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Anonymous, Interview, 2023

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Interview with [REDACTED] conducted by EMU graduate student Elizabeth Allen (EA), on November 15th, 2023, at the LGBT Resource Center on EMU's campus for the LGBTRC's "Queer Stories" series.

Transcribed by Finn Vincent-Fix

EA:

Today is Wednesday, November 15, 2023. This is Eastern Michigan University graduate student, Elizabeth Allen, and I'm here at the LGBT resource center on EMU's campus with [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is a student at EMU who's here to share her story about being queer/trans for the LGBTRC's Queer Stories series. Welcome, and thanks for joining me.

[REDACTED]:

Thanks.

EA:

So just going all the way back, what sort of kind of childhood memories do you have of being queer?

[REDACTED]

I honestly don't have many early memories, I would say it mostly started around in middle school, where I just started questioning my identity.

EA:

Can you tell me about that process?

■

I attended a Christian Middle School in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, more so near Radcliff. That experience was chosen for me because my parents felt that I would do better in an environment where it was smaller, and tighter knit, and give me a chance to learn more about Christianity, because that's my family's religious background. I noticed that some of the language used by the church, and other teachers there, was very unwelcoming towards people that were LGBTQ. I didn't really understand why, but it just felt very off putting to me. It caused me to look up things about the Bible, what they said about homosexuality and Transness. As I continued learning about the history of what the Church believed about gay people, it became kind of a problem for me, because on one hand, I noticed that I felt a big resistance towards it, and also felt that I needed to believe what the church said.

EA:

So that conflict kind of caused you to question things?

■:

Yeah.

EA:

What brought you to Eastern specifically?

█

Towards the end of high school, I was looking at colleges, and I mostly wanted to stay within the state. I was considering Eastern mostly because of the financial opportunities, but I also realized that it had a pretty nice—I would say—welcoming atmosphere towards LGBTQ people, which I like. So yeah, that was another draw as well.

EA:

On that note, what are some of your safe spaces where you feel welcomed on campus, or off campus?

█:

Initially, I think that the organization Crystal Queer, when it was started, it seemed pretty nice. It was a way for—I would say—people to just kind of come together and just talk online. It's mostly friendly in that sense. So, I think that's just the main space to which I felt pretty welcomed on campus, because I think other spaces—I don't know—it just didn't seem like I could really fit in to those things.

EA:

Can you tell me more about the group that you're part of? Like, what kind of things do they do? You mentioned talking online?

█

Yeah, Crystal Queer is mostly a social organization for just people to hang out. They can meet up on campus and do things together, and also just talk about their interest freely. So yeah, it's just pretty casual.

EA:

Obviously, you're involved with this club, how involved are you generally with the queer community on campus?

█

Last year, I was a normal member within the organization. Now I'm part of the executive board as a member at large, or member of FDA. So, I mostly handle social media stuff to push out events that we're trying to do more of.

EA:

How did you get involved in that?

█

Just from being a member last year.

EA:

Okay, so just to get a little heavier. Obviously, we know that there have been a lot more anti-trans/anti-queer legislations being put out. How have you sort of kept yourself safe, and practiced self-care during those times?

█

I have noticed that over the years the news has been one thing that has felt very heavy, and just overall just makes me feel sad. So I just tried to turn away from televised news or radio news. I'm more just focused on reading on local legislation on my own, in the right headspace, where I feel comfortable reading different topics. I guess I just try to indulge in things that just bring me joy. Like my hobbies.

EA:

What are some of your hobbies?

█

I like to read. I honestly didn't read much in the last few years. I'm getting back into reading, and I finished about three books so far. So that's been pretty cool. I like to do yoga, journal, and I also just started cooking for this year, just so that way I can eat more healthy fulfilling meals on campus. Yeah, that's been pretty cool.

EA:

Yeah, that's great. So, it's the week of trans joy, so can you describe in your own words what queer joy, or euphoria, feels like to you?

█

To me, euphoria is when you feel the most happy, fulfilled and comfortable in your own skin.

EA:

Can you think of any moments that you've had that recently, or in your past?

■

In the past, for me—I didn't really go to prom in high school, just because I didn't go to prom—but there was a queer prom that was hosted in Detroit by the organization called Congress of Communities, I believe. I got to go downtown dressed up in a cute pink dress. It was pretty intimidating, I'm not gonna lie, because it was my first time really being at a queer party. It was a really fun event, because they really had a lot of nice people hosting that try to make you feel comfortable, that came out and talked to you about things. They also had different spaces where if you wanted to dance, you could dance in loud rooms, or if you needed to chill out for a second to kind of recover from things sensory wise, they had little sensory rooms where you could just draw, or games, and I thought that was really nice.

EA:

Did you go with someone or just by yourself?

■

I just went by myself because I didn't know anyone.

EA:

Is there anything else you want to say for the record? Do you have anything you want to say to future generations of queer people?

■

Sure, I think that the process of self-acceptance for me was pretty hard. Because I just didn't believe that I had a future where I could feel happy in any sort of way, just being myself. But once when I started seeking media that I enjoy, and also, I don't know, just authors and blogs that kind of related to my personal experience as being a Black lesbian, that really helped me a lot. I guess over time, I was able to develop more courage to reach out for help from therapists that were very affirming, and culturally sensitive to me. So, I will say that the process of accepting yourself takes time, but the process is going to come when it's ready.

EA:

I'm just curious, because you mentioned specifically being a Black lesbian, that is kind of a different thing. How do you feel like that kind of intersection that has happened in your life? Do you feel like people see you differently in different situations?

■

I'm not an out-out. I guess I'm not very loud about my sexual orientation, in that sense, but I guess where those intersections kind of come into play is you don't really know if - I guess, I don't really know if I'm going into certain LGBTQ spaces if it's okay for me to talk about racial issues. Because I'm like, "okay. Well, there's not a lot of people like me." It's mostly you know, I would say, white. I just kind of feel this uncertainty that you can really speak authentically in those ways because you don't know how other people will take it. If that makes sense.

EA:

Have you found kind of a Black community on campus in the same way you found queer community?

■

Personally, no. I know that there's a lot of Black organizations, but I've only interacted with one and that's the Black Honors Student organization, but not really many others just because of lack of time and other commitments in my life.

EA:

Is there anything else you want to add?

■

No, I'm pretty good.

EA:

Yeah. Well, that's all my questions. So, thank you so much for coming in and doing this. This will be at the archives. There'll be a transcript, you can show your grandkids or whatever, you know. Thank you.