

4-13-2015

# A Conversation with Carmine Salvucci

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## Recommended Citation

"A Conversation with Carmine Salvucci" (2015). *GLBTQ Alumni Oral History Project*. Paper 5.  
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**GLBTQ Alumni Oral History Project  
Conversation with Carmine Salvucci  
April 13, 2015**

**Conducted by Ethan Jacques and Nickole Gonzalez-Vasquez**

**Location: Holy Cross campus**

**Length: 49 minutes**

**Keywords: athletics, Catholicism, college culture, coming out, counseling, donations, families, first-generation students, gay men, identity, Jesuit, LGBTQ, masculinity, normalization, reflection, student life**

**Transcript:**

Ethan: It is Monday, April 13, 2015 at 4:41pm Eastern Time, and um, Carmine, are you aware that you are being recorded currently?

Carmine: I am.

Ethan: Thank you very much. Umm.. So just moving forward, right, this is a multi-segment interview.. A few pre-interview questions. Nickole, if you'd like to ask the first one.

Nickole: Ahh, yeah, so can you please tell us your year of graduation and the major at Holy Cross?

Carmine: Sure, class of 1984, Economics major.

Ethan: Thank you very much. Umm, and so we answered that one. So now, subsection, uhh, two, we wanted to...we're going to begin, with sort of, the interview with your coming to Holy Cross. and we read in your really really nice reflection [in *In, Out, and About on the Hill*] that, you said it was a rainy awful day, right, but you remembered saying that uhh that you just knew that you wanted to go to this place. I was wondering if you could elaborate what, sort of, what that feeling was or how you decided to come to Holy Cross?

Carmine: Mhm, yeah, that's great. You know what's interesting, I've completely forgotten, when you initially contacted me I thought, "Oh, I have to go back and read my essay" which was written now, I don't know how many years ago, I'm guessing it was 6 or 7 years ago, fi-, I don't know...how many years ago?

Ethan: I don't have the date.

Carmine: Do ya'll know when that book was published?

Ethan: I don't have the date of the publication on...on my hand, Nickole, do you?

Carmine: Yeah.

Nickole: No, I don't have it.

Carmine: It's been a while... anyway... umm... so yeah, I loved Holy Cross. You know, I was first generation college and I, a, I went to a boys Catholic high school with 42 boys in my class. My mother was the lunch lady so I was sort of the financial aid kid and none of my siblings all older had gone to college, but I was at a school where everybody was on their way to college, it was completely college prep, so it was sort of that given expectation that I would be thinking about it. And I was a good student and I liked school, and, so it seemed natural and uhh I didn't want to go too far from home and at that time I think going to a Catholic school was a comfort zone for me, so all of that, and I didn't want a large school, given that I was a high school class of 42 so Holy Cross seemed like a real natural fit and went up there with two real good friends from high school and the three of us had interviews that day and like I said, standing on Fenwick-, I can still remember standing on Fenwick porch after my interviews, thinking, oh my gosh, I so hope I get admitted here.... And I applied early decision and that's the only college I applied to.

Ethan: Nice, okay cool, cause that helps... that helps piece together some of the, umm, puzzle pieces, uhh, that you know were sort of missing in my mind. Umm, Nickole.

Nickole: So, what was your transition from high school to Holy Cross like? Umm, any changes in activities or ways to present that weren't reflected in the story that you told?

Carmine: Umm, Nickole, I'm sorry, I missed a little bit of your question... so you asked me about your transition from high school to Holy Cross, and then I missed what came next.

Nickole: Oh, if there were any changes, umm, in your story, that... in the way that they were presented, umm, in... *In, Out and About on the Hill?*

Carmine: No..

Ethan: Uhh, we're inquiring in, terms of if you saw a... if you changed, sort of, any of your extracurriculars or any other notable changes that marked your transition from high school to college?

Carmine: Oh, I see okay, umm, I guess the most significant one would be I had to work at Holy Cross, I had to be... I was a work study student and that took up a fair amount of time, as you'd expect, but also when you go to college you suddenly have all of this free time, you can't believe how much time you have, initially, at least, you know, you're not home, uh, accountable to anybody, so you suddenly, uh, every day, every minute of every day is your own, so that was cool. Uhh, but I continued to be sort of student-service oriented and student leadership oriented, like both of you, you know, I was an RA and all of those things and those are the things that appealed to me right away, to get involved with when I got to Holy Cross.

Ethan: So, ah, was it right out, um, did you... this is a follow up question, right off the bat, did you get involved or did you exhibit another attraction to your involvement, like a year of acclamation or whatever?

Carmine: Umm, let's see, probably the first year, really focused on school and work, and my first year I worked at Kimball, which was fun, and umm, actually by the end. Before the end of my first year I got a job in the Admissions Office and that's where I ultimately worked the whole rest of my time there, um, which was really great, so I would I say I didn't get particularly involved probably till sophomore year. And I think it was my sophomore year I was a cheerleader, football/basketball cheerleader, and um, I, uh, was in Purple Key, I was, uh, SPUD Big Brother, you know I think I did Big Brother freshman year as well, anyway you don't need the, I'm sure you don't, the timeline, but I'm starting to dig through my memory here, and then, um, became an RA junior year and then a senior RA senior year, I was in Healy. I know you're in Lehy.

Ethan: I am, right next door!

Carmine: I loved that, that was a lot of fun, too.

Ethan: Cool, thank you very much.

Nickole: So, you were a student at Holy Cross from 1980 to 1984, um, what was happening in the world then, any events or anything that you can recall that stood out to you?

Carmine: Uh, boy, that's a good.. that's a funny question, um, just because I think for me, my college experience was so expansive, you know, and, and new and I was so mono-focused on it, I didn't feel very connected to the world, and I have the sense, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, I have the sense that Holy Cross students now, well, given technology, etc., of course they're more connected to the world than any of us probably were when we were there, just because you could easily unplug, you know. My major news source was *The Crusader*, you know [laughter], and so you can understand just how much I was aware of what was going on in the world. It was the height of the Reagan era, you know, Ronald Reagan was president the entire time I was at Holy Cross, and, um, I don't think I had a good sense then, I know I didn't have a good sense then, of all that that meant or implied, now in my adult life I look back and just think about what a transformational time that was, but, um, I didn't really have a sense of what was going on when I was there. I wasn't very aware of the world around me, outside of, uh, outside of Holy Cross.

Ethan: Cool.. As a follow up to that, right, so maybe in terms of a sociopolitical term.. um, but what about, um, is there any sort of notable things in terms of like, culture, or, uh, pop culture, or um, you know, things along those lines that you can recall?

Carmine: [laughter] My sophomore year, my roommate and I, well, somebody who became my roommate, became, um, DJs.. on campus DJs..

Ethan: Yeah..

Carmine: ..And uh, his name was Sean Murphy, and our DJ name was Murvucci, thank you very much... yeah... we were pretty hot [laughter]. That's funny and, so, I was, I was pretty connected to music then and uh, had a lot of fun, you know, it was a great, the great era of Madonna, and

um, all sorts of other great 80s music, that, it's so funny now, the agency where I work. I work at a non-profit, and one of our fundraisers is an 80s dance party, and it just makes me laugh, how, our current genera-the current generation... your generation has, has kind of taken ownership of the 80s and think it's so cool and fun and you know and it just makes me laugh because I lived through that and think, "I didn't think it was this cool and fun as you all do" [laughter]... at least not then, but people seem to really [inaudible-glob?] on to the 80's.. so that was fun, pop culture wise, I was pretty connected to music in fact, that's probably the most connected to music I've ever been in my life, I'm not a particular, um, music...aficionado now, at all, uhh, let me think of what else with regard to pop culture.

Ethan: Or just culture in general

Carmine: I would say I, uh - What was that?

Ethan: I said, or just, uh, culture, in general

Carmine: Yeah, yeah, uh, you know, I've always been connected to um social needs and social service, and I think, I was.. I was particularly aware of Worcester and the community as it existed and how different it was from Holy Cross and you know, that's why I got involved in the SPUD program pretty early on, and just understanding the dichotomy between what we were experiencing on the Hill and what folks were experiencing in Worcester.. which again, I know it has to be so different, uh, 30 plus years later, but, uh, back then it was really...you know, you didn't go, you didn't go to Worcester for, uh, anything really, I had a, I had an internship there, I didn't socialize off the campus very much.

Ethan: Interesting, oh yeah, um, so I guess as a sort of follow up.

Nickole: We're going to shift more into the micro-level of this... what was campus culture like on the hill?

Carmine: Oh, completely campus-focused, completely, you guys, it's so funny, cause, I-I've been back for enough, uh, a couple of reunions, to know the...to see the sharp contrast, um, or any, how the campus has sort of grown and developed and be how it's expanded beyond the-the broad iron fence, too..

Ethan: Yeah..

Carmine: So, I'll give you an example...Caro Street really became Caro Street while I- during the 80s, sort of the first big push of people moving off campus when I was-and I noticed because I was an RA so I was involved in some of the Dean of Students conversations, around, 'why are people moving off campus?' .. 'what's happening?' .. what- you know, and, um, uh, the fear of, what people were doing off campus, with regard to underage drinking, and things like that.. so, can you- isn't that funny, Caro Street.. it was THE street, and it was [inaudible]...you know I barely socialized with people at Ho-Jo's, it was just too far away ..

Ethan: Yeah..

Carmine: .. Right.. In fact, is Ho-Jo's still there? Is it still Ho-Jo's?

Ethan: No... Ho-Jo's is long gone and Caro Street has like.. pretty much died a very, quiet death.. like ..

Carmine: How about that ... what is in Ho-Jo's place? Is it a hotel of some sort?

Ethan: It's a grass strip.

Nickole: Wow...

Carmine: No kidding!?! ... Wow..

Ethan: The structure is gone, it's a giant lawn.

Carmine: Oh wow! How about that...

Ethan: I didn't even know it was there until, uh, yeah, until someone told me, you know

Nickole: I didn't even know about it.

Carmine: Oh, interesting .. yeah, yeah, yeah ... well, um, like I said, completely campus-focused, it was .. it was the dorm, it was pizza, it was keg parties .. it was .. the pub, you know, in senior year .. it was football, it was basketball .. I loved-I loved the sports at Holy Cross, even though they were miserable... no change there! Unfortunately.. Though I was- I did-I did have the honor of cheerleading at the last Holy Cross-BC rivalry game .. isn't that funny, the last football game..

Ethan: Wow..

Carmine: Between BC and Holy Cross.. and it was the year of Doug Flutie, if you know anything about, any memory, about Holy Cross football [inaudible].. but he was a big BC hero that year

Ethan: I've-I've, unfortunately, I'm relatively ignorant in the sports department. [laughter]

Carmine: There you go.. but, uh, yeah, does that answer your question, I don't know if I'm getting to your- I mean it was that, it was, uh- for me moving away from home, even just an hour from home, was such an expansive experience for me. You know, I think other kids perhaps if they had gone to a boarding school, even just other kids whose siblings had gone to college, or whatever, you know, they maybe were-were looking for something bigger and broader.. now, even the concept of applying to junior year abroad to me was sooo..out of the realm of possible.. or-or out of the realm of my interest. Because I thought 'well, this is so great, why would I leave here?' you know, so.. uh.. I was as happy-as happy as a pig, um, right there on campus...even living close by I didn't go home a lot during the course of the year.

Ethan: Mhmm.

Nickole: Okay.

Ethan: Perfect. Thank you though, you hit the nail on the head, uh, we're just-we're transitioning now to just, uh, sort of-sort of, stage two, so, which is more talking about, uh, you're coming out and being LGBTQ-identified or under the umbrella there, at Holy Cross and the first question, is sort of, uhm, recognizing that coming out isn't a one time event, uh, how and when did you first come out? I know this was briefly mentioned in your, um, reflection.

Carmine: Yes, um, well after-really it was after Holy Cross, you know, if officially coming out is sort of telling people, um, that would be after Holy Cross, a good, uh-sort of the first year after I was out of Holy Cross. And while I was at Holy Cross, honestly, I had, uh, a pretty steady girlfriend, not pretty steady, very steady girlfriend, from jun-through my junior and senior year. She was one year ahead of me so she graduated and did JVC in Rhode Island and we continued to date while she was in JVC, and I was in my senior year at Holy Cross, so...I didn't- I did not come out at Holy Cross, for sure, I-I did have um, same-sex sexual experiences at Holy Cross, probably not until my-uh, well, yeah, my senior year, that was when that first happened and um, yeah, that would be-that would be it. And you know, if conveniently, I think what helped me not need to come out, frankly, was that my girlfriend had left campus and she was in JVC my senior year, and that's when some things started to happen with other men on campus-and men on campus and so I could sort of have this dual life and not have to pay attention to what was happening sexually because it was just that, it was just sort of something happening sexually and wasn't part of my total being, right?

Ethan: Mhm.. A follow up to that, too, is, um, just wondering, um, so, who supported you, sort of, through this? I mean, in terms of like managing the dual-life aspect or managing some of these thoughts that, or desires, that could be incongruent with the life that you were living then, at that time?

Carmine: Yeah, that's great. Well, interestingly enough, I can tell you her name, it was [name] and she was a counselor in the Counseling Center, and that's the only time that I spoke openly about it, to anybody, was in the Holy Cross Counseling Center, and, uh, I think she was as helpful as I was letting her be at that point and I can't remember going to her more than a couple of times, and you know, she tried to help me think through what my-what my thinking was, .. 'Was this a phase?' .. or was it, you know, a natural, um, predisposition, and, you know, blah blah blah, uh, one funny thing is, she, because I didn't really know how to act on it, frankly, and so her suggestion was to go down to Worcester, there was a gay bar in Worcester, so she told me about this gay bar in Worcester, and I thought, well, you know, for this kid who barely left campus anyway, the last thing in the world I'm going to do is take the shuttle-take the shuttle, I can't remember the nam- what was the name of the shuttle, in the campus?

Ethan: Yeah, it still runs, yeah

Carmine: Does it really, yeah? What's it called, I forget.

Ethan: The.. well, there's the Woo-bus, and now there's the consortium bus, I don't know, they keep changing it.

Carmine: Yeah, that's it! The consortium shuttle, exactly. Yeah, 'if you get off the consortium shuttle then you can get off here and then.. you can..' I think it was down near Clark University or something - anyway, I never did. It was too...completely frightening to me.. so, uh, I sort of stayed-stayed where I was and took advantage of...there was only really one person I had any relations with and that would happen occasionally, and that seemed to, uh, take care of business, but, um.. the other person who was really helpful to me, in a variety of ways, though I never spoke about coming out to him, was, um - I had a spiritual director, Father Boughton, at the time, B-O-U-G-H-T-O-N, Father Boughton. And he was the chaplain, the college chaplain, and a really special person to me, I just loved him and he was just so great to me, on a whole bunch of levels and uh, seeing him, as .. you know, I did struggle senior year, I think, I started to struggle as the end came, and I started to realize that, you know, shoot, there's sort of no hiding after I leave Holy Cross, right, I was going to be out in the world and I had to figure this out and uh, I don't know, even though we didn't speak directly about it, he was always a great source of comfort, and as well as my faith, you know, um, and I'm sure you're going to have some questions about how this fits together with your faith, etc.

Ethan: Oh yeah, that will come in due time, Carmine.

Carmine: Sure, there's a page of those questions, yeah.

Ethan: Nickole is going to follow up.

Nickole: Yeah, so, a follow up to what you just answered, uh, what prompted you to go to the counseling center in the first place? Um, was there anything specific or, I don't know, you name it.

Carmine: Yeah, I wish - that's a, Nickole, it's so funny, I-I so wish, it'd be so great if one's memory, well my memory, forget one's memory, if my memory was better. I just - I can't remember. I can't remember what pushed me to that place, because I think, that I've never really had any other kind of counseling and I didn't necessarily grow up in a family that thought counseling was required, or a good thing, you know, you're Italian and you're emotional and just let it all out, you didn't go need to talk to anyone about your problems, you just talk- yelled at each other about your problems, you know. Um, but, I don't know what led me to that point, obviously it had to be some...just given my existence and, my, uh, otherwise, to, satisfaction with everything at Holy Cross, uh, something, had to be and it was probably that year of senior year, and as I said my girlfriend being away and these experimental things kind of happening and getting a little nervous about what that all meant. I suspect I went to her to sort it all out.

Nickole: Okay, thank you ..

Carmine: But I have so little recollection of my visits with her, too, and as I mentioned, I don't think there were more than two or three.

Nickole: Okay

Ethan: Interesting, and a follow up question, in terms of, actually just rather shifting gears...thank you for that. Um, was- were you involved in sort of any other sports, clubs, teams, organizations that you haven't mentioned before or was there any one, besides maybe cheerleading, that was specifically like meaningful to you? And if you could describe sort of like the meaning or the focus of it.

Carmine: You mean...Specifically in sports is what you're talking about, right?

Ethan: Yeah, just in terms of, uh, like other than the cheerleading role that you assumed, I was wondering it was there was sort of any... other activities that, um, you deemed sort of meaningful as well?

Carmine: Definitely other activities, but no other athletic activities, no other...not even... no, no club sports, no. I wasn't very good which is why I was a cheerleader and not on any teams, I'm just not a particularly good ..um.. I'm a much better athlete as an adult than I was as a college student and its quite interesting, I'm a big runner now and I run marathons, you know, my whole family runs, it's just something we do together, and I wish I had discovered running in college though if I had discovered it in college, maybe my knees wouldn't be what they are today which means I can still run today, if I had started too early, maybe that wouldn't be the case but so far so good. So, no I hadn't, I didn't participate in any other sports activities at school aside from cheerleading.

Ethan: Okay, cool - just wanted to double check.

Carmine: Yeah

Nickole: So did any of the involvement in the groups that you did mention earlier, um, impact your experience of being LGBTQ at Holy Cross?

Carmine: Now, Nickole, sorry, one more time

Nickole: I'm sorry, I said that, uh, did any of the involvements that you mentioned earlier, did they impact your experience of being LGBTQ at Holy Cross?

Carmine: Oh, I see...uhm, did they impact? The, uh, the athletics? You mean being a cheerleader?

Nickole: Um, anything you had mentioned - being an RA, um, any service you did, being a cheerleader.

Carmine: Oh okay! I see, I see.. um...I was just kind of laughing ... aside from having a crush on the other boy cheerleaders, I don't think so, um, the... I don't think they had any impact on my, um, activity or my thoughts about being- you know there's always sort of a ... being a male cheerleader is not the most hyper masculine thing to do on a campus so, so. It's a lot more masculine to be on the team as opposed to be a cheerleader, um, in fact, there's some- there's just always a weird, um, how do I describe this, you know, a lot of the guys were just all about,

‘ooh, you get to touch Janice all over her body’... all...rururu... all this crazy... college crap, you know and it was just so offensive, frankly.

Ethan: Yeah..

Carmine: Not because-not because I was not...um, not because I was gay or straight. It was just this boy-ish, frat boy behavior, even though we’re not a fraternity, but you get the reference [laughter] um, it was just such a turn off, you know...which you know, I wasn’t thinking about touching her butt when I was lifting her up, it was more about keeping her above my head so she didn’t fall on my head. [laughter]

Ethan: Brilliant, just another additional question, just, uh, if you could do your Holy Cross experience over again, would you do anything differently? And I ask this question, knowing that you said that if you had known more about your sexual identity and the Catholic church’s intolerance toward it, you would not have chosen HC, so I was wondering if you could sort of, a-sort of just comment on the first question and b-comment on these thoughts that you’ve offered in your reflection.

Carmine: Yeah, uh, well the first question, if I would have- I would have.. I think- I think an unrecognized, an often unrecognized minority on college campuses are first-generation college students and the good news is so many first-generation college students are students of color and so I think there are opportunities for them to get the, kind of, extra help, or, um, intervention services or bridge programs or things like that to get- to be successful in college. And I wish that, you know, my white skin sort of kept me from some of those opportunities, though even in the 80s, they didn’t really exist, I mean if you had- um, if you were a minority student it wasn’t as if there were these, you know, terrific opportunities for you to get to know your community on campus in advance or anything like that to make the transition smoother, but as I said, I think, first-generation college kids go so unnoticed and it’s just this expectation that everybody sort of comes in with the same, um, with the same set of- just because you’re admitted, you all come in with the same basic academic preparation, and everybody is ready to go, um.. you know, I was- I had no clue what I was doing, frankly, and maybe lots of kids would say they had no clue but I didn’t have any siblings that went to college, my parents didn’t go to college, you know, so I kind of had to waddle my way through and all of this is leading to say, I wish I had a stronger, hardier, more robust, academic experience in college. I really didn’t, it was- it was fine, I did fine, but it was not- I did not become academically or intellectually charged at Holy Cross and that’s disappointing to me, you know, it took me graduate school and it took me being a curious adult. I do have more of a news source now than just The Crusader and I actually participate in activities that are important to society, so, you know, that’s one thing I wish there was- I had the opportunity or I wish I took advantage of the opportunity to reach out- there could have been services out there that I didn’t know about, but, um, I wish I had a more robust academic experience while I was there. Um, with regard to the social piece of Holy Cross, again, staying away from the gay business for a moment, I had an extraordinary, off the charts social experience there. I had so many wonderful friends. I had, um, so many leadership opportunities and experiences there that really helped build my confidence and made me-uh, I-I think that’s what my college experience was about. It helped me realize who I could be as an individual and that I had sort of leadership, uh, qualities and- and Holy Cross gave me the opportunity to really

act on those and that was very exciting. And I was glad- so proud to do those things and so pleased to be chosen to do those things, and all that. In fact, quick aside, my husband went to Duke. He, too, was an RA, and at one point we were having a conversation about it, and he said something about, 'Yeah my parents were so relieved when I became an RA because, you know, it was free tuition' and I said, 'you're kidding me' and when I told him that, thought Holy Cross did it because it was such an honor, he said 'that is crazy, you people are nuts!' Perhaps that's different now, but, you know, there was no, uh, compensation when I was at Holy Cross to be an RA or Head RA, except a bigger room of course, but.

Ethan: Oh my God

Nickole: Wow

Carmine: Yeah, yeah, isn't that funny. Okay, so, let's see. Would I do anything else different, uh.. I would go to a bigger place, I would go to a bigger place, Holy Cross opened- because of my..uh.. involvement in a variety of things and because of my, uh, as I said, my social experience was pretty broad, but by senior year I felt like Holy Cross was a little small.

Ethan: Mhm...

Carmine: And so, I probably would have picked- my new college of choice would be Georgetown because that was on my- that's where I was applying if I didn't get into Holy Cross.. Georgetown, BC so, much bigger places, interestingly enough, but, anyway, all that said, I probably would have enjoyed and grown a little bit more if I had gone to a bigger place, um, than Holy Cross. And perhaps gone a little further away, though, I felt as far away as anybody feels, probably, even though I was only an hour from home, and that was fine. So back to the, uh, the other part of the question, the- I guess, the gay experience and Catholic and would I choose it again, is that what you talked about?

Ethan: Yeah, and sort of like, a related question, umm, we were just about to ask you, like a mind reader, uh, Nickole, do you want to

Nickole: Yeah, do you think the Jesuit identity and environment of Holy Cross affected your view of sexuality- of your own sexuality?

Carmine: Nickole, I'm so sorry, I don't know why I am having such a hard time hearing you first time, so I apologize.

Nickole: No, I'm sorry, I have a soft voice sometimes so it might be that.. um, so I asked if- do you think the Jesuit identity and environment of Holy Cross affected your view of your own sexuality?

Carmine: You asked if the Jesuit identity of Holy Cross affected my own view of my sexuality?

Ethan: I guess in terms of operationalizing the Jesuit identity, like maybe the ideals of the campus or the structure of it?

Carmine: Gotcha. okay. You know, um, and I don't know if this is revisionist history, you guys, or not, uh, there's probably a fair amount of revisionist history in this answer, but I think of the Jesuits as so beautifully progressive with regard to the rest of the Catholic church and so I never felt that a Jesuit would discriminate in any way, you know, there was always- they're just.. I hope you are having the same experience... the Jesuits were just cool and fun and brilliant and, uh, you know, they just felt like a different breed from my lame parish church. I would go home to my parish church and think 'oh my gosh, who are these people?' you know, it was just so different, so, um, pedestrian. There was nothing to it, you know, it was just this- this robot of a religion, um, where at Holy Cross it was so rich and I had this relationship with my spiritual director and I went on the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius twice and you know, it was just this great, extraordinary experience so I don't think that the Jesuit identity of Holy Cross had anything to do with my- any fear I might have had of coming out, you know, but as I got older, I have to say, Jesuit or not, I just really resent the Catholic church, in general. You know, and-and, I'm sorry the Jesuits are part of it, that's too bad for them, but I have to be really true to myself and to my family, and-and any organization that institutionally dismisses my ability to marry the person I love or to raise children, um, doesn't have my support, doesn't have my acknowledgement, um, only gets my financial support at \$25 a year, because I was my class chairman for the first 25 years, and I know how important participation is, so okay, I'll send you 25 bucks a year but Holy Cross used to be one of my primary philanthropies, and, uh, as Duke is one of Steve's primary philanthropies, we both loved our college experience but as the church, through the last couple of popes, prior to the current one, um, just got more and more, uh, conservative, I just had to write Holy Cross and say, I'm sorry, I just can't do it - I can't send any more money to an institution that- that is a part of this bigger organization, so, uh, yeah, my thinking about it has really, you know, obviously matured, as I got older and as I realized just how damaging it can be.

Ethan: Mhm

Carmine: I don't know if that's, if that's clear.. I-I .. and when you think about would you reco- this might be one of your questions so I won't steal your thunder, but would you recommend Holy Cross to somebody, to an LGBT kid, um.. I don't know what I can say, you know, I don't know what I would say because, could they have a good experience there? Of course they could, And would it be a great, welcoming place? Of course it would in a lot of ways and look at the things you two are studying and look at the work you're doing and look at all of this. And I have no doubt that there isn't a person at Holy Cross, at least in the hierarchy of Holy Cross, who would ever outwardly discriminate against, um, gays and lesbians. On the other hand, the institution that it represents does still, so, I don't know, that's a hard one.

Ethan: Okay, no, I appreciate your answer - that just illuminated one thing. I just had a quick follow up question. Something that's not- just came off the top of my head is wondering, what would it take for you to start donating back to Holy Cross again?

Carmine: I told you, I haven't stopped. I've given every year, every year since I've graduated. I've given every single year. But, like I said, my giving has dropped by a hundred, well. I was - anyway, I give \$25 a year. It would- it would be a complete change of the Catholic Church for to

get, go anywhere different, you know. Um, it would have to be institutional, not Holy Cross, right? My issue isn't, really isn't so much with Holy Cross.

Ethan: Ok. And now we're going to be transitioning to, Nickole is going to ask you right after this, we're just looking at, this is the first- this is the home stretch, you made it! Uh, we got - we're just in the looking back section. So you've - we've already started precipitating that with looking, reflecting. But um sort of trying to change, uh, shifting over. Nickole you've got another question.

Nickole: Yeah, so, based on your experience and everything that you've shared with us, what advice could you offer to any LGBTQ students who are struggling to come out at Holy Cross?

Carmine: Hm...who are struggling to come out at Holy Cross, yeah...um. I think, I guess I would say find your safe places. So, what, uh, so, find your safe places and your safe people and surround yourself with them. Um, don't, don't try to...you know, don't work too hard to swim upstream against, um, millenium years old institution. Don't let that bond you down but use the progressive, wonderful, generous people that you're surrounded with at Holy Cross who recognize, uh, the beauty in the world and all it's forms, because I truly do believe that-that most everyone at Holy Cross, as I said before, would not have much problem with so many of the things we're talking about. So, most importantly, find those safe places, where you can express yourself, and feel comfortable with other folks, um, and, and just be able to be yourself.

Ethan: Thank you

Nickole: Thanks

Carmine: Don't pretend! You know, maybe don't pretend, you know or maybe pretend- well, I'm going to take that back, I'm going to take that back. I'll tell you why. I'm going to say pretend a little. And I say pretend a little because, I think, by pretending a little - not pretending, but by-.... what am I trying to say.... I think, the militant in anyone is unattractive, so if you are a rabid, capital C, Christian, like I experienced plenty of in Texas, uh, that's really ugly. And if you are a militant, capital LGBTQ person, shoving your rights in my face, all the time, that can get a little ugly, too.

Ethan: Mhm

Carmine: So, I think what I'm saying, is try to be measured. Try, you know, offer respect to people, uh, for their own traditions. It doesn't mean that you have to agree with people but you have to be tolerant because the world will be a very sad place. And is in a lot of ways is a very sad place because are just, not at least, tolerant. So, don't assume everybody is going to- just because you put yourself out there and come out and say, this is me, I'm here, I'm queer, get used to it... they don't have to and you need to appreciate that. And, so, uh, and be prepared for that-be prepared for that, and don't-don't be a hater...don't be a hater.

Ethan: I-I think, you're like a mind reader.. I was just going to ask you, uh, based on your experience, what advice would you give/offer LGBTQ seniors who are about to make their transition from college to the professional life, or the real world, as most call it, um, if that was your advice beforehand, I was wondering if you could offer- if you had any other advice for that?

Carmine: I think... yeah... I think, one of the things about coming out for me, I mean, I do remember thinking this - when I finally decided to come out, I realized, I'm not being my best self by being, uh, in the closet. I'm not- I'm not my whole self to the world or to myself. So, until I really accept who I am, and until I really start to share that with other people, I'm never going to be my best self. So, if you always keep in mind what your-what your core values are and what your goals are and what you hope to be and appreciate that that can't be accomplished, unless it's in the context of you as a whole person. Um, then, you'll make decisions and you'll interact with people and you'll present yourself the way you truly are. And that's probably, I hope, at least it was for me, that's going to be what's going to get you everything you want in life, you know, uh, it's just- you're not fighting anything, you're just letting it be. You are who you are, and you're not trying to force yourself on other people and you're, uh- but you're not shy about - not shy about who you are. You just are who you are.

Ethan: Mhm

Carmine: When my- when Steve and I- Steve has a.. Steve grew up in Waco, Texas which I don't know if you know, is a very conservative Texas town/city and he has a very conservative- his parents are terrific, both educators and progressive enough that they've never-they've never had a problem with him. He had a very big 'C' Christian brother who, for the longest time, had a real hard time with us and our relationship and avoided interactions as much as he could, and that sort of thing. And it wasn't until we had- we adopted our kids that life turned around and why that happened is because he suddenly had something to relate to with us. He couldn't see us as a couple, he didn't understand what a same sex couple was but he did understand what parents are. And so that opened the window for him to start to connect to us with all of the things that come with parenting - the frustrations and the joys and everything else. Our relationship is so different now than it was 15 years- we've been together for 26 years, so I would say it took a good 10 years before thing started to warm up at all and once we had kids, it really transformed. I don't know what that has to do with any question you asked me, but, it's a good side story I guess.

Ethan: [laughter] No, that's perfect, um, because that helps- gives more fodder and more context for the after story as well. So I've got one last um sort of like salient question before some little demographic questions at the end, but I was just going to say, of the top of your head, I know we covered a lot of ground, um, if you had any sort of funny stories about sort of being LGBTQ or gay-identified or however you identify that impacted your experience at Holy Cross - it could be funny, salient, reflective, what have you- if you just have any ones that we didn't get to.

Carmine: You know I, this is more melancholy than anything, I remember a couple of folks, one in particular, classmate of mine, who was just kind of over the top effeminate, um, and he was in-he was in every, you know, you pick the stereotype, [name] was it - he was just over the top and big, floppy hair and was in every show you could imagine and he was just that guy. We were pals and I have to say that I found myself sometimes distancing myself from him because I

didn't .. I was afraid of that association - not afraid, but I didn't want to get so close that I would get pegged that way, you know. And partly, it's because, you know, as I look back on it I hope it wasn't as much a selfish decision as it was 'that's just not the kind of person I am' .. I'm-I'm not that way, you know. And I realized- that helped me realize, 'okay, there are different kind of gay people'. I'm not going to grow into that - to be the ultimate gay, you don't have to have a really good voice and be in every production and different things. Um, but I- it's not the proudest moment to think of times when I would back away from, uh, [name]. You know, or hear people say unkind things about him and not do something about it, that's kind of- that's a regret. I think that's just a maturity- a maturity issue and where I was in the coming out process. Um, my girlfriend and I, you know when we're ... my girlfriend for those last few years at Holy Cross, we're still good pals. And, uh, she and I have had some really funny conversations about being gay. And she would talk about...[laughter] the best part about being Catholic and being in a Catholic school is that I could always lean on that as sort of my, um, my moral compass with regard to having sex. And we didn't always agree on that so it got- we laugh about it now, you know, about-some of the [laughter] ... anyway, I don't think I should say anything else since this will be an audio book but I think you get the idea, um, that was kind of funny. Gosh, I can't think of, I can't think of any other, anything else. Yeah.

Ethan: No, thank you for that, that was great. Um, so just the home stretch here, uh, the best questions. So, basically, we just need to, um, we don't want to make any assumptions, but we want to make sure our records are accurate, um so just missing demographic information. Three categories: Are you willing to identify as male?

Carmine: Sure.

Ethan: Are you willing to identify as gay?

Carmine: Yes.

Ethan: Are you willing to, uh- how do you identify with your ethnicity or race?

Carmine: Caucasian

Ethan: Caucasian... and lastly, what is your professional background, current or former?

Carmine: I'm the executive director of a non-profit.

Ethan: Okay, cool. Perfect, so I guess, uh, I wonder if, do you have any questions for us, this is it, the it, in terms of the formal, uh, scripted interview.

Carmine: Great. I think, one thing I want to say is, because I'm glad and so lucky and we've been so lucky to have a life that's just, that's so blessed on so many levels, so ordinary and boring and blessed, and I think let's, let's go back to that advice to Holy Cross students who are gay, just to say, you can have it all. Everything you see and you associate with the normal person, the normal straight person, you can have it all, you can have a family, you can have a monogamous relationship you can have, uh, everything ever dreamed of and being gay doesn't

have to get in the way of that. That's important advice-that's important advice that I wish I've thought of before.

Ethan: Oh okay, you made it ... uh ... just in time, the recorder is still going, so..

Carmine: Awesome, awesome. Yeah, well I think that's a good place to end. That's my most sound advice to people.

Ethan: I could not agree more. Thank you very much, Carmine, for all your time, um, and it's been a pleasure.

Nickole: Thank you, Carmine.

Carmine: Thanks, Ethan and Nickole. Good luck with the project, I'm sure you'll keep me posted about- how it's used and when it's up and running. and it'll be fun to hear other folks. Uh, how many interviews are you doing?

Ethan: Uh, so you are, you know, are our one and only. Quality, not quantity - so, we're going to take some time to sort of type up the transcript process through, uh, do some thematic work analysis, and um, submit it in by, uh, two or three weeks.

Carmine: Great and how did you two get paired? I didn't see in your bios that you're-perhaps you're in a class together, by now?

Ethan: Mhm

Nickole: Oh, yes.

Ethan: The basis of this is sort of, we're currently in a class called Intro to LGBTQ Studies, and, um, the teacher is the co-chair of the alum- LGBTQ alumni network or one of them.. or no.. Outfront...

Nickole: Yeah..

Ethan: There's an alumni network, there's a faculty network, it's very hard to keep track of there's the student group. So she's involved- in addition to teaching this class, she is one of those chair people. I think it's for the faculty network. But, we're sort of connecting all the dots now - just finally, and she had this brilliant idea of 'let's do an oral history because nothing's been done since the book's been written.'

Carmine: Gotcha, gotcha. You know, I-uh, I didn't mention this before, but my classmate, Marybeth Kearns-Barrett, was so helpful and instrumental in just starting any conversation around, um, being gay or lesbian at Holy Cross. And I'm so proud of her and her work. Steve and I actually came out there, um, once when I lived in Chicago, many years ago, and spoke on a panel about it, to a small group, there were probably 25 people there, but she asked us to come and we did and I'm just so proud of her work.

Ethan: She's amazing, I've, uh, I worked with her on a sophomore retreat that they're developing over there and um, yeah, she moves mountains here.

Carmine: Yeah, she's great, she's great. Well, if you see her, send her my love and my best and my thanks. And thank you both for what you did. And good luck, good luck!

Ethan: Thanks, we'll need it!

Nickole: Thank you so much for your time, Carmine.

Carmine: Alright.

Ethan: Alright, well have a good day. We'll talk and, uh, we'll be in touch.

Carmine: Thank you very much, bye you guys.

Ethan: See ya.