can you see yourself staying in a rural area like this, or?

M -- It's really kind of strange because I like rural life as in um, people know each other, people usually are more friendly. Um, but uh, I like night life, also -- I love clubbing and I love drag-queens so, like, it's really, funny because I know this drag queen and he is just, he's hilarious, and then when he dresses up, she is so beautiful. So I switch gender pronouns, because he's Aaron to me, but then I've seen pictures of him as Heather.

K -- okay.

M -- So I just switch the gender pronouns, for who he is. Like it's not that he's schizoprenic, it's just that he's a drag queen and that happens.

K -- Right, right.

M -- So, I've never actually seen him perform, but..

K -- Where does he perform?

M -- Somewhere in Louisville.

K -- Okay.

M -- Like a lesbian club.

K -- Do you go into Columbus for anything ot?

M - No, not really. I've been to High Street a couple times and like, um, just had some fun. I do go to An Open Book as often as possible -- It's a gay bookstore on High Street, um, near downtown. High Street is kind of like the gay strip. So. But, no I never really gone to any gay bars or anything.

K -- Do you see yourself like settling down with like a monogomous partner or anything?

M -- Yeah, yeah. I'm actuallu kind of planning on it with Keisha.

K -- Children or anything?

M -- Um

K -- It's really early to talk about that type of stuff.

M -- No, actually it's not. I've been thinking about it for a long time, I really want children. And I babysit 4 little boys, like the oldest one is 4. The 2 youngest are twins that are 2 months old. And I babysit them every Friday for like 9 to 10 hours. The mom is there the whole time, she just needs a break. And next week -- wait next semester I'm going to do it more often. So, it's good pay.

K -- That sounds nice.

M -- And I just love the kids. You know?

K -- Yeah.

M -- Um, it's really really hard work, but um, I've always said I was going to adopt a little girl from China -- probably from China, or perhaps an orphan from one of the South American, Central American countries that has had so many civil wars.

K -- Right.

M -- Um, I always said China because, even now, little girls in China are so unwanted because the Chinese has put that one child per family law in effect, so. So little girls are often abandoned and all that kind of thing.

K -- Do you see yourself having a Union, or some type of gay-marriage?

M -- I don't know. Um,

K -- I'm sure you picture it.

M -- I do, I do picture it, um, I used to picture, like not talking to my parents for years and like never coming out to them and then sending them invitations to my wedding. You know? But that's not going to happen, and I'm glad that's not going to happen that way. But um, I think it would be really neat. Um, at the same time though, like, my sister's had 2 weddings, there were not a big deal to me. I thought that they were silly, personally. So I don't know, I don't know. If I do it, maybe just one of those little kind of like commitment ceremony.

K -- Yeah, that's how most of them are.

M -- Not like a big wedding. I think a big wedding would be really really cool, but Keisha totally wouldn't go for it, so.

K -- Is there anything you think that I've missed, or anything else you want to talk about?

M -- Um

K -- This is your chance.

M -- Actually, yeah. Kenyon College campus. Okay because something has pissed me off recently. You obviously got the all-stu?

K -- I must have gotten it, I don't know if I've read.

M -- The all-stu about the gay grafitti? Okay a freshman sent out an all-stu, I don't remember his name, I refer to him as "jerk" in all of my e-mails to myself on things I'm going to send to him. I just haven't yet because I'm trying to make myself as calm as possible so I don't like rip him a new asshole. He got like 45 responses. Um, he sent out this all-stu about how, why do gay people feel the need to um, be proud and like and exert -- exert, I don't know. Force their pride down everyone elses down everyone elses throats, blah, blah, blah , blah, blah.

K -- Okay, I do remember this e-mail.

M -- Then there, the same week, there was an editorial in the paper called "nine out of ten aren't

gay.” Yeah, this senior can do math, we’re happy for him. But that one was really upsetting too. And those things piss me off. One of the things that he said in his article is “Kenyon College is a safe place.” Those weren’t his exact words, he said more than that. He said, you know, “this isn’t a place where we need to be exerting our sexual freedom. Okay, sexual freedom is the most ridiculous thing on earth. He also called it a persuasion. It’s not a persuasion, it’s an orientation, it’s not a choice, it’s not like “I’m feeling like wearing blue today,” “I’ll be a lesbian today,” “maybe I’ll be straight tomorrow, or bi tomorrow, or maybe I’ll even be transgendered or transexual.” It’s not a persuasion. It’s a fact. And then another thing he said was, of course the “Kenyon is a safe place.” Kenyon is not a safe place. I mean, alright, there hasn’t been a reported instance of physical attack this year. I believe there was one last year, there might have been two. Um, harrassment because of sexual orientation is the most commonly reported harrassment to the harrassment task force. Um, it’s the most commonly reported overall. Like, even above gender. Um, I know of several incidents where gay or perceived gay students have had um, their doors or their personal belongings vandalized. Like, a door knob hanger that used to say um on one side “please come in” on the other side, “sorry i’m busy” or something like that. And that side was scribbled out and it said “having gay sex.” That’s great for someone who’s timid in the first place.

K -- Right.

M -- You know? And it’s not the first time like things, have happened to this particular person. I know last year, people who were threatened, it’s just, it’s ridiculous and the thing is he assumed, he didn’t ask anyone. If he would have asked anyone, he would have found out. But he didn’t, he just assumed. And since he doesn’t see these things happening, they’re not happening. And that’s ridiculous because of course someone who has been perceived gay, and, has had their door or themselves vandalized or harrassed, isn’t gonna go to, you know, the Collegian and complain -- isn’t gonna go to anyone except maybe the people that that person already knows are gay and are gonna be understanding, whether or not that person is gay. So.

K -- I think that’s also probably parallel in other communities as well, not just on college campuses.

M -- Yeah

K -- Which is really important -- this is -- that’s another thing which is another reason why we’re doing this -- get that voice and get that out there that, you know, you’re not seeing the whole picture.

M -- ALSO is writing a huge editorial about it and like

K -- Oh really?

M -- Yeah. Actually, there is an ALSO web page.

K -- Oh is there?

M -- Yeah, I created it.

K -- Did you?

M -- Yeah, it's not very old, it's um, it's www.2.kenyon.edu. Um, it's the alternate Kenyon web page. It's really cool. It has like all of the

K -- is it .2 or is it?

M -- No.

K -- Okay.

M -- It's, it has more organizations on it than the regular one because it has more room. It also has people web pages on it. Um, basically, it's under organizations and then ALSO. Um and there is a whole page on it called "Hate Crimes." Um, and it's stuff that has happened in the last month. Not here, not all here, al -- excuse me -- most of it isn't here. Um, but it's like my dedication to the idiot. To the idiots who don't know what they're talking about.

K -- Yeah.

M -- Um, it also has a um, a trans page on it, with just a little update of how society is beating down the transsexual. Kind of.

K -- Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

M -- Um, people are stupid. That's my main take on it. Um, the article is about, it's written by Sarah Fox who is the nicest lady. Um, she has a PhD in Neural Biology, I think. She's really interested in frogs. I don't know, I'm not a science person, I didn't really understand what she was talking about, but Melisa Cravates did last year. Um, because Melisa Cravates is into like reptile-things. But anyway, um, she came last year, she was one of the people who helped me get together people for trans-week, last year. And she's a professor at OSU and she does so much stuff with um, It's Time Ohio, and It's Time Columbus, and It's Time America. They're all like, groups and sub-groups. It's basically the grassroots transsexual political group in the nation. Um, she's like the web-mistress, and she's chairpersons for like everything, I don't know, it's just amazing.

K -- Would she be a good person to talk to?

M -- Yeah, but she doesn't live in Knox County.

K -- Okay.

M -- Is the thing.

K -- Is she still live in like a rural.

M -- No, she lives in Columbus.

K -- Oh, she does?

M -- Yeah, but Kathy

K -- But she would still know.

M-- Kathy is actually the person that I gave to you, she's friends with Sarah.

K -- Okay.

M -- There're in the same groups. Kathy is almost as like, amazingly into all of this stuff.

K -- I'm definately gonna contact Kathy.

M -- What else? I think that is all I can think of right now.

K -- No, that's that's

M -- That was my rant.

K -- That was absolutely terrific, um, I guess, is there anybody else that I should talk to, I mean you've given me Kathy, the possible people at Ikes, um

M -- Um

K -- I briefly, I e-mailed Ryn Edwards, but she didn't offer an interview -- I might follow that up because she could probably.

M -- Oh! What am I thinking? Here hand me your pen and I'll write down some people here on campus. Um, I don't know how many, why did I not think of this? Okay, um there's um, oh, you can probably stop that now.

K -- Okay

M -- I'm not gonna say anything....

END