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# A Conversation with Christopher Brown

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Oral History with Chris Brown, '04  
Brown, Chris, '04  
Duration: 0:55:07  
Caroline Body

*This conversation represents an oral history interview with a Holy Cross Alum who graduated in 2004. Highlights of this conversation include content on the interviewee's transition to the Holy Cross community, extracurricular involvements, spiritual life, and career in student services at St. Benedictine College in New York state.*

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Caroline: So, the first section is called “Coming to Holy Cross,” and it’s just a little bit about your transition and your college experience- uh, your, college process, if that makes sense.

Chris: Sure.

Caroline: So, can you tell me how you decided to come to Holy Cross?

Chris: You know, that’s a good question. And it’s something that I have to reflect on a lot, especially running orientation programs and first year services. I remember, initially, when I was starting my college search, I really didn’t know what I was looking for. I was involved in Maine, where I grew up, I was involved in a lot of the youth ministry programs both in my parish and at the state level, and my parents were definitely pushing, like looking for a Catholic institution. And I don’t know if it was because they brought it up, that I was not necessarily looking in that same direction. But, as I started doing college visits, the more I saw the smaller, private and liberal arts institutions, the more I liked Holy Cross. And, I know, talking with my dad once, when I described the route that you would take to get from where I lived in Maine to Worcester- I’m horrible with directions, and he said that he knew I had chosen Holy Cross once I could tell him how to get there. So, I had one of those like campus experiences—

Caroline: Right.

Chris: —where like it just felt right when I showed up on campus.

Caroline: Okay, cool!

Sam: So that’s how I ended up deciding.

Caroline: That’s awesome. Cool, thank you. So, what was your transition like from high school to Holy Cross, like in that first year?

Chris: For me, I think back, and it was relatively uneventful for me.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: Like, I had the same—like the normal—at least in hindsight now it seems uneventful, I definitely felt the homesickness, I definitely felt just kind of like, figuring out how to make my way through campus with independence.

Caroline: Mhm.

Chris: And about establishing myself for myself.

Caroline: Right.

Chris: And, so I don't, to be honest with you, I don't remember any major traumatic moments in my own transition. Like I know, in hindsight, things like homesickness, and, and just kind messing up like being on my own.

Chris: So I know, I spent my first year in Hanselman, and at the time it was the FYP, the First Year Program

Caroline: Right, right.

Caroline: Where Hanselman was- it wasn't the entire first year class,

Caroline: Mhm.

Chris: but it was just the people who had opted in. I didn't know my roommate, we kind of started to get to know one another, the kind of the normal roommate adjustment issues.

Caroline: Right [laughter]

Chris: But yeah for me like the transition into Holy Cross was thankfully pretty smooth for me.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: I think the biggest adaptation I had to get used to was the going from being, like feeling like a very successful student in high school and feeling like I knew how to study and how to be successful in the classroom, and kind of relearning how that would actually work in college and adapting some of the academic expectations. I think that for me was some of the most difficult components especially my first semester.

Caroline: Okay, awesome, thank you. So if I'm correct you were a student at Holy Cross from 2000 to 2004?

Chris: Correct.

Caroline: So, were there any current events you know that stand out in your memory that played a part in your Holy Cross experience? Sort of like, in the global context?

Chris: Sure! One, kind of global events or national event I definitely remember of course kind of staying up late at night in September, no, November of my freshman year, watching the election results.

Caroline: Yep.

Chris: Definitely feeling a little unsettled when it hadn't been called between Bush and Gore, and kind of not knowing where that was gonna go. One thing I love is just like following politics, and that evening, and watching those results unfold was really exciting. Of course I remember 9/11 and a lot of the aftermath, like I remember giving, I was a tour guide on campus, and I remember giving a tour when everything actually happened. So just now knowing what was happening and why the campus was so quiet that day while we were on tour. And it wasn't until we got back to the admissions building that we actually found out what had happened while we were walking.

Caroline: Wow, that's crazy.

Chris: and I definitely remember that day spending a lot of time like in my floor lounge, watching with other people and Professor Hobgood, I remember in the class that she hosted, I was a religious studies major and I was in one of her intro courses. At the time I don't think I was a religious studies major but I was in one of her intro courses to fulfill one of the distribution requirements and I still remember her processing what had happened with us in the context of the social ethics. That was one of my most memorable classroom experiences, probably because of what was happening.

Caroline: Okay. Awesome.

Chris: And then, the other major one that I remember is the Goodridge decision, uh, when,

Caroline: Yes! Yeah.

Chris: In Massachusetts, when same-sex marriage was, like the impetus start of that was, I think that was my junior year, that the decision had come out, and my senior year, that actual same-sex marriage was legal and implemented in Massachusetts. So for me those are the three big ones that I can remember.

Caroline: Okay, awesome.

Chris: Junior year related to 9/11, was some of the protesting about what was going on in Afghanistan and Iraq?

Caroline: Okay perfect. Protesting on campus?

Chris: Uh, protesting I actually was involved in a group that was protesting in town, in Worcester. I don't know why, but I didn't do a lot on campus in terms of Iraq and Afghanistan protesting.

Caroline: Yeah. I don't know if, I feel like now at least, Holy Cross isn't the most like, like, not to say it's like indifferent, but there's never a lot of like protests or things like that that take place downtown in Worcester. This year, they had a group of students, the SGA sponsored a bus downtown to raise awareness for like the refugee crisis, and it was like the Worcester Welcomes Refugees, week, so they protested downtown, but there wasn't a lot on campus. So that was interesting.

Chris: That's interesting, because I think there are things that definitely did happen on campus.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: Yeah, for whatever reason, I didn't participate much in those, and to be honest, thinking back, I can't tell you why.

Caroline: Yeah.

Chris: I do know that Professor Hobgood was my connection to what happened with the protest in Worcester. And there were several students, that were there, with the group that was protesting in Worcester. And it's interesting you mention the refugee piece, where, like, where I am now, the college

campus that I'm at, now, is a very rural setting, so our protests were very much on campus, because to get to one that was off campus would have been probably about seventy miles away.

Caroline: Oh, wow.

Chris: [laughs] So it's an interesting reversal, to see that actually happening and being involved in that on campus, here, as opposed to in the local community.

Caroline: Yeah. This kind of relates to what we've been talking about, but, what would you say Holy Cross was like during this time period? Like, how would you sort of sum up the school, sort of, like, sort of, in like a bird's eye view, if that makes sense? Like balcony style, if you were looking down, how would you describe Holy Cross?

Chris: I think my bird's eye view is shaped by what I was expecting.

Caroline: Right.

Chris: and I don't think I was expecting to be challenged from where I was coming in terms of my world view and perspective like I was, relatively conservative. I was—

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: Much more so than now, connected with like the structures of my faith life especially within the Catholic Church.

Caroline: Mhm.

Chris: And I was not expecting to get pushed on that, at all. And I think a lot of students could've gone through Holy Cross....(lost audio)

Caroline: So the next section, is called coming out and being LGBTQ at HC, so the first question, you can hear me and everything?

Chris: Yes.

Caroline: Awesome, thank you. So it's, recognizing that, you know, the coming out process is ongoing and not a one-time event, when and how would you say you came out?

Chris: It's funny I actually just told this story on campus, in like a speaker series here—

Caroline: Oh, cool!

Chris: I, I remember coming out first to a guy that lived down the hall. For me, that was like my one, my first time speaking out about that or speaking about that at all. I think it was my second semester my freshman year. I struggled a lot with that internally, and when I sat down and talked with him that was kind of my first time saying it out loud to someone else.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: And then, it was kind of, for me, one of those things that once I got it out of my way the first time, it was just kind of like from zero to sixty, where I felt very comfortable coming out after that. But mainly, I felt much more comfortable coming out on campus and with friends than I did at home.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: And so it wasn't for another year or so that I came out at home with my family. And in some ways I was kind of pushed out of the closet, in my, I think it was my junior year, with some incidents that had happened on campus, that got some coverage on the news, that then was broadcast and some of my family members saw it.

Caroline: Oh, wow.

Chris: I think it was, it was, it was time and I was probably just delaying at that point and time, I was delaying more out of fear than anything rational.

Caroline: Okay. Okay, awesome. Thank you. So, who did you feel comfortable sharing your identity with, and why? And this can be sort of at any point during, you know, this process. And sort of, what factored into those things? (inaudible)

Chris: Early on, it was friends. It was fellow classmates in Hanselman. It was people that I had gotten to know, started to develop a relationship of trust, like the first person I came out to was somebody who was out when he came to Holy Cross.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: and I, I feel like I talked to him first because it was gonna be easier, and I probably didn't think that in my head when I was doing it, but again, like looking back, I think I told him first because I knew that since he was also gay that I wouldn't risk any—losing anything. I wouldn't risk any friendship.

Caroline: Mhm. Mhm.

Chris: I think the next people I came out to were like, other people in Hanselman that were also at the dining hall, like working at Kimball, with me.

Caroline: Oh, okay. Cool.

Chris: And then, there were, as it kind of progressed, it just kind of became a lot more natural where I felt comfortable on campus saying that, and I think the next group that I came out to was a group of friends from high school.

Caroline: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Chris: And then, eventually, family members.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: And for me, like, family was the one that was the hardest, because that was one where I felt like I had the most to lose.

Caroline: Right, thank you. So who would say was your support system at Holy Cross?

Chris: Primarily, the first half, it would be students like, my fellow peers, especially people like us in groups like Allies and ABiGaLe, and I'm sure you know that there were two different clubs there before--

Caroline: Before Pride?

Chris: Yeah, before pride.

Caroline: Okay, cool, yeah.

Chris: And so getting involved, with Allies, first, eventually ABiGaLe, and some of the friends that I made in those groups were definitely very influential, some of my faculty like Professor Hobgood, Father Linnane, and one of the other, there was a visiting faculty member, that was there my junior and senior year. Professor Nickoloff, I can't believe I just forgot him.

Caroline: Yeah! Liberation Theology?

Chris: Yes.

Caroline: Awesome, yeah.

Chris: Yeah that class changed my life.

Caroline: Yeah! I took it, I took it last semester! Like, amazing.

Chris: Yes.

Caroline: Was just recommending it to a friend, but unfortunately, Professor Eggemeier, well not unfortunately, but he's taking a sabbatical next semester. And she's a senior this year, so she was like "no!"

Chris: Oh!

Caroline: But that was an incredible class.

Chris: And then in, Brenda Hounsell Sullivan was definitely part of my support system among like faculty and staff. And I can't remember his name, but there was a man in charge of judicial affairs that was very helpful when I was dealing with one of the incidents that occurred. I don't think I was necessarily, ~~or~~ he wasn't necessarily someone first on my list to turn to, but when I needed to, he was definitely there.

Caroline: Okay. Cool. Awesome. Thank you. Another question I have was, could you share, like a story, or like an anecdote about what it was like to be out at Holy Cross during this time?

Chris: Sure. One of, the unfortunate thing for me is one of the ones that I remember the most was a negative one.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: But I wouldn't say that that was necessarily representative of my entire experience there. My junior year I studied abroad in my fall semester.

Caroline: Okay, where did you study abroad?

Chris: In Sri Lanka.

Caroline: Oh, wow! Okay.

Chris: Is Todd Lewis still there, in the Religious Studies Department?

Caroline: I think so, that name sounds familiar.

Chris: Okay, he does comparative religion and focusses a lot on Buddhism, and Eastern Asia.

Caroline: Okay, okay.

Chris: And he recommended the program to me, and I'm so glad he did. I wouldn't have traded that for the world. So that was the fall of my junior year. The spring of my junior year when I was back on campus, there were some incidents that happened. The room that I was living in, like the corkboard that was installed outside the room. Somebody had written a slur on there.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: That one was like, "Fags are gonna burn" or something. And then there were, was like a series of similar types of notes that were either like slipped under my door, or sent to me. Are you still able at the PO Box, at the Post Office, to send somebody mail without a stamp?

Caroline: Yes.

Chris: Like campus to campus?

Caroline: Yeah, like you can just walk up to the window and drop it off.

Chris: Yea and so somebody did that to my post office box.

Caroline: Wow.

Chris: With similar types of messages.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: I don't know why.

Caroline: Yeah.

Chris: And I don't know who it was. But it was one of those things where a lot of like the public face of campus was very supportive, but there were certainly like undercurrents that weren't as publicly vocal, that still made things very difficult to be out.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: On campus. And, like some of the people that I mentioned in terms of my support system, especially among like the faculty and staff, were people that I turned to for help, when those things were occurring.

Caroline: Okay. And you said that was your junior year?

Chris: That was my junior year. So it would've been Spring of '03.

Caroline: Okay, thank you for sharing that with me.

Chris: And then at the same time, I also remember like, in the coming out process, we'd stolen--obviously I'm not advocating this as like a campus administrator now--but we'd stolen, "borrowed," not stolen, we "borrow" trays from the dining hall. And we were using them to sled down the hill between

Caroline: Right yeah!

Chris: Going down towards Kimball. And this was like when I was just first coming out, and I told some of my friends, and they were like, 'oh, okay, like are we still gonna keep sliding or do we wanna talk more about this?' and that was it.

Caroline: Right, awesome.

Chris: So like those types of experiences were like so different, but I think it was in part like the people that I was surrounded with people that were affirming. And it was kind of like the next layer out of people that I didn't really know were that I kind of isolated myself from, that would've caused issues.

Caroline: Okay. Thank you. So were involved in any sports teams, clubs, or campus organizations? I know you mentioned you worked at Kimball and you were a part of, Allies and Abby, you said?

Chris: It was Allies and ABiGaLe.

Caroline: Okay. Allies and ABiGaLe. Thank you.

Chris: ABiGaLe was the association of bis, gays, and lesbians. It was kind of the acronym.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: My favorite Holy Cross t-shirt came from ABiGaLe. It was just like a simple,, grey, t-shirt and on the back it said, 'ABiGaLe: Cleaning Closets Since 1990" - I can't remember, I'm gonna say 97, whatever year that ABiGaLe was founded.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: Like, I love that shirt.

Caroline: Yeah!

Chris: I was not involved in a sports team, even high school, all throughout, was not an athletic person. Still am not. But I was involved in SPUD, and a few things in campus ministries. I think SPUD has transformed into something else.

Caroline: Really?

Chris: Now. It was Social Programs for Urban Development, it was a lot of service related.

Caroline: Yeah.

Chris: I can't remember what the acronym is now.

Caroline: Student Programs for Urban Development.

Chris: It's still the same?

Caroline: Yeah, it is.

Chris: Oh, okay. I thought it was something new. Okay, good.

Caroline: Yeah! It's actually like the--

Chris: Yeah so I was involved in SPUD, the Manresa retreat.

Caroline: Oh yeah, mhm.

Chris: And few things in ministries, Allies and ABiGaLe. And there a couple other clubs I was involved with, probably not as in depth as those, but those were like the major things I was involved with.

Caroline: Yeah, awesome, thank you. Do you feel like your involvement in these groups impacted your experience of being gay at Holy Cross?

Chris: Absolutely. Absolutely. I think my involvement with the things in campus ministries, was, it kind of helped me reconcile the tension I felt internally between being like a person of faith, and being out. And kind of understanding, both in a practical way in the things I did, and in the classroom with Religious Studies, with my major, understanding that my understanding of what it meant to be spiritual, or to understand like a, not totally you can never understand a relationship with God but whatever.

Caroline: Yeah

Chris: Yeah, but to come to understand, that it wasn't as restrictive as I believed it was.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: I think my involvement there coupled with the leadership experience that I gained from helping to run Allies and ABiGaLe, just made me a much more confident person. More willing to share my own story, more willing to, I think those groups helped me overcome like a terrible fear of public speaking. And, do they still have the safe person, safe space program, it's kind of like an ally training program, through Pride?

Caroline: They might, they may, I'm not sure. They do have a RPE, relationship peer educators, that run like, One Love, which is being a like safe space and bystander training. But I'm not sure if Pride still has it.

Chris: The program that was part of Allies, and eventually ABiGaLe as well, it was a specific training on being an ally for LGBT people. And the people who went through the training got a sticker to signify that their office was a safe space. And that was a program that I kind of helped, that I inherited with from a previous leadership in allies, and then I kind of took it on as my role, my way to give back to the club.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: And I think that definitely helped me with facilitation, communication, and just overall self-confidence, being able to kind of put my issues aside and focus on what do we need to do to train people to be open and accepting.

Caroline: Okay, awesome, thank you. So my next question is, did you have any romantic relationships at Holy Cross, and sort of how did you find those experiences?

Chris: Those were, those were difficult for me. I think I was still at the time struggling with what it meant to be gay and to be Catholic. And kind of struggling with the traditional Church's expectations around sexual expression and how that applied to me. So, I think I would just call it a lot of near misses, or near close calls with serious relationships. And, that something again, in hindsight, that I wish I had spent more time, whether it was with like a chaplain or a counsellor, like processing through those, rather than trying to, those issues, like those hang-ups, rather than trying to figure that out internally.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: I did have a relationship with a guy who was at Clark University, and that was my senior year. But, prior to that, it was nothing that I would call a relationship. [laughter]

Caroline: [laughter] Okay.

Chris:[laughter]

Caroline: [laughter] Okay. Well looking back, is there anything you'd wish you had known, sort of in that realm?

Chris: Yes. [laughter]

Caroline: [laughter]

Chris: One, on just like a fundamental, self-acceptance level that like I had come to embrace the fact that I was gay, but the fact that I could be like a romantically, and sexually whole, and still be a good person. I think that was something that I definitely struggled, with so just like, that knowledge, that that would've been possible. I wish I would've known that a long time ago. And then when I think about some of the things that I've learned since Holy Cross. about like, sexual health, and sexual well-being, it was those sort of things that I wish, and this isn't just necessarily specific to being gay, like it is specific to being gay like I wish I had know more about those aspects, like how sexual well-being and sexual health are

specific to, for me, like the gay male community, but the LGBT community in general but I think that was something that a lot of my friends were lacking in knowledge, whether they were LBGT or straight.

Caroline: Okay. Sort of relating to that, do you think the Jesuit identity and like the spiritual environment at Holy Cross, in you know, as part of your upbringing as well, affected your view of your sexuality?

Chris: For sure. And, to actually, I think the Jesuit spirituality helped me bridge the gap from what I understood to be like my sexuality, as something that was bad, to something that could be embraced. For me, I think it was the bridge that I needed.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: Because I could still have those discussions, I could still have those thoughts or reflections, in terms, in the context of a faith tradition. But I think the Jesuit approach helped challenge what I made as far as assumptions coming into Holy Cross.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: So I think, for me, it was helpful, but I also could think, if I had been further along in my own development, I could see where it could be detrimental.

Caroline: Okay, got it.

Chris: To someone else.

Caroline: Right. Thank you. So, my last section is sort of like looking back, if you could do your Holy Cross experience over, is there anything you'd do differently?

Chris: Good question. In general, I like to say no, because I think it would change who I am today. And that seems like a cop-out answer, so I'm trying to come up with a better one, like a real one.

Caroline: No, not at all!

Chris: But, I think one thing I probably wish I had done is to take advantage of some of the either emotional or spiritual support, rather than trying to internalize a lot of the struggles that I had, like coming to terms with who I am.

Caroline: Okay, okay. Is there any advice you'd offer to an LGBTQ student who is struggling to come out at Holy Cross?

Chris: Yes. One is to go at the pace that you're comfortable. That, I think if somebody is trying to come out, that there is no need to rush it. And the other piece is to kind of break away from the idea that a coming out experience has to be this like deeply emotional, earth-shattering conversation. For me, like one of the things that I like most, and like you said earlier, coming out is definitely an ongoing process.

Caroline: Right.

Chris: But it, for me, coming out now, is just being honest about who I am. And not waiting, or hesitating, or worrying about referencing a male partner, or a boyfriend, in a conversation. and worrying like how am I going to word that. I think in society as a whole, people are, it's less of a hang up when someone hears that in conversation.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: But at the same time, I don't think that someone should try to rush that beyond what they're comfortable with. So I would say, if someone is feeling like they're ready to come out, and they want to start that process, to start with someone that they know and trust. Almost, like to think of somebody that they know will be positive they know will be affirming.

Caroline: Okay. Is there any advice you'd offer to a Holy Cross senior, who's about to make the transition from college to professional life who identifies as LGBTQ? Sort of in the eyes of the transition on the other side, I guess.

Chris: Absolutely. For me, one of the things that I've learned that was very important in my job search, was looking for a place where I knew that I would be respected. And so, I made it a point to be out in my interview process. And I know it's illegal for somebody to ask me about that, and it would probably be illegal for someone to make a decision about that, but if I referenced a boyfriend and I saw like an uncomfortable reaction, then I knew that that would not be a comfortable fit for me. And so I think, and I think any career services professional would tell you that the interview process is as much about you seeing if you're a good fit there, as the company or the institution seeing if they want to hire you.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: And I think it's absolutely fundamental for a student who is LGBT and going out into the world to make sure that that professional environment is going to be healthy. And I was nervous about that, because right now I work at a Catholic institution, and obviously different Catholic traditions have different approaches to whether or not an LGBT person is respected and embraced within the community. Or to what extent. And so that, making that part of my interview process where I was seeing, would I fit here? Like I didn't want to go backwards from where I was after I went through Holy Cross. I wouldn't have wanted to make a step back. So, to the extent that someone is comfortable, like being out in the interview process, whether it's just in casual conversation. Like, I made sure that ABiGaLe was spelled out, like what the acronym meant, on my resume. And if somebody was, like if somebody saw that and was, reacted poorly to it, then they wouldn't have even called me.

Caroline: Okay. Thank you. And then, my last question, can you kind of share a story about a moment when being LGBTQ impacted an experience that, an experience that all students may have, but like how being LGBTQ impacted that particular experience, if that makes sense?

Chris: Say that one more time.

Caroline: So can you share a story about like a moment when being LBGTQ impacted an experience that all Holy Cross students have, but yours was sort of like impacted particularly by being LGBTQ if that makes sense?

Chris: Okay! So the first one that comes to mind was just like the general campus environment, or general campus conversation, around when Massachusetts made same sex-marriage legal.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: And, while it was, I think a lot of people, especially the people that I had surrounded myself with, I think a lot of the people saw that as a very good thing. But, for me, the idea of being to able to, like I had never had an image of myself in a long term, like, relationship. That, like, the type of relationship I had grown up seeing, as like the ideal, healthy partner, whatever, that had never been something that was in my world view. And, so I remember kind of like the general, oh, this is a good thing that just happened, that happened on campus, but like, for me, that moment was almost like world-changing. Where, it altered the way I saw possibilities in my future, that didn't exist before. Did that get at the question?

Caroline: That was perfect.

Chris: The question you were asking?

Caroline: No, that was great. Thank you so so much. So that was the end of my questions. We just have a couple of demographics that, if you're willing to just like self-identify.

Chris: Yes, definitely.

Caroline: For us to include them, for when we sort of like transcribe and put together these pieces. So, your graduation?

Chris: 2004.

Caroline: Major at Holy Cross, and any minor or concentration programs?

Chris: Religious studies.

Caroline: Okay, perfect. Gender identity?

Chris: Male.

Caroline: Sexuality?

Chris: Gay.

Caroline: Racial or ethnic background?

Chris: White or Caucasian, and ethnic would be primarily Greek and a mix of a few other things.

Caroline: Okay, awesome, thank you. And your current or former occupation, but current. [laughter]

Chris: [laughter] Current is higher ed and student services.

Caroline: Okay, awesome. Thank you so much Chris for taking the time to talk to me.

Chris: Absolutely.

Caroline: And once everything is put together, I will definitely send you the archive that we're putting together of all these pieces, and I really appreciate that you were willing to participate and help out in everything, so thank you.

Chris: That's great. Can I ask you, how are things going there? Like how would you say things are?

Caroline: At Holy Cross?

Chris: Yes.

Caroline: Things are great at Holy Cross! Yeah, I'm loving it, I am a sophomore right now, so I'm like almost halfway done, and getting a little nervous because all of my friends are going abroad and I'll be staying here, but that's alright!

Chris: [laughter]

Caroline: But I think things are really good.

*40:26 to 42:44 excised: discussion about student orientation and Holy Cross mutual friends.*

Caroline: So were Allies and ABiGaLe two separate groups?

Chris: They were two separate clubs.

Caroline: Oh, okay, got it.

Chris: Allies was the, kind of like the, gay-straight alliance. And they did things like rainbow awareness week, some of like the public facing education.

Caroline: Okay, got it.

Chris: And it was intended for both LGBT students and heterosexual students who identified as allies.

Caroline: Okay, got it.

Chris: And then ABiGaLe was specifically intended for ABiGaLe, for LGBT students.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: The membership wasn't really restricted, but it operated in that way. And at least for a short period of time on campus, some of the students who were closeted, or on their way to coming out, were involved in Allies, because they didn't have to be out to be in Allies. They could pass.

Caroline: Okay, got it. That's really interesting because now on campus, we have like Pride, and then there's also like a group run out of Campion, which is run by Chaplains, which sounds like it's similar to ABiGaLe.

Chris: That group actually, that group also existed in Campion.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: Like, it was almost like a spiritual support group, almost?

Caroline: Yes, exactly.

Chris: That also existed. I think I attended that like once. But ABiGaLe was an independent club run through like the SGA.

Caroline: So like an RSO, okay, got it. Okay, cool.

Chris: And I know, I can't remember when, but at some point the two clubs merged and became Pride.

Caroline: Oh, okay! I see, awesome. Cool. Thank you so much.

Chris: Absolutely.

Caroline: It's so interesting to hear about like what was the same and what was different, because it hasn't been that long I feel like.

Chris: No, no.

Caroline: Yeah, there are some students in my class who are interviewing students, in their 70s, it's interesting because I think at that time, Holy Cross was so different, almost unrecognizable for the interviewer.

Chris: Definitely.

Caroline: But it's, it's much more, easy to contextualize more recently, what things were like.

Chris: I'm trying to think, I don't remember how long Allies existed. I don't remember which one came first, Allies or ABiGaLe. I know ABiGaLe was around '97, because of that t-shirt that I mentioned.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: And they were both, at least when I graduated, they were both still separate organizations.

Caroline: Okay. Okay.

Chris: But I know that one of the challenges for ABiGaLe, specifically for the group that was intended for LGBT members. The name of the group that like, because of it was ABiGaLe, it was A-B-I-G-A-L-E, and then the B, the G, and the L, were capitalized. And so it was the association for Bis, Gays, and Lesbians.

Caroline: Okay, got it.

Chris: And so it left out a lot of the other identities under the LGBTQ umbrella.

Caroline: Right.

Chris: So I know that was a challenge, and then another challenge was like, putting together the membership roster for the student government.

Caroline: Oh, to like publish?

Chris: Right. And some people were uncomfortable being listed under ABiGaLe.

Caroline: Okay, got it.

Chris: And so for, a few times we kind of had like 'anonymous student 1' and 'anonymous student 2' but that was difficult to do understandably. Understandably, it was skeptical on the side of student government, like making up 'anonymous students 1 and 2' to fill the rosters.

Caroline: Oh, okay.

Chris: But also respecting some of the folks that didn't want to be publicly identified as a member of the club.

Caroline: Okay. Okay. Awesome.

Chris: So the fact that they merged together, to me, it makes a lot of sense.

Caroline: Right.

Chris: But in the moment, when I, I probably would've resisted it, if I was on campus, if it happened when I was there. Because it served me, because they like, they had such different purposes.

Caroline: Interesting. Okay. Thank you so much Chris for everything.

*Chris: Absolutely!*

*47:39 to 48:15: Excised, discussion of assignment scheduling.*

Chris: I'm glad you're in the class, I hope you're enjoying it.

Caroline: No I definitely, definitely am.

Chris: It's a class I wish we could offer here.

Caroline: Oh, is it, do you think like, because of the religious affiliation, or just you wish you had it?

Chris: It's a class I think we could offer here. When we compare, in terms of, sometimes I think students at Holy Cross wouldn't believe me when I say this, but in terms of like structures for diversity and education and multicultural support, you're worlds ahead of where I am.

Caroline: Really. Okay.

Chris: And it's not that, we would be, here, that we would be closed to it, it's just that we aren't that far yet. We're working on it. [laughter]

Caroline: Yeah, an ongoing process.

Chris: Exactly. And while I know, a lot of students will cite a lot of the things that Holy Cross has failed on, or things that they need to do better, perhaps my fondness for Holy Cross is based on the fact that I'm comparing it to a place that isn't as far.

Caroline: Okay. Is it like a similar size?

Chris: We're a little smaller. But similar.

Caroline: Okay. Similar like profile, kind of?

Chris: Yeah. We're in Western New York, south of Buffalo. I think that the biggest, the biggest difference, other than the Jesuit vs. Franciscan, is that we're in a rural, very rural setting.

Caroline: Okay, interesting.

Chris: So like a lot of the same like charisms and values that are at Holy Cross are repeated here but our like, our size is similar, our student demographics are a little different.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: There's a little less affluence and proportionally, we're a little more white.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: In terms of our student body.

Caroline: Okay. Interesting.

Chris: Like I think we're now, where Holy Cross was when I was there.

Caroline: Okay.

Chris: In terms sort of like, recruiting of multicultural students.

Caroline: We talk about that a lot actually, in like, as we become more geographically diverse, in terms of like not just being a Massachusetts or New England school, which it still is in a lot of ways, but the number of students outside New England is becoming bigger and bigger each year, too, which is interesting.

*Excise 50:57 to 54:43: discussion of first year student services, and the state of New York, and student demographics.*

Caroline: Well, I'll let you go, thank you so much for your time, and everything.

Chris: Absolutely, and good luck with the rest of the semester.

Caroline: Thank you! And I'll pass on everything once it's been like compiled and uploaded and everything. So I really appreciate it, it was great talking to you.

Chris: You too.

Caroline: Have a good one!

Chris: You too.

Caroline: Bye!

Chris: Bye!