LGBTQ Oral History Project
Introduction to LGBTQ Studies (Spring 2018)
Northern Kentucky University

Larman: Well, my name is Larman Rodgers, I am a sophomore here at northern Kentucky, with a major in social work, a minor in social justice, and a focus in woman’s genders and studies. So could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Eric: Yeah, my name is Eric brose and I am the upward bound director at NKU and I’ve worked here 21 1/2 years and I’m from Rhode island and my family was military so we moved around, I grew up in Europe and then in calzone, I was born in Wyoming and college in the Midwest, and I started working in upward bound after grad school.

Larman: I know you said you’re from Europe how was it identifying as LGBTQ in the community there?

Eric: When I was young, I lived in Europe and England till I was 12 and went to an all boy school, and I’m not sure anyone was identifying as anything other than being a boy, but certainly there was a range on behavior that would be different from an American public school in terms of an elementary school.

Larman: How would you identify your sexual orientation or gender identity?

Eric: I would identity as a gay male.

Larman: what pronouns would you use for yourself?

Eric: he him his

Larman: When did you realize that you were LGBTQ?

Eric: Probably when I was like around 11 or 12 years old.

Larman: How was that for you?

Eric: well it was difficult cuz you know there was that whole sense that you know it wasn't something that you should be so it was like trying to avoid it or somehow hide it.

Larman: Was it hard to hide and it did you feel like?

Eric: yeah kind of pretty much people could guess

Larman: Did you deny it a lot? Or would people question you about it or how would that go about?

Eric: Well people would be questioning and I kind of just avoid it until I was in college.
Larman: So when you got to college, you felt more open about being who you were?

Eric: Yeah mainly cuz it was I went to college a long long way from home and I was in the department and a college with in that University that was very open about various different things with diversity.

Larman: Yeah I know I know when people get to college they find it more comfortable to be themselves, When you start college it’s a new environment and you know people don't really know you so it's like you get a fresh start in so you don't have to start off being anything but yourself so who I understand it.

Could you describe your family or could you describe your family?

Eric: I was from a military family, also a professional family and I have one sister is younger, my parents were very much in the traveling so they had both travel internationally from a young age and the major thing they had in common was they wanted to travel so that was that was that was a major determining factor for them in most things.

Larman: Do you have any family members who are part of the LGBTQ community?

Eric: Yes, I have a cousin who is transgender, transgender male.

Larman: How did your family take that if you don’t mind me asking?

Eric: Well his mother is incredibly left-wing and Incredibly Progressive had so even though we thought it said that he growing up was a lesbian his mother was sure that he was transgender and so when he thought he might be she really pushed for that and I mean she was very supportive of that.

Larman: How old is he?

Eric: He’s 19

Larman: How was your family with you when you came out?

Eric: They were fine, that didn’t care.

Larman: How was it for you growing up? Did they question you a lot? Push you to come out? Or did they just leave you alone?

Eric: My dad had left alone was totally cool if my mom was kind of pushy

Larman: How was the community that you grew up in?

Eric: Well well in England people didn’t make a big deal about it, no one really talked about it. And then Laramie Wyoming, it's an issue now because of Matthew Shepard flat at the time again it was playing at people didn't feel like talk about.
Larman: When we experience it like in school in the I know you said you were questioned a lot, were you bullied?

Eric: Yes I was bullied, in Junior High but it wasn’t so much for that it was so because of my English accent and I and my sister were trying to drop those. Trying to sound more American and I reacted by like having to be in every Club like sports and participating all the time to stay out there a lot doing things and trying to getting to know a lot of people.

Larman: I can relate because people use to make fun of my accent when I first moved from Louisiana and its find of embarrassing because the kids use to call me Katrina. But I work for Hurricane Katrina you can bully me for that and I dressed differently so they do not go kind of relate to you on that aspect of it.

Eric: So when did you come here from Louisiana?

Larman: I moved here and I want to say ‘06 ‘07 and I moved back home and I came back here, And then I was actually supposed to go back to the college in Louisiana but I ended up getting a scholarship here and so is that too early why I’m here right now. Speaking of school Your teachers treat you different or today not really care about?

Eric: my gym teacher in 9th grade made kind of a comment but everyone else was just of Supportive of Me and who really did a lot for me to be able to progress and go on with where I want to go to college Excel you in on the great I'm doing now.

Larman: Speaking of school what influenced you to move from England to America to come to college?

Eric: Well that’s what my dad wanted to do and we moved there and then we ended up in Wyoming in high school to my parents split up and well my mom's family lives in Wyoming if I went there and I went to college in the Midwest for two reasons one my dad wanted me to and he was living in the Midwest and teaching hand because of scholarship money.

Larman: How was your experience if you don't mind me asking?

Eric: the last two years were great the first two years were rough But the last two years were incredible. Graduate school was not so much fun, when you go to graduate school Make sure whatever program you go to is better than the undergrad program I went the other way, I went the best undergraduate program anywhere. But when I went to grad school it was for free and I ended up in a program that wasn't as good.

Larman: Why weren't your first two years good?

Eric: It was homesickness and adjustments I ended up changing my major to something that was very similar And when you're in high-school you think that if you do really well on things And when you get to College it's completely different It's more competitive plus I was dealing with things it's like being gay and other stuff.
Larman: Did you get in any relationships while in college?
Eric: yeah a couple and they didn't last
Larman: did you try to date girls in college to?
Eric: yes and that was a mistake yes I tried I gave it a good old College try
Larman: are you involved in any spiritual communities or religious communities
Eric: not really I was and my husband is but I go to some stuff with him but that's about It.
Larman: Did your beliefs change because of your sexuality or just because of what you put personally feel as you got older.
Eric: Not really I just feel that religion is a organized way to keep people out.
Larman: Do your employers are co-workers know about your sexual
Eric: Yes
Larman: Did they treat you differently
Eric: I don't know I was out before my first professional job in Wyoming
Larman: Are you comfortable with discussing your sexuality at work or that really is hep C touchy subject
Eric: Yes kinda
Larman: I know you said you have a husband how long have you guys been together
Eric: We in a party and we were dating other people and we just started talking at the party I was in a long-distance relationship before then for a year he was in Cincinnati I was in Ohio how long have you guys been together we started dating in ‘94 and we've been together for 22 and a half years
Larman: That's really good. Has your marriage affected your family life or do they accept him?
Eric: Yes they accept him on both ends both families except him my family in Wyoming is long distance the show there was no one who said there was like we were going to hell or anything have you dealt with anyone saying that you were going to go to hell or hate crimes or anything great question no not that I can remember I do think that there's glass healing
Larman: what do you mean by that?
Eric: We haven't had a gay president at the University we only have one gay vice president and we only have a couple of gay chairs but the chance have been recent and so has the vice president they were transfers and they came through the system here at NKU. I mean maybe I don't know it maybe it'll change over time maybe

Larman: Do you feel like people are comfortable here coming out their place of work or the flag is more of a conservative thing?

Eric: Another good question I did it feel any concern about it when I came here in the mid-90s and I've known to people who did not 10 year here because they came out I know how people who have been fired for forgiven 22 years

Larman: Do you have any children?

Eric: No

Larman: Did you want children or is that something that you thought about actually I thought about that a lot but the time for it has passed if you don't do it before you 40 is not going to happen so yeah I work with high school kids so I feel like I did with kids a lot so that is fine

Eric: What all do you do as far as University wise in high school University wise and I understand your upper bon... upper bound is a government funded program who works with students whose parents don't have four years College of degree and it works with them and some of them have money some of them don't and we work to get them prepared better compare for college to help them get into college and help him get in financial aid for college that's what we do do you

Larman: Do you make connections with lot of the kids?

Eric: Yes I make direct connections with the kids. We have a 6 week summer program here at NKU this residential will work out student. They actually providing a lot of time with me

Larman: do they talk to you about my sexuality to ask you any questions or it is like a touchy subject I don't really know your sexual orientation or do you not really talk about it?

Eric: One of the students do it now but one of them I think does want to say something but isn’t really comfortable saying anything but I let them know I’m here to talk whenever needed. I tell them Call me then you know and I just got it that's fine

Larman: So you don’t really want to press the issue?

Eric: no not really, on a variety of things and that's one of the things that they feel my talking about his gender and also transgender issues, when I was in high school transgender was not hear something but we thought it was Renee Richards the tennis player the idea of transgender wasn't
even so I can being gay that was something to be to know you're all right now to suck it like it's just another identifier it's like yeah you know so.

Larman: Do you feel like everyone is prejudice against people in the LGBTQ community? Is there Never going to be a time to where everyone going to be at accept or do you feel like they just one of those things that is always going to be an issue or someone's always going to have something to say or

Eric: no I think there's always going to be issues of homophobia, racism, and sexism in the United States.

Larman: I feel like it's pretty sad because people are people regardless of orientation sexuality gender identity and color of the skin

Eric: yeah I agree

Larman: I actually like this class because it has open my eyes I'm more two different sexualities indifferent pronouns in different orientations because I thought lgbtq was the only thing that had but being in this class I see people using different pronouns and different sexualities I've never heard before so this class is open my eyes for me

Eric: In Terms of that like we didn't really talk about asexuality until 5 or 6 years ago and I didn't see people starts on the name and use them pronoun preference in until about 4 or 5 years ago so those are recent for those who are older it's pretty reason

Larman: yeah because I know even though I'm a part of the lgbtq community only hang around straight friends I don't have gay friends and it's just like blindsided someone got in the classroom it was like I opened it was different and I appreciate it. What was like when the first time you met someone up a part of the same Community as you?

Eric: Another good question Is another thing there is a thing where gay people check each other out and it's a sense of are you safe or is it take to be open with you even though we have that in common there's a weariness it's on the first initial meeting between people were okay that's what I see

Larman: it's kind of I want I want to I want to come I you have keywords that and indicators that you can use. With me I'm pretty open about it, if you ask me i'll answer it for you.

Larman: I've never been the type to ask and it doesn’t really matter to me, to me people are people gay straight or lesbian or not. when was the first time you ever met someone apart of the lgbtq community

Eric: that was officially out

Larman: yes sir or did it have to be out yet just anyone

Eric probably I guess and Junior High School
Larman: how is that where you guys like strange did you tell each other that you were gay
Eric: I was in junior high school and they were old person working at the theater and so no it was more like checking out how that person acted and behaved
Larman: how did it make you feel?
Eric: self-conscious
Larman: because you felt like they were comfortable enough to come out or what or your reasoning behind it for you being self-conscious
Eric: it will force me to have to address things I wasn't ready for you and I was actually ready to deal with it
Larman: so are you involved in any LGBTQ groups or communitites?
Eric: no I have friends I am one of the co-founders of sake and I haven't been really involved the last couple years because I have things going on in my personal life and I was politically involved when trying to get to get the city involved
Larman: how was your first kiss if you don't mind describing it
Eric: it was a little frightening Really cute but I was really curious but I kind of jumped and looking back I wish I would have done it
Larman: was it with a boy or girl?
Eric: oh I didn't think about that sorry it was with the girl wasn't that good the first time with a guy wasn't good either
Larman: how old were you for both ages?
Eric: 16 for the girls 17 for the guy
Larman: I know you said it was you regret it wasn't because you were nervous or was because it was with a girl
Eric: I regret it because I was just trying to get it done and then later I felt like maybe I exploded myself I can't get much further than that. Sorry
Larman: no you're fine
Eric: it was around the time when I AIDS I just hit the dang it was a real terror back then and age HIV test. In the mid-to-late 80s it was really terrified at that point older men we're not used to using condoms so the younger man that knows how to use condoms that was a generational shift.
Larman: I can see that being nerve-wracking not trying to be funny but when I get Ebola came around and everyone was kind of speak scared about that and I was a touchy subject.
How was your first romantic relationship? Weather boy or girl

Eric: it was really great exciting and really cool

Larman: Did you learn about yourself from that experience

Eric: that if you want to be with someone stay with them and that I need to be a lot more more careful and being able to divide how you feel about someone romantically and how you feel about them physically

Larman: I can see that, how long were you together?

Eric: a year-and-a-half it was too long

Larman: was it very good the beginning and wasn't toxic after while or was it toxic as soon as you got involved

Eric; it was a high level of toxicity there but it was time to go

Larman: did you guys have contact afterwards

Eric: no we did it

Larman: if you could go back and change it would you or would you say help better your marriage

Eric: you yes most experiences teach you something and if you didn't have those experiences you wouldn't be who you are now. the song I'm pretty happy with where I am now and some way and how you feel about yourself now

Larman: talk about the places where you feel safe and comfortable at the lgbtq person

Eric: pretty much everywhere but I would not want to be and Price Hill after Dark

Larman: how come I never heard about price

Eric: it's changing but it's kind of redneck neighborhood and it might be too aggressive then people in other neighborhoods could handle it

Larman: When you say aggressive do you think people are aggressive towards gay people because of hatred do you think is because of their gay themselves or do you think it's just a lack of knowledge.

Eric: I think that it's homophobia that is coming up and people who are short with themselves and not going to be assholes it's those who are insecure with themselves and we're trying to hide something that the wrecked their power on to someone else plus they start using the Bible and all that good things and justifications for their actions
Larman: speaking of how do you feel when the process is come to protest on campus today and they can speak in on campus and tell you that they're going to go to hell

Eric: I walk right on

Larman: have you ever acknowledge them before?

Eric: I mean they have a right because it's public park pretty whether we like it or not and they're going to do it all the way at some point since you as a student pay so much to be here if we were to completely poor the Commonwealth money out of NKU which seems to be getting closer and closer I think it would be search for the students to say we don't want these people are campus

Larman: I've also heard that they come to campus a lot because they want to antagonize people so they can get money from them

Eric: yeah to get publicity

Larman: yeah to say someone of LGBTQ community attacked them, for me it doesn't really bother me but like unless you say something to me personally I don't really care what you have to say like if you could talk about the LGBT community you can talk about the black community you can talk about the male community, to me and it doesn't really affect me as a person because it's like I know who I am at the witch's name that they're mad at me but until you personally say something to me and try to bring antagonizing me I care to the point it doesn't really bother me if they're just like yeah. It's whatever you can say what you want think what you want about me I know who I am so why should I even give you that time of the day to really interact with you or even pay any attention to what you’re saying. Is there something in your past that you wish you have done differently that can turned out differently or everything is everything pretty ok?

Eric: Yeah there is one thing and it has to deal with figuring out your sexuality. There is one thing and if you're the one that I take back there's one day I'll take back but can’t so

Larman: would you mind telling me about the incident

Eric: well I wrote a really nasty note to someone and left it on their door when I was drunk and it kinda ruined our friendship. And so it did not go well it really hurt our friendship and after that I can plan to quit drinking

Larman: Did the friendship get fixed after while or was it over

Eric: we were still friendly but we weren't friends

Larman: Is there a story that you could share with me? Personal

Eric: Like what?

Larman: Anything, like good times bad times, parties
Here’s advice though, one thing I know is that I feel like I'm always trying to deal with his my fear is the great people will look flaky and so I try to be as grounded as possible. I want to share with straight people because they think they have to watch out for gay people