

4-4-2018

A Conversation with Mark Campbell-Foster

Follow this and additional works at: https://crossworks.holycross.edu/glbtc_alum

 Part of the [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Commons](#), [Oral History Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

"A Conversation with Mark Campbell-Foster" (2018). *GLBTQ Alumni Oral History Project*. 21.
https://crossworks.holycross.edu/glbtc_alum/21

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral Histories at CrossWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in GLBTQ Alumni Oral History Project by an authorized administrator of CrossWorks.

Interviewee: Mark Campbell-Foster '04

Interviewer(s): Emma Powell and Luke Walsh

Date: April 4, 2018

Location: Podcast Room, Multimedia Resource Center, Holy Cross via Skype

Course: Making History, Professor Stephanie Yuhl

Transcription:

Emma: Okay, alright, So, I just have to say this thing for like a legal statement really quick to start off, okay. Today is April 4th, 2018. My name is Emma Powell, and I'm here with Luke Walsh

Luke: Hey

Emma: Mark can I just get that you acknowledge you are being recorded, and that you consent to this interview.

Mark: I acknowledge that I'm being recorded and I consent to this interview

Emma: Awesome, so the purpose of this interview is to preserve the history LGBTQ+ alums at Holy Cross and their experiences. Thank you for being apart of this. Could you just briefly introduce yourself?

Mark: Yeah. So, My name is Mark, I went to Holy Cross from 2000-2004. So I've been out for 14 years now, which is insane.

Emma/Luke: (laughs)

Mark: I feel like it was just yesterday. I am an audiologist, so I got my doctorate at Northeastern in 2009. And I've been working for the past 7 years with, um, a company called Cochlear, and they're an implant hearing solution company. So I work with Cochlear implants and *** (1.48) technology. I am a cochlear implant user, myself. Um. Sorry I was just wondering why my heater was going off.

Emma: (laughs)

Mark: So that's just a little bit about me. I've been married for about ten years now, 11 years now, sorry. Umm. To a wonderful person I met at Northeastern. We have a son. Uhh. His name is Orion. He's six months old. So that's a little bit about me, we have dog.

Emma: Oh

Mark: You may hear him every-so often.

Emma: Awesome. (laughs)

Luke: Um so I guess to start off the interview I would just like to ask how do you co-, how did you decide to uhh go to Holy Cross, to attend Holy Cross?

Mark: So, how did I decide to go to Holy Cross? Umm. Well I grew up in Waltham, which isn't too far from, um, Holy Cross, about 40 minutes west, east rather, to Boston. And I really knew I didn't want to go too far from home. I'm kind of like a homebody. And, but, I had worked hard in high school and stuff so I really wanted to go to a, um, a prestigious school, which definitely

fit Holy Cross. Um, so Holy Cross, Clark and Tufts were on my list of where I wanted to go to, and um, I just fell in love with Holy Cross. And I went to the campus, it's beautiful. And, um, the people that I met with were great, so I connected with the LGBT center before I attended Holy Cross. And that was, um, a deciding factor as well.

Emma: Uh, okay. Awesome. Um. What was your transition like, from high school to Holy Cross kind of in your first semester.

Mark: It was interesting it was definitely, um, I still remember being dropped off at the hill...

Emma: (laughs)

Mark: ... with my parents, you know, on the Hart Lawn where, you know, your parents walk away from you and you walk one way where you try not to look back. Um, so like I said, I was kind of a homebody, but I was ready for college and so I had a wonderful roommate right from the get go. We lived together from freshman year and then senior again. We cou-, we um, He studied abroad, and we were both RA's sophomore year so we couldn't live together. Um, but my transition actually was really smooth. I actually came to Holy Cross, um, with a nice group of friends that I had met through the, um, LGBT center, Abigale, and allies and what not. So, I felt like I had a little bit of a one-up in the fact that I knew somebody.

Emma: Mmhm

Mark: And obviously I knew my roommate, but, um having more than one person I knew did help a lot. And I had a great hallway, um, freshman year, so that was nice.

Emma: Awesome.

Luke: Awesome. Uh so like, you were a student in the early 2000's at Holy Cross, and so we were just wondering what was going on in the current events, like outside of Holy Cross, in the broader world that were like super influential to you, uh, while you were at Holy Cross?

Mark: Um, the biggest thing that happened at Holy Cross while I was there was 9/11. Um so that was in terms of what happened outside of Holy Cross. So I had mentioned that I was a RA. So Sophomore year, that was the first year they had decided to let RA's be um be sophomores. And I was 1 of 16 sophomores that had been selected, and on September 10th, um there was a suicide on campus and that definitely rocked the entire campus as you would expect. And then as an RA I was pulled into just the kind of the (pause) obviously as an RA you don't have any official capacity in a conflict standpoint but it was more like, this is what to look for, um watch out for your students, check in on them, if they need anything refer them onward. Um and so that I remember having that meeting in the afternoon of September 10th and then waking up and going to anthropology and somebody had run into the classroom, and said that one of my stu-I call them students, but they're not they're just one of my hallmates that I was an RA to, um father had been in one of world trade centers. And at that point I did not know what was going on. And the teacher had said at that point, the professor had said that one of the towers had been hit and um we didn't know anything more. And but I left class and I saw my roommate in front of um so I was in um is it beaven? Is that the building next to Dinand hall, um not, Dinand Library?

Emma: Uh yeah

Luke: Yeah

Emma: That's where like the anthro classes are so

Luke: Yeah

Mark: So I left beaven and I saw my roommate crying on the stairs of he just happened to be walking and I was trying to get back to our room in Hanselman. And he was crying, and I was like what's going on? And he was like the second tower just went down, I can't get in touch with my family cause and it was just I get goosebumps just thinking about it

Emma: Mmhmm

Luke: Yeah

Mark: It was just surreal and I'm not a really religious person, but we all went to uh the chapel, and it was just it was tough. It was rough, ya know? Just trying to figure out how to carry on and ya know as a campus and so that definitely was pretty significant.

E: Yeah

M: Ya know and it was scary because ya know like I said I lived in Waltham and I would go home and the Mass. Pike would have a high alert

Emma: Yeah

Mark: And you would have to be careful that ya know there could be a terrorist attack happening in the ya know we just didn't know anything at that time, so that was definitely the biggest thing that I could think of right now that happened during my time there.

Emma/Luke: Yeah

Emma: No, for sure, that's definitely a big thing that happened

Luke: Yeah

Emma: So kind of shifting gears sort of about your LGBTQ experience at Holy Cross, um recognizing that coming out isn't a one time event when did, when and how did you first come out?

Mark: So I was actually somewhat outed. I had known I had been gay since I was ya know younger than 10

Emma: Mmhm

Mark: I had always known I was different. And I had tried to tell my family, ya know part of it was fear on my part, part of it on their part. And ya know I had tried to tell them I was like bisexual. Ya know? Do the like compromise? And ya know my parents were like well maybe it's a phase ya know and they kinda did that whole thing and I was like "okay it's a phase."

Luke/Emma: (Laughs)

Mark: And I kinda backed off. But then I did a summer program in England for a couple of um about 6 weeks to 2 months, and my mother was really proud of me. And so she gave me a journal to kind of to document my studies at Oxford. And um so I'm a junior going into senior year of high school at this point. And um it was the first time I wasn't really home, and I could just be myself there. I kind of reinvented myself. I didn't have any family to worry about over there. I was meeting all these kids for the first time, and it didn't matter if they didn't like me cause ya know I was leaving in 6 weeks, 2 months however long the program was. And I still had a few, I had two people that went to the program with me, so I knew I had those two friends.

And one friend did know I was gay, the other one I can't remember if she knew or not. But anyhow I wrote about my experience in my journal, and my mother really wanted to read it when I came home. And I was like no, no you can't read it.

Emma/Luke: (Laughs)

Mark: Well, curiosity got the best of her, and she read it. Um so I came home one night. And all the lights were on in the house, and I knew they should've been asleep. And I walked in, and uh, it's gonna sound way more dramatic than I make it to be. But they were like, "Mark we know you're secret."

Emma/Luke: (Laughs)

Mark: And I knew she had read my journal at that point. And so my sister came into the house, and at this point I'm mad because they violated my privacy ya know I had nowhere to go, and so my sister comes in and she's like "what's going on?" And I'm like, "Mom and Dad know I'm gay!" So, that's ultimately how I came out. Um so junior year going into senior year, high school, I was out. And then began the slow process of-really it was more of my parents coming out at that point because well I shouldn't say that, ya know when you come out to your parents like you said you come out multiple times right?

Emma: Yeah

Mark: Now you gotta start telling your whole family and all that. So that was kind of like peeling an onion so to speak like one layer after another like just dumb doing that but I had a fantastic ya know my parents were never ones that were like you know they were great

Emma: Yeah

Mark: Given. Given that this was like 1998, 1999, Ellen Degeneres had come out a few years prior and I can remember a family member being, telling, sitting in this room with me telling me how disgusting that was and that ya know it didn't need to be on broadcast TV. And ya know so I can still remember those things being said. But it's funny because those same people that said those comments, when they found out that I was gay, were amazingly supportive.

Emma: Yeah

Mark: So yeah it was one of those things where, like as I started telling people, like their ignorance might have been ya know exposed earlier but really they had the capacity to be loving and accepting. Um obviously when my mother read my journal and stuff there were things in there that I really didn't want her to know or read. So, and I knew that I had been closeted for so long that I could use a little bit of help, so I actually suggested because my mother wanted to process and talk and I was like I really can't talk about it unless we have like a mediator. So we actually went through family counseling, and that was amazing. And my parents joined PFLAG, which is Parents or Friends of Lesbians and Gays, and we went to that meeting quite a few times and my parents found a lot of help in that. And they found the world was a lot smaller than they had initially thought because when we went to this meeting, we actually saw a neighbor of ours who had two older sons that happened to be gay. And it was just, I think it was good for my parents um to have that. And so then I came to Holy Cross, and as I mentioned I had kind of reached out to Abigail, the group, and they were great they took me under their wing. I don't

know if this is true or not, but they told me I was the first student to attend Holy Cross openly gay, like I didn't have to come out, I was the first one going there open. So that was kind of cool. But yeah that was my initial coming out story.

Emma: Do you think the fact that you were out going into Holy Cross made it a lot easier to like find a support system from the beginning? Yeah?

Mark: Yeah absolutely because people were telling me about Abigail and allies, and I don't know if it's still the same way and I'm neither gonna do it justice, but right across from Hanselman is the Champeon house? The Champeon house?

Emma/Luke: Yeah

Mark: Yeah, so they had a group that was like a private, non-advertised, not public, invite only GBLT group. And I don't know if I necessarily would have found out that group, if they didn't know that I was gay because I hadn't, I mean I didn't go to anybody with a problem like to a professor or something, so I don't know how I would've found out about it.

Emma: Yeah

Mark: Had I not been open and somebody told me about it. But definitely I feel like I had a nice strong network because of those people and those groups

Luke: Yup.

Emma: No, that's awesome!

Luke: Yeah, so I was just gonna ask, so what were you like, were you involved with any uh sports, campus activities anything like that while at Holy Cross, and like was your involvement with them like hindered or like-what was the fact that you were out, openly gay how did that like did that change anything or make experiences different for what other students would feel happen to them?

Mark: That's a good question um overall my experience was largely positive at Holy Cross, I will say that. Which is surprising considering with today's current events

Emma: (Laughs)

Luke: Yeah

Mark: Who knows where we are.

Emma/Luke: Yeah

Mark: But that's a different discussion, so was I involved in things? Yes absolutely, I didn't do sports necessarily, but I was the relationship peer educator, I was part of the women's forum, I was a multicultural peer educator, I was part of the SGA Cabinet.

Emma: Oh, cool.

Mark: My senior year, I was uh I was the director of Resident life liaison, so to speak, so I will say on the outside in terms of like my professors and the extracurricular groups, everybody was awesome. Obviously, I was also apart of Abigail and allies, and those sort of things. I was an RA for all three years, so I definitely feel like I was very active on campus. But what I will say is that, it wasn't necessarily the administration, although again it was a different time, we tried to bring a drag ball to Holy Cross

Emma: Yeah.

Mark: And we, we were able to do it, and I don't remember all the nuances but I think we couldn't call it a drag show or something, but you could come in drag. I'm sure Phil Dardino or some of those have a better memory of that. But what I will say is, I think I had an easier time because I kind of passed so to speak in the fact that I wasn't necessarily the most fem- I shouldn't say that it sounds negative, but I wasn't the most stereotypical gay person. So I could blend in for lack of a better word. So I-I know I tend to do that. Ya know? I tend to internalize some of my behavior if you will just to kind of fit in a little bit more. If that makes sense?

Luke: Mmhm

M: But, I will say that um so I had a rainbow lizard, this sounds like talking about little things, but my lizard was kidnapped and they sent me like little rainb- like little notes about what happened to the lizard and why I wasn't gonna get the lizard back and things like that. And they like they held it hostage, which it sounds so st-

Emma: (laughs) wait was that stolen from your room or?

Mark: Yeah, yeah it was one of my, it was one of my hallmates that stole it from my room freshman year. The irony is that like you know the joke of that those that make fun of you might actually be gay themselves?

Luke: Yeah.

Emma: Yeah.

Mark: Well, this person actually ended up coming out years after Holy Cross, so we take that with a grain of salt.

Luke: Yeah

Mark: But while I was there um there was a student, who was a student of mine on my hall that I was an RA of, who was attacked. Not physically but verbally or even with like with um. They had written on his door that "Faggots need to die."

Emma: Oh.

Mark: And um so

Luke: Jesus.

Mark: As an RA, we did a vigil, and ya know we kinda kept watch over the door to get, to let the student feel safe. And we made a quilt and everybody would come and ya know we have like hour shifts or two hour shifts, and we would all make a quilt, just to raise awareness. I think we might've even done a march. But I definitely had the support of the administration. Um you know we have like um a hate crime happened here sign. The student also said that they got notes, this student worked in the dining hall, and so they said they got notes on the tray. So like a student would know he was working and would put like notes on the tray so that when he was cleaning he would get these notes. So I never had anything like that directly directed toward me
Emma: Yeah.

Luke: Do you think you like didn't experience those things because you were able to like as you said like blend in with the rest of the crowd?

Mark: Ya know, I hope so. I mean well I don't necessarily mean hope so I mean, I would hope not. I guess that I was just accepted. But probably. And I also didn't tell everyone that I met.

Luke: Mhmm

Mark: Like ya know I'm sure people knew but it wasn't, it wasn't always on the forefront of what I was doing. Ya know?

Luke: Mhmm

Mark: So yeah, like I said I was in a million other things while I was there.

Luke: Yeah.

Mark: It just happened to be one part of me.

Luke: Mhmm

Mark: And I would say I was pretty confident like I didn't let it hold me back, and I was not gonna let somebody say something and back down.

Luke: Yeah.

Mark: So and ya know having hearing loss I've always had to advocate for myself like if I don't hear the teacher or if I miss a note or something like that I had to ya know be able to advocate for myself. And actually, that was the harder fight advocating for services on campus that I found versus being gay.

Luke: Yeah.

Mark: Um, but yeah so.

Emma: So when you were at Holy Cross, is there any experience or part of the experience that you would want to do differently? Or do you feel pretty content on like just like if you could change anything would you? I guess is the question.

Mark: Yeah, yeah um honestly, so I kinda said that like when I went to England I kind of reinvented myself. And when I went to Holy Cross, I think I went the complete other way like I think I was just, I had like such a (unhearable audio) that I did every single thing, and I definitely feel that I'm not the person I am today, so when I go back to Holy Cross and I remember how I was then, sometimes it makes me a little uncomfortable because I don't necessarily know if I'm the same-if I would've been the same type of person I was then. I was the same person I had to be then, but it's not how I would do things now. But ya know, life makes you older and wiser, right? Like ya know, I have a son now, life is different so how i was then, like I think about that rainbow lizard, and I'm like why did I have a rainbow lizard?

Luke and Emma: (laughs)

Mark: Like I would just not have a rainbow lizard now. So, it's just little things like that sounds like a small example, but it was things like that. So, and I don't know if it's ya know again like current events might have just beaten me down as like ya know where ya know we've gone so far ya know. In 2004, gay marriage was legal, like speaking of current events, gay marriage became legal in Massachusetts, the first state like we were on the upward trajectory. And now, it's like ya know now marriage is legal in all 50 states, and that's great, but it seems like we're still going back a little bit. Ya know?

Luke: Mhmm

Mark: People like to have much more of a voice now that they didn't necessarily have ya know going back 15 years ya know because we're still in Massachusetts. Maybe the way the things are

today is how things are in other parts of the country um but in Massachusetts we were still very isolated, like I said in '98 I came out to my parents, and it wasn't an issue. Which reminds me, so that's 20 years from this year that I've been out.

Emma: Oh yeah.

Mark: So that's crazy. So yeah I've been out for more than half my life now because I'm 36. But um ya know so I feel like yeah I feel like maybe now if I were to go back I would have to do things a little differently because we're so much more vocal now as a society willing, not necessarily, ya know people don't have as much of a filter anymore. And tend to freely think what they need to say. And I was protected from all of that when I was at Holy Cross, and I hope that's still the case today but you just don't know.

Emma: Yeah, So you kinda felt like Holy Cross was a little bit more of a "bubble" then than like the real world I guess?

Mark: Oh I don't know if I realized it then but it definitely was a nice bubble and it was a great bubble to be in. I mean it was small classes, really great friends, um but yeah but clearly that isn't the norm. You know, I could've had a had a very very different experience. And I feel very grateful that I had that experience that I had.

Luke: So uh, I just wanted to ask, did you have any like romantic relationships while at HC? And if so how did those relationships come about?

Mark: Yeah, so um, yes I had a few relationships at Holy Cross. And they were great, I mean the men I met there. I mean, you really can't meet a bad person at Holy Cross, in my opinion. But um yeah so I-yeah-I mean honestly meeting people wasn't that hard. What I did find with Holy Cross was that people tended to be very much more reserved and closeted and so I will say that a lot of people I did date were closeted back then. It was typical for the time. It may not be now- not anymore but- It wasn't a big deal that you were seeing someone in the closet. So um, so yeah, I dated one person that was out of the closet, one person that was sort of in the closet and then one person that was very much in the closet. So that is 3 people over 4 years. Don't judge me!

Emma: Oh no. I don't know if this is an uncomfortable question you don't have to answer it but do you think dating someone who was in the closet put a strain on the relationship at all or do you think it would have been the same sort of thing-kinda comparing someone who is out vs someone in the closet?

Mark: It definitely poses a lot of challenges. Like, you couldn't-you always had to be worry like because since I am openly gay like if I got too close to this person that wasn't terribly out of the closet were they gonna start to assume things-sorry I keep hearing a noise that gets distracting-So it was more like that so we only had our time in the room so like although we did have a nice romantic kiss in the cemetery (laughter) so you find your spaces right? Where you try to be safe. I may or may or not have had an elevator key. (laughter) So I had a study room. So you find your spaces where you could-because again you are not necessary out to your roommate. I don't want to say it definitely strained things because I feel like they were fulfilling relationships but it definitely adds a lot more anxiety and like complexity that you know a heterosexual couple or a

couple that was both out had. I definitely would say that Holy Cross was not unique in that regard. We weren't in a bubble where we could be holding hands down Easy St. No, it wasn't like that at all. But I think if you passed you were ok. So I knew how to do that- and so that's what I think made the relationships work. But, It was tough. The one that was very very closeted- I fell hard for-I fell super hard for. And that was tough, because I definitely felt more than he could because he just wasn't there yet. So he was just reconciling the fact he was gay, and he was ready to have you know a relationship but it couldn't be much more because he wasn't ready for that. So yeah, That was definitely really tough on me-a lot of heartache there. You know, he's a good guy too now, and he was then too. The thing about Holy Cross- college in general- you go in a completely different person. Most people live on campus. You leave your home and you move on campus and live by yourself somewhat by yourself and you try to figure out who you are, what your interested in, what your major is, start doing homework, have relationships-it is a whirlwind! And then you go home for 3-4 months every year.

Luke & Emma: Yeah.

Luke: So earlier you mentioned you aren't really that religious, and I just wanted to ask what was it like going to a college that has like a strong jesuit identity and a strong jesuit calling? As you know the Catholic church, does not fair-does not have very really good views of the Gay community-so what was that like while you were at Holy Cross?

Mark: Yeah, absolutely- so I believe in god I believe in religion-um, but growing up in Waltham, MA, we had the-one of my friends was the first children molested by Father Gagin, so I was very close to the church scandal going on. And, so there were some family dynamics with that as well which made it complicated. So my feelings with religion was kinda like they clearly do not accept me- I had a strained belief with religion. What I loved about Holy Cross was that they had a religious requirement but it wasn't in like catholic studies. So I actually did it with Jim Nickoloff -who I can't recall-Is Jim still there? Jim Nickoloff.

Emma: I feel like I have heard the name, but I am not sure.

Mark: So he was an openly gay professor, I don't know if he had Jesuit ties or if he was formerly a jesuit priest that stepped or if he was just a professor very skilled in the Jesuit theology. But anyways I took his Latin American liberation theology class. And it was phenomenal because I learned from that course that it kinda reassured me what I thought along and that is yes god is this greater being but god is also here on earth with all of us and by doing good work and being good people we can see god all around us. And that is how I was able to reconcile my faith that is that, yes there is something bigger out there than all of us but there is also something here on earth with each of us that encourages that. So I'll say that while going to Holy Cross while didn't make me a devout church goer, it definitely helped me find my way in reconciling my faith because if I can have this conversation with two good people that accept me for who I am- well I truly that is how I feel god would be today. Did I answer your question? There were like a few questions within that question.

Emma: Yeah, no I think you kinda summed up what we were looking for. Yeah, that was a really good answer.

Mark: Yeah so um, I did not feel at all that my religious beliefs put me in any sort of on the edge of my experience at Holy Cross. Like, I felt very much a part of Holy Cross and embraced with it. Yeah.

Emma: Awesome, um so kinda looking back on your experience from where you are now-What advice would you offer to an LGBTQ+ student who is struggling to come out on campus?

Mark: Find your person and trust that person. You need to have a person. Having a secret like that is just too big and too scary to keep to yourself and as a RA, I had witnessed a few things that could probably have been prevented had the world been a little different or these people had a friend they could confide to. Because you know, when I met this professor, I never actually took a course with her but I worked with her, and she told me something that I never forgot and it applies to many things. But she was talking about it in a perspective with people with hearing loss. They tend to retreat and withdraw because if they can't hear you and communicate they are not going to put themselves in a situation where someone might say "Forget it, too complicated to talk to, I am not going to repeat it, I'll write it down, I'll tell you later." So she told me that everybody deserves love. That is true. You need to find someone who loves you for who you are and you have to be willing to identify who that person is. And I am not even saying that person has to be a classmate, that person could be a professor, an RA, RD um somebody in ResLife, somebody in counseling. You just need to set that up because you need to take care of yourself because if you don't-because we don't want to be in a position where that person ends up hurting themselves so--I think I talk about the way things are with current events but in my experience, and I could be totally naive in this but is that yeah people might be bigots and ignorant but when they are confronted with a real person that is going through being gay or what not. It puts a face and meaning to the concept and we're not as scary as some people think. So, we shouldn't have to be so scared back; We should give people the benefit of the doubt but it's tough because people are often hurt, a lot of the time beforehand because somebody said something, somebody pushed them up against the locker, something happened. Something that could have been meaningless like stealing a rainbow lizard and you feel like you're being targeted and that can go in either direction. You can either fight back and have the confidence and support network. Or if you don't have the support network, you could feel even more isolated-even withdrawn. And you know, Holy Cross is an amazing school and the fact it is affiliated with a religion, it should not hold somebody back. Because, Holy Cross being a Jesuit school is at least liberal enough to think outside the box. Well yes, the teaching of the church is kinda black and white. Women can't be priests. Gay men, gay folk can't marry in a church. Yes, there are certain things but fundamentally there are a lot of people who are religious who-I think it was Sex in the City where they called themselves, Cafeteria Catholics. You can't go to a cafeteria and pick the pudding and pick the coke and leave the peas behind-Right? But I kinda think you can do that!

Emma: Yeah, you can.

Luke: Yeah.

Mark: You can be a good person and be religious and reject certain parts of the church. And that's ok, you know! So, that was a long winded answer but we need people, we need friends, we need love. That's why we talk, right? You know?

Luke: I just want to ask, would you give the same advice to a senior who is about to graduate as they transition now to either graduate school or the professional life? What would the transition be for them being also in the LGBTQ community?

Mark: So it is interesting that you bring that question up. So, I am an audiologist and I work with cochlear implants. So, I have always been in the mindset that if I am going to get a job, I need to make sure I have a phone call with you before you meet me at an interview, so that you know- it sounds so weird or random but I'll call and set up my appointment and say hi or confirm so that they know I can answer the phone. But to them they don't realize I have hearing loss. But they will remember that phone call when they see me come in with implants. So I never want to talk about my hearing loss because I do not want that to ever set me back from getting a job or what not. So I think in today's political landscape if you are going into business or something being gay is just one part of you and I would never say deny that. Be true to who you are but if you are doing a resume you have to think about whether or not putting that you are co-chair of ABIGAIL, is going to hurt you, if you decide to apply to a company.

But you may have a company where your president is this stark republican and you know the company is known to give donations to anti-lgbtq organizations. So if that is an organization you want to work for, well why? Because clearly they do not accept you as a person. So, two if you're going to go for that- Well how are you going to present yourself? Because if you at least want the job, what do you need to do to get yourself in the door? Which might mean, leave off ABIGAIL off your resume. Because getting a job, as you guys probably know in your generation is very very difficult. You need every advantage going for you so I don't necessarily know- unless you think it is going to work to your advantage like if the company has a hiring quota where they need to fulfill certain demographics and that might be an advantage but I know, personally I am always very cautious about displaying anything that might not be relevant and you know I get this on a daily basis. So you talked about coming out multiple times, I feel like I come out every single time I talk to a patient because you know I used to work a lot with pediatrics. So when I see pediatric patients now, the patient's family will be like "Wow, you're really great with kids. Do you have kids?" And I am like, yes I have one son. And they start to ask about my family and so I am like do I acknowledge, Jason or use them, they, their...or do I just call him a she? Because it is not about me, it is not about my hearing loss, it is not about being deaf, it is about me treating this patient. So bringing up being gay or talking about my own deaf experience, does that take away from patients' care? It is like little things like that. Again, that is kinda what I mean I am very different now than vs when I was at Holy Cross, where I had NO problem telling you about whether I am gay or not. I was gonna stick up for anything. But again, I was in a bubble. You know I mean like and that is great that college can provide such a safety net but there really is not that in the real world, until you have that job. You know, then you can have HR to protect you and things like that but yes, you can't technically be

discriminated against for being gay but they can come up with excuses or say we had a really big applicant pool. Like, you just don't know. So, I don't have a right answer but I would just caution seniors that are coming through, maybe, caution is a strong word but just think about that. Think about who and how and what you want to be. Because not everybody is going to be accepting as you think.

Luke: And I would say they just grapple with that, they some of them may have just come out in college or like struggle to be accepted by the community and now again they have to hide themselves. How would you advice them to grapple with that?

Emma: Like do you think once you are hired, maybe, you can go in and kind of

Mark: Yes, because again, the goal isn't to keep anything from them. So I have only been in the mindset, get me in the door, and if my family comes up, sure I'll tell you about it. If my hearing loss comes up-because I am wearing an implant in my head, you can't miss it. So they're going to ask questions like I don't mind talking about it but get me in the door. And then if you decide you don't like me, well at least you have met me face to face. I've done all I can do and you're doing me a favor if you don't like me. So, I'm not saying go completely in the closet. And absolutely once you have the job, talk about it as natural as you want it to be. There are people who are very closed off and very guarded and that's easy for them. I am not a closed off or guarded person. I can have a conversation with anybody. So for me to not talk about my personal life is difficult and I always tell stories. So I'm not saying hide who you are but make smart decisions. And then but keep your path going and if your path is slow and conservative, that's fine! But also don't feel like you have to prove anything to anybody-you don't owe anything to anybody. Your job opportunity has nothing to do with your sexuality, your disability or anything like that. So don't give them something to look for if it doesn't matter.

Emma: Okay, so I guess our final question is-Can you share a story about a moment where being LGBTQ impacted an experience you had while being at Holy Cross? Whether positive or negative. I guess you shared your lizard story but I didn't know if there were any others.

Mark: So, can you repeat that question one more time because I heard it but I really want to analyze and make sure I give you what you want.

Emma: Yeah, so can you share a story about a moment when being LGBTQ impacted an experience you had at Holy Cross. It can be positive or negative. It is kinda is an open-ended question.

Mark: So while we were talking I had remembered an incident, that I kinda alluded to, that was really profound to me. I think because this happened my sophomore year, and I really think this is why I kept going with being an advocate and being open because there was a kid who had been abused for being gay. He was attacked outside his home, not while at Holy Cross. But something happened at Holy Cross, that triggered it. The reason, I say something happened is because I actually don't know what happened because I was now the RA with the hearing loss and I didn't have a cochlear implant at the time and I didn't hear as well as I do now. And so somebody came and got me or told me something was wrong with this student and I remember going into the room and it was all dark. I can still remember what he was wearing and he was

like kinda like a shell, he was just so broken and I don't mean that in a negative way. He was just so hurt. And he started crying like into my shoulder and into my arm. And I just like held him as he cried. And I could get snippets but he was crying and talking about what was happening and I knew the situation was beyond me and I knew I had to go get help from somebody like higher up in medical intervention. But-I couldn't go. So I literally held him for like 35 minutes while he just cried and processed. And I couldn't hear what he was saying and the fact of the matter is that I served a role and I was able to help him. And I knew then while I was having such a positive experience. Because I had such an amazing experience; it wasn't that same way. So, that kid ended up being helped and is in a good place. But for me I am so grateful, to bring it back to a positive aspect, for the fact that I was able to be an RA my sophomore year. And I created a big board that was for like queer history month. That definitely caused a lot of conversation in my hallway because I had guys involved in ROTC and sports and things like that but not once did I ever feel attacked or but it was all about open conversation. So I am really grateful, Holy Cross fostered that environment because it was definitely needed, and I hope it has continued to get better because you know for those kids, I was just talking about they needed that environmental way more. I was very fortunate because ABIGAIL, Allies, and the Jesuit group at Campion House existed for me. And I was so grateful for the friends that I had because that is really what made my community at Holy Cross amazing. Because the support from every level of the administration was also phenomenal. But I do know there were students out there that had a very different experience than me. And that's what I wanted to change. Hopefully, I did something. So yeah.

Emma: Yeah, well even doing this interview you are definitely making an impact.

Luke: Yeah!

Mark: I appreciate that.

Emma: Well, just sort of this being the end of the interview I just have to confirm a couple of things for like the record.

Emma: You graduated in 2004 correct?

Mark: Correct

Emma: Were you a psychology major at Holy Cross?

Mark: I was Psychology major, deaf studies ASL studies concentration

Emma: Ok, Gender Identity, male

Mark: ASL deaf studies? No...

Emma: No, what is your gender identity? Just for the record.

Mark: Oh you're asking me a question. Sorry I thought you meant that was my study. I am CIS-gendered, I am a male.

Emma: Ok! Sexuality?

Mark: Gay, 100% gay!

Emma: Racial, ethnic background?

Mark: Caucasian, white, American, Italian, Irish

Emma: And then your current occupation?

Mark: I am a clinical territory manager for Cochlear Americas which an Audiologist.

Emma: Ok awesome, thank you so much for doing this. This has been great.

Mark: Thank you and if you have any questions feel free to reach out. So I know my availability is a little bit tight but I can always pull up a laptop if you guys need me for anything.

Emma: Yeah, we're just going to transcribe the interview so we will write everything out that has been said, so we just have to send that back to you and make sure there is nothing you want to cut or anything like that.

Mark: Perfect.

Emma: Ok!

Mark: Sounds good.

Emma: Thank you so much for doing this.

Luke: Thank you.

Emma: It's been awesome. Thanks.

Mark: Nice to meet you both.

Emma: Nice to meet you!

Mark: Bye!