

Transcript

Sarah

Hello, everyone, and thanks for coming back to the Rough Draft podcast, your favorite student-run literary art and culture podcast here at your college. It's Sarah, and I'm back this week and I'm joined by...

Ben

Ben, your host.

Sarah

Thank you for returning for this week's episode, we find it to be another very important episode, we're having a celebration of coming out for the LGBTQ+ community here on campus. I know I'm not and I think Ben can speak--he is also not part of the LGBTQ+ community, but we thought this would be a very important topic seeing that this week, October 11, was National Coming Out Day, just to bring you some of the stories of your fellow peers who are a member of this community and to share how their experience was. And we hope that you'll gain some knowledge that maybe you don't have, get better educated in some LGBTQ+ issues. And just know like, if you are a member of this community, there's resources on campus that you can reach out to to become more involved in the community. And there's other students on campus that might have struggled with coming out experienced some of the things same things around it that you have, and that's okay, but they're here to share that it's a celebration. And that we want you to know that even though we aren't members of the community, we're here to support you, and that it's a safe space for you to be a part of. We'd like to start the episode by reading a poem written by Taylor Groft, a member of the LGBTQ+ community here on campus. The poem is entitled I Accept You. It goes:

"When I told you you said I accept you. I never thought you would react so well. You didn't accept me, but you live with it. A huge weight was lifted from my shoulders, I finally started to feel freedom. When I told you, you said I accept you. Little did I know you'll never, truly. Your acceptance was simply ignorance. You don't accept me, but you live with it. I thought I could begin being myself, I figured you would help me be myself. When I told you, you said 'I accept you.' You don't call me 'he.' But you still love me. You never kicked me out when I told you. You don't accept me, but you live with it. My transition was an inconvenience. A trip to New York, a weekend in Michigan. When I told you you said 'I accept you.' You don't accept me, but you live with it."

I think that's a pretty powerful poem to start this episode off with. We want you to know that here, the Rough Draft podcast, The York Review is a place where you are accepted no matter what identity you share. And as you hear from some of your peers on campus, we hope that you'll also feel the community surrounding you. And we will kick it off now with some of your peers.

Ben

All right. Our first guest today is Cherish Christopher. They are the current president of Lamda at YCP. Cherish, thanks for coming on and talking to us this week.

Cherish

Thank you for having me.

Ben

So why don't you start us off? What is Lambda, for those who are unfamiliar with it?

Cherish

So Lambda is our LGBTQ+ organization here at YCP. It's an organization where a lot of like LGBTQ+ people come together and kind of like socialize, get to know one another and anonymously, like make friends being that we are such a small minority--well, it can feel like we're such a small minority on this campus. It's just nice to know that you have people in your corner who are, you know, there to support you and everything. You can kind of relate it back to like a high school GSA, a little bit, I will say it's like a little bit more advanced than high school GSA with some of, like, the topics and stuff that we tackle, but overall, it's an organization that is meant to kind of spread awareness, you know, inform people on issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community and ultimately like bringing people together, helping them make friends and stuff like that, so they feel like not so alone. And although it is like a club centered around, like, LGBTQ+, right, it is not exclusive to LGBTQ+ people, so we do welcome allies to come as well, so long as they're willing to learn how to be more effective allies and such.

Sarah

Thank you so much for sharing a little bit about Lambda. Can you tell us, what is the importance of coming out for the LGBTQ+ community as a whole?

Cherish

So um, historically, you know, sexual orientation has like oftentimes been demonized is also something that has been seen as kind of like a 'hush hush' thing. It's kind of like already assumed, like from birth that you're going to be you know, cisgender and heterosexual and you're going to follow, like, a typical cis-hetero lifestyle, which is, you know, find somebody of the opposite gender or sex, get married, have kids get, you know, do the whole nine yards, but for LGBTQ+ people coming out, it's kind of like a statement in itself that kind of, like tells people that, you know, I, you know, different people out there exist and it also kind of like liberates you in a way because oftentimes, like we are so prone to like being in the closet, especially because a lot of us like, don't grow up in households where, you know, being anything different is readily,

you know, accepted. And so coming out is kind of like you not only like affirming your sexual orientation or gender identity to yourself, but also to the people around you, as well. But I think like, the main thing that coming out does is like affirm it for you. Because then like, you know, you kind of like that's like your first time actually like wearing that identity, like with pride and like you're saying it and I mean, well, I'll get into that later.

Ben

All right, for our listeners, what's some of the history around National Coming Out Day here in America?

Cherish

So I know that National Coming Out Day was kind of like started, I want to say in like the late 80s, I want to say it was like '87 or '88. It was right after the March on Washington that happen for lesbian and gay rights. And so from then on, like after that March happened, like National Coming Out Day has just been something that has been like recognized since then. It's a lot of social media, international people like posting and coming out through stories, and it also like become this thing where like, people who haven't come out before, like, that's typically their day to will they typically use that data to come out and again, like, you know, I guess solidify that identity for themselves. But overall, National Coming Out Day has just been a day for like people within the community to like, yeah, and proud and honestly talk about their experience as an LGBTQ+ person.

Ben

What would you say is the importance, specifically this year of coming out?

Cherish

So I, for me, personally, coming out is like something that I feel should be very, like personal to you, like, I am very pro, like not coming out unless it's safe for you, or honestly, unless you want to, but during a time like this coming out is important. But it's also a very scary time, right? Because like the person who is in charge of our country has like actively spoken out against like, you know, queer people, trans people, he's gone back and like changed a lot of laws and stuff like that legislation put into place to protect queer and trans people. And so it's like a very, very, very scary time, right now, if you weren't, I mean, I honestly, I cannot imagine coming out during this time. But if you were to come out during this time, like, you're kind of like taking a stand against the person who is kind of like out there to essentially oppress you, you know, and take away your rights and stuff like that, like, you are basically saying to this person, like, you know, I'm going to be myself and I'm going to be out, and I'm going to be proud about it, regardless of how you feel about me and the people within my community. So I think, you know, people coming out during this time, like, they're, they're really doing this to take a stand. And also coming out during this time, kind of, like, helps you, like, get a better idea of the people who are like, and who you should have in your circle. So coming out, you know, if you have people who are homophobic or transphobic in your circle, and you come out, you know, then those

people know that, like, Oh, you know, my friend is queer, or trans, or, you know, my sister or whoever is, you know, part of the community, it kind of like, lets them know, like, hey, like, this is not okay for something for you to be saying, you know, around me or near me being that I--well in general, but also specifically because I belong to this communities.

Sarah

And if somebody does feel comfortable coming out during this very turbulent time that we're living through, what's something that you would tell them if they're in a safe space, but they might be a little nervous about coming out?

Cherish

I would tell them that, although it seems like coming out is something that you have to do to validate your sexuality or gender identity, always remember that you don't have to come out if that's not something that you're a) ready to do, but b) like, want to do, like, I know, for me, my sexual orientation and gender identity was something that I hold, like very close to me. And so very few people actually know about it, it's more so than like, it needs to know kind of basis. And if you don't need to know them, you don't know. And so if you aren't ready to come out yet, or if you're just like not wanting to come out, just understand that your sexual orientation, or your gender identity stand like outside of you know, whether or not you've come out or not. But if you do want to come out, you know, do it in a way that you want to do it, do it in a way that feels authentic for you, don't feel pressure to do it one specific way. Just because somebody did it like really extravagantly doesn't mean that you have to do it, you know, you can just tell your close friends or just your family members, or just the person that you're dating, like, it doesn't have to be like a super extravagant thing. Like really just make it your own experience. Don't try and like craft it after somebody else's.

Sarah

And if--you have any advice you'd share with an ally who might have a friend who comes out to them, like what's ways that we can be more supportive as allies for the LGBTQ+ community and coming out?

Cherish

So every queer or trans person is different, so be mindful of that. Like, just because, you know, you've seen online that like people have come out and you know, the person that they've come out to has been super, super excited for them and like, you know, screamed and shouted for them and like told the whole world, that doesn't mean that that person wants you to do all of that for them. So just make sure you're being mindful of the way that you are reacting during these times. And also just make sure that like, you know, you're being supportive and making sure you're using as inclusive language as possible. And also feel like if somebody comes out to you, you know, your first reaction shouldn't be, I knew it, I knew it, you know, just make sure you're like creating a warm environment for that person so they feel protected, and also affirm the fact that you know, they have a safe space with you. Because just because you know, you have a

friend, that doesn't automatically like mean that you are going to you know, protect them or be a safe space for them. So really affirming that is really important as well.

Ben

Where can students find Lamda on campus?

Cherish

You can find Lamda, on campus at ycplambda@gmail.com. Or you can feel free to email me my email is cchristopher@ycp.edu. We are online pretty much for the rest of the semester due to COVID regulations and stuff like that. Yeah. And if you have any questions or anything, just feel free to let me know, I can get you the zoom link for our meetings.

Ben

Alright!

Sarah

Is there any part of your story that you'd like to share that we didn't get to go over yet?

Cherish

Um, I guess for me, like, my story is a little bit, I won't say different, because, you know, there could be people out there who kind of had like the same experience for me or as me, but I didn't really come out like fully until I was, I want to say, it was my first year here at York College, I was 2018 and I was a transfer student. And I started like, surrounding myself with friends who were like out about their sexuality and their gender identity. And I've always known that, like, you know, something wasn't right with me, or that I was just like, a little bit off. And it wasn't until like, I started surrounding myself with people who were like, out and like proud about it that actually came out. Even when I came out, I didn't come out to my family, you know, and it wasn't like a huge extravagant thing. I remember, I was just sitting in a club meeting one day, and I was like, you know, I identify as queer and I use she they pronouns and it just felt right. And so I just kept doing it. And I know, like, a lot of my friends didn't even know I hadn't been out. So like I told them like, yeah, it wasn't until, you know, that club, even though we were in that I like actually came out and like started using the words for it. So yeah, and I mean, I would just say to like, you know, coming out to my family was something I just was never comfortable with, just because I wasn't in the position to like, potentially lose family members in that at that moment. And you know, it's still like, not something that I have, like done in its entirety, like I've told, like, it's like, siblings that I feel close to. But like, as far as being completely out to my entire family, that's not something that I've done yet. And I honestly don't even know if that's something that'll happen at all. So that's kind of like why, you know, I mentioned earlier, like, if you, you know...come out to the people who you want to come out to, and if you don't want to come out to everybody, then it's not, you know, a necessity because I know that that--I felt a lot of, like, extrinsic pressure from other people to come out to validate my sexual orientation and gender

identity. And it always just felt super forced, and it made me uncomfortable. And it wasn't until like, I had a friend of mine, like kind of affirm the fact that like, I didn't have to come out to everybody for my sexual orientation and gender identity to stand that I actually like, you know, slowly started to do it. And you know, like, accepted so now like, I'm out to some people out obviously, everybody's listening to this podcast, but there's people in my life who will never know and I'm 100% okay with that. So yeah, I just feel very strongly and making coming out like your own and you really like claiming your power, like, when you do come out. That's all I have to share.

Sarah

Well, thank you so much for being with us today. We greatly appreciate you coming on and sharing your story with us.

Cherish

Yeah, no problem. Thank you guys so much for doing this and having me on.

Sarah

Okay, we're now joined by Destiny. She is a sophomore Human Services major, a member of YCP Lambda and the Disney club, and in her free time she enjoys spending time with her friends and family camping and learning new American Sign Language. Destiny, thank you so much for joining us today.

Destiny

Thank you for having me. Well, basically in the LGBT, I identify as bisexual, so I like men and women. And basically my story is in Junior Year of high school, I was closeted. I hadn't come out to nobody growing up. I always knew I was bisexual just because you know, playing with Barbies and Ken dolls, having them kiss you know, both genders both sex and then growing up. I had closeted crushes maybe on celebrities, men and women. Students. But I never really came to terms with myself, I thought maybe this was a phase or maybe this is something a normal kid goes through. And then as I got into middle school, I basically learned a little bit about LGBT, but not enough to know, hey, I identify and I'm bisexual. But basically, I went Middle School, still closeted questioning, but not as much as I got into high school. High school, my high school had an LGBT club. Basically, I had friends in there, and they told me like, what it was, what LGBT was, like the different sexual orientations. And after learning some stuff and hearing on people's stories, especially people who identify as bisexual, I'm like, hey, that sounds exactly like me. And so my friends actually invited to to join them in the club. So I went a few times, and I actually enjoyed it. But being there so many times I knew that I related to these people, I related to a bunch of people who identify as bisexual. And I knew at that time that that's what I was. That's what that was called. And that was probably like 9th grade, 10th grade of high school. So I did, I still haven't come out yet. But I was like, Hey, I'm bisexual. I know the term, I know the meaning. And that's what I am. But I'm not ready to come out yet. And so in junior year of high school, I went maybe a few weeks into the beginning of school, and

something didn't feel right. But the thing that didn't feel like was nobody knew. Nobody had an idea. I wasn't out to any of my best friends or any friends, not even my family. And something was telling me that like, I should come out, because this isn't me, this wasn't who I was. I'm not good at hiding things. And because I was hiding this, it, like ate me up every day. It killed me every day. So how I came out to my friends at school and just friends in general, I basically just, I pulled maybe one or two to the side at a time. And I would be like, Hey, I have something to tell you. I'm bisexual. And basically, I like men and women. And most of them were really supportive. I did lose a friend or two because they didn't want to be friends with someone who was LGBT and someone who liked women and men. They thought it was kind of gross. So I did lose some friends. But most of my friends I'm still friends with to this day are super supportive, super just with me and support me on this journey. And then I knew the hardest part was coming out to my family, especially my mom. Because growing up, I was always Christian, my mom was always Christian. And we've talked before about LGBT, but she didn't have like a strong opinion. She didn't hate LGBT. She didn't know a lot about it. But she also said she support them. So I was just really scared to come out to her because I didn't know what she would do. I don't know how she would react. With my anxiety, I did think she was going to kick me out. And I was going to become homeless in junior year because something was telling me and all my friends were telling me I had to come out and I knew I was ready. It's just I was scared. And I didn't know how to and I figured a way to come out was, I basically wrote a letter to my mom, probably like a two to three, maybe four page letter about me being bisexual. That's what I identify with, it's not a phase, I've learned this for so long. I hope she supports me and my journey, that I love her, and that I just I wanted her support going on with this journey. And after writing this long, long letter, I folded it up and that night I put it--I don't remember where I put it. I think I put it on a desk. And then the next morning as my mom was getting ready to take me to school, I snuck the letter into her work bag that she takes work. And basically, I went to school, normal everything and I get a text from her because she opened her bag to grab something. And she saw the letter and she wrote the letter--or she read the letter. And basically she texted me and she was telling me that I'm not homeless, I'm not going to be homeless, I'm going to live right where I always live, she still loves me and supports me. That's never going to change. She's never going to stop loving me she want to learn. She wanted to learn more about the LGBT and like what I identify with and like just stuff about like me and the LGBT. So she was definitely supportive. And I remember crying at school, because I told my friends that my mom actually supported me and loved me and I had this great support system.

Ben

And I'm glad you're able to have that kind of support from both friends and your family. What would you say is the importance of coming out, at least in your opinion, in your experience?

Destiny

Yeah. Uh, in my opinion or my experience, basically the importance of coming out is just making sure you know who you are, like making sure you feel comfortable to come out, like you feel safe and you feel comfortable and you feel ready. You don't want to feel pressured. So if you're not ready, definitely don't come out. It takes time. I know people who are maybe like 20 or

30, and just came out, and I noticed people who came out in middle school. Basically, just if you're not ready, or you don't feel safe to come out, definitely don't come out. But if you feel ready, you think you know how you want to come out, or you just know you want to come out, that it's time, definitely come out. That's the importance, is knowing when you're ready and knowing, um, that you're ready to just start your journey.

Ben

All right. Well, thank you again, for coming out and talking to us this week. I think that's a really good message to spread to our listeners. Thanks again.

Destiny

Thanks so much.

Ben

All right. Our next guest is Alex. Alex is a student here at York College who studies Art and Science, and they make beats to cope with the world. Alex, take it away.

Alex

Well, I guess it all started in like, oh, wow, I guess high school really, it kind of started before that but it was like, in middle school it never--I was still like, in the closet, I guess. I didn't--I was, I didn't really understand why I felt so different from everyone else. And then in high school, I ended up having my first girlfriend before I'd even come out as gay. And then, you know, eventually I like realized that I was queer, and was just trying to lean into like being a lesbian, because I thought that that would make me feel more comfortable. And it kind of made more sense than anything else at the time. And then when my girlfriend and I broke up, she ended up outing me to my parents. So like, I didn't get the chance to tell them myself what was going on, because she told them for me, and...so that was really hard. That was really tough to go through that. And then after that point, my parents--like because of everything that was going on with my ex, like, they kind of let it slide that I had lied to them about it. But they've never been the most accepting. And my dad, like, cried when he found out that I was gay, because he was like, 'how are you gonna pass on my genes' and all this stuff. And I was like, This is not about you at all, you know. So I struggle with coming out because my parents made it about them. And I was like, This is not about you. It's about me, like and me being gay and not straight. So like, I struggled to feel accepted by them. And I definitely took a lot of solace in my friends at the time, because they knew what was going on. And they were supportive when my parents weren't, so I owe a lot to them during that time. And then once I got to college, I actually started to realize that I was trans. And so that was another big change, like I had to come out again. I already, I'd already come out as gay, and then I had to come out as trans. And then, that's--everything is just an ongoing process, you know. Like, nothing is just one and done. You don't come out once, you come out all the time, every day to like every person that you meet. And you are always having to make these decisions about who you come out to and who you don't. Because there's a lot of people now, I've been on hormones for over a year. And I got top surgery in December

so like, in some respects, I look more like a guy now than I ever have. And that means that I pass more often. And some people think that I'm just like a 12 year old boy. And other people think that I'm like a really weird looking girl. And so that, that line that I walk is really thin and very wobbly. And everything's just kind of crazy, you know. Like coming out is so important because visibility is so important. And although there are a lot of people that can't come out, because they're not in safe situations, it's really important for people to be visible so that people like me, who are like walking this really weird line between different genders...like I don't really know what my gender is, or I just know that I prefer to express in a more masculine way. And then some people get that and some people don't. So like when we have more visibility, then it helps me to feel more comfortable going throughout the world. Because then I know that people have seen other people like me, and I don't get so many weird stares or, like, really dumb questions. There are a lot of people that ask a lot of really dumb questions, and that can be really hard to deal with. And like I'm also aware that because I'm white and because I'm trans-masc, rather than trans-femme, like I experience some privilege because of that and like, as much as I struggle, like, it could...I don't know. I know that people who are people of color, and it's just...it's just different. Race plays into this too, and um, it's important to recognize how these things impact everybody differently. And it's not just about my experience, it's about everyone's experience. So like, we all owe it to each other to be outspoken when we can to try and pave the way for others, and to make sure that everybody is accepted in the community, and not just those people that get seen in the media. Because even though even though queer people are supposed to be really accepting, sometimes there's still, there's still discrimination, because people, as people start to be in the media more often, it ends up being a lot of like, thin, white people. And then that can lead to like some exclusion. Like, if you're not white, and you're not thin, and you're not masc or whatever, then it's like, well, you are making us look bad. You hear that sometimes, they'll like, they'll lash out at others, because they're not like fitting this box. And queerness is not about fitting in a box, it's about being who you are, and being proud of who you are. And when any sort of community is...doesn't allow that, then there's something wrong with that community. So coming out is really important because being queer should be for everybody, not just for some people. So yeah, I don't know, it's a marathon, not a sprint. Like...because I'm trans, um, I got kicked out of housing this summer, twice. And I don't talk to my parents that much, because they're not very accepting. And so stuff like that sucks. It sucks a lot. And it's stuff that you don't necessarily talk about with people, because you don't want to have to explain why that stuff happens. And it sucks to be ostracized from your family, just because they wanted you to be someone different. And people who are straight and people who are cis, just don't get that the same way. And that's why it's really important that we have stuff like coming out so that queer people have a chance to talk about these experiences. And for straight and cis people to listen to them. That's one of the most important things, is that coming out isn't just about us being proud, it's about us having a chance to have an audience and having people actually listen to what we have to say.

Sarah

Thank you so much for sharing. That's very powerful. And sorry to hear that, like the struggles, but I'm sure some of our audience can relate to things that you've said. And hopefully it will give them a sense of courage and strength. What's something you would tell, like, an ally of the

LGBTQ+ community, during like coming out, that they could help be a better ally, for the community?

Alex

Just to listen to people, like, listen when people are talking, and then don't, don't trample over those voices. Be willing to, like admit, where you have bias and like, where you might be wrong, but also be willing to fight for your friends. Like, that's one of the biggest things that can be frustrating as a trans person is when I tell somebody that I'm trans, and then later when I need an ally, that person disappears, and they aren't there when I need them. So it's really hard sometimes to trust people, because that happens a lot that like people that say they're with you don't show up when they need to. People have an opportunity to like, use the right pronouns and speak up if someone is misgendered. And they, they really don't. And in any other situation, like people have chances to help queer people and they choose not to, because it's easier not to. So like, put your money where your mouth is, and like, help your friends when they need it. Because that stuff matters. And it matters the most to those people that need your help. And like, we see that and we appreciate it every time. It never goes unappreciated when someone is an ally. So like, even if it's hard you have to try. And even if you try and you miss, it's better than doing nothing.

Sarah

Thank you so much for coming on and sharing we greatly appreciate it. Up next we have Jaida and she can touch her tongue to her nose! Jada, thank you so much for being here with us today!

Jada

Thank you. Yeah, so my name is Jada. Um, I'm gay. So I was going to tell my story about my experience with my dad. Um, so this past summer, we did a lot of fishing together, and we have this little boat, that's a two seater boat with a little motor that's run with a battery. So we're out on the lake, and we get all the way to the other end of the lake. And as we come back and start coming back to shore, the battery dies. And my dad realizes, oh, he never charged it. So we have to paddle all the way back to the other end of the lake. So within those hours of us paddling back on this big boat, it took us so many hours to get back. We got on the topic of love interests, and how that was for me at college and stuff. So he asked me like, "oh, are there any boys in college that you're interested in?" I said, "No, not really." And then he said, "so what about girls or there girls?" And I said, "Well, kind of, and he looked at me, and he wasn't upset or anything." He looked at me and he said, "you know, if a girl were on this boat with you, I bet she would remember to charge the battery." So he just totally thought it was the funniest thing. And he could tell I was, like, getting emotional, because it's just like weird how he was so casual about everything. He didn't seem to care--he cared, but he didn't really 'care.' Like, he wasn't upset or anything like that. So that was super cool. He just rubbed my back and he was like, you know, I'm so proud of you. And I love you no matter what. So yeah, that's kind of how that went with my dad. That was really good.

Sarah

That's so nice to hear an encouraging story of a parent being supportive towards you. And it wasn't, you had to come and tell him, he kind of just like was like...

Jada

Yeah, he almost asked me, which was kind of interesting. It's almost like he knew, he already knew. And he just kind of wanted to pull it out of me. Amazing. Thank you so much for sharing your story today.

Ben

Oh, sure. Yeah, that was a really good story. What does coming out mean to you?

Jada

I guess it's...to me, it's important, because it's something you want to share with your loved ones, like your family and your friends. You know, you'd want to share those important things about who you are as a person and who you love, and it shouldn't be something you have to hide. So I think coming out is like a celebration, it's a good thing, and it's something everyone should be able to do. And what is one thing that you might tell someone who might be nervous about coming out? I mean, I think for everyone, they're nervous, at least their first time coming out to somebody, but the more you do it, the easier it gets, especially when you have those great experiences like I had with my dad, it just made it so much easier. Because I said, You know what, if my dad accepts me, then why should I care what other people think--random people that don't really matter in my life? So yeah.

Sarah

Well, again, thank you so much for being here. Thanks for sharing your story and words of encouragement to other fellow YCP students. We're so glad you were able to join us today. Thank you. Okay, we are joined by Beck. Beck is a non-binary LGBTQ+ artist and activist, they spend their free time when not in class, crocheting cute plushies and scarves, some with pride themes. They are constantly working to educate students and faculty at YCP about LGBTQ+ issues to make them more aware and the campus and community a safer place for everyone. Beck, thank you for so much for joining us today.

Beck

I'm happy to be here. Um, so basically, when I was in high school, I started doing research about different kinds of like LGBT identities and learning about what transgender means and stuff like that, um, and I was kind of going back and forth with like, over it with myself for a good couple weeks. And I finally realized like, Okay, well, if you're looking up about this stuff, and you're like, constantly trying to get more information about it, there's probably something there and you should look into that. So through doing my own research online, because my school

didn't educate us about LGBT stuff at all, they basically were just like, "yeah, gay people exist, but we don't have to talk about them." So I kind of relied on my own research and trying to just figure out what was going on with me, and I came to the conclusion that I was actually a trans male. And I kind of went with that for a couple weeks. And then I realized that like, it doesn't necessarily matter how you present, as long as you're kind of like good with yourself and you kind of understand yourself and I did a bit more introspection and thinking and I realized that the label non-binary fit me better. And the kind of sub label under non-binary that I identify with is called gender-fluid and I feel like that really fits me, because the definition is basically someone whose gender can change depending on like, time and situation. And I definitely relate to that because when I'm in public, I'm kind of trying to just like, hide away and not let people see me, and in that state and kind of like what I refer to as like "the blob", so like, no gender, don't look at me don't perceive me. But then in other cases, like for with my partner, I'm okay with being called his wife when we get married, and that doesn't hurt me in the way that like 'she/her' pronouns do when someone, like, misgenders me, and there are still other times where I'm comfortable going with 'he/him' pronouns. But yeah, so that label kind of fits me and how I view the world through my own little weird lens.

Sarah

Thank you so much for sharing. I'm sure, um, it's very important for all of our listeners to hear about gender-fluid, I know it's not something especially that I have much experience hearing about. So definitely your education, I know I've had classes with you before, is really important for not just professors, but also for all students on campus to become more familiar with using correct pronouns for people and not misgendering people. In your experience, what is the importance of coming out for you?

Beck

Um, for me, it was kind of just like, letting the pressure go, like letting the pressure off my own shoulders of trying to fit into what society told me I had to be, um, I know a lot of people work on like, how they present themselves and like what it means to be a man or what it means to be a woman and what the stereotypes that we should drop are. And for me, it wasn't even necessarily about I can't be a stereotypical girl. It's just I don't feel happy being a girl in any sense. So it's kind of, for me, like the label non-binary allows me to just be Beck! And that's the ideal. I don't have to have any other labels other than Beck.

Sarah

Really cool. Well, we're glad you were able to join us today, Beck, and share your story with us. We greatly appreciate it. And I'm sure our listeners will appreciate it also.

Beck

Alright. Thanks!

Sarah

Okay, we are now joined by Missy. She's a junior Theatre Major, Minor in art administration, and is also partially deaf in one ear and has six tattoos. Missy, thank you so much for joining us today!

Missy

Yeah, thanks for inviting me here today, guys. Um, so I just...openly before I kind of tell my story, I am a bisexual woman, um, but more so towards the pansexual part of 'bi.' I just kind of love everybody. And so I've known for a long time that I wasn't straight that I was on that I was within the community. But I have had a really hard time coming out to direct families such as my mother, and almost everybody else in my family knew way before my mother knew. So it was kind of a shock when she found out. She didn't believe me at first, she said that I was kind of going through like a college phase because I told her as a freshman, I came out. I was seeing a female when I told her and it was someone that she knew personally and really liked as being within my community at college. But she didn't believe that I had feelings for her in the way that I did. So that was the first time I tried to come out that I came out to my mother and she completely rejected it. And she's my best friend. So it was really hard hearing that from her. So I kind of just let it be for a little while, kind of thought about it for almost another year. And then towards the end of the spring semester of Sophomore Year, I pulled her aside I was like I really need to talk to you, and I really want you to listen and be open-minded because she's a spiritualist, so she's very open about everything. So that's why I had the hardest time with it because she's very open and very accepting of everybody but wasn't accepting of her own daughter. So I pulled her aside and I told her I wanted her to keep an open mind to that and make sure that she knew that that's how I view her. And I just wanted her to stay open and hold her comments or anything like that until I was finished talking. And so basically I was just like I know that I already told you this in freshman year, and I know that you don't believe me, but I have known that I've I'm bisexual since I was probably twelve, and I'm almost 21 now. So I really want you to accept me as who I am on more of that level, because you love me as your daughter already, but I need you to accept me fully. And I need you to be there to support me fully. And I need that, because of the things that, you know, I've gone through in my life, this is one of the biggest things that I need you to know. And I was expecting it to be an argument again, and I was expecting it not to go positively. But she took a couple minutes to really like digest what I told her. And she was like, "Okay, this is who you are, this is how you want to be, and you can't help but this is how you were born. It's part of your brain chemistry." So she accepts me now and is very open with it. Um, she's very protective of me now, when it comes to my sexuality, because we do have family that is anti-LGBT, and when I fully came out and fully like I posted it on social media that I was open, and I had certain family members attack me and call me a disgrace to my family. And my mother came to my rescue and protected me and still has protected me. And it's been, it's like a weight got lifted off my chest since then. And I'm just really thankful that I have the family that I have, for the most part. And I'm really thankful that my mom is who she is.

Missy

And I'm just really thankful that I have the family that I have for the most part and I'm really thankful that my mom is who she is. That's very powerful.

Sarah

Thank you so much for sharing with us, and for the rest of the York College community, your story,.

Ben

Yeah, that was a very, very powerful story you shared with us. Thanks for coming on. What would you say is the importance for coming out, at least in your opinion?

Missy

So in my opinion coming out, is something that not everybody can do, or feels that they can do just because of how they grew up, or family or friends or anything like that. But it's part of you, like it's a huge part of you! Your sexuality is pretty much what makes you, other than your personality and your beliefs. And if you can't, if you can't tell people or you feel like you can't tell people because you don't feel safe, then that is a whole other thing, but expressing who you are truly is something that when you do it, it'll feel like you're a completely different person. Because now people know more about you and know a huge part about you that you've been hiding. And as someone who hid my sexuality from someone who means everything to me, and now being open, and her accepting it, I've changed a lot. And I've become a lot like more accepting towards other things. And I've, in a way gotten wiser and stronger. So coming out is something that I hope everybody can do, at some point in their lives, but they all people also need to remember that you need to come out in your own time, don't ever feel forced to come out, because then it's not going to have the same effect as you want it to have.

Ben

I think that's a really good message to show people. You know, wait until you're comfortable doing it. Just want to thank you again for coming on. That was a really powerful story you shared and I know it probably was painful before your mom accepted you. But I'm glad, now things are a lot better between the two of you.

Missy

Yeah.

Ben

Thanks for coming on.

Missy

Yeah, of course. Thanks for having me.

Ben

All right. Our next guest is Mickey Dawson. Mickey is a grad student here at York studying Music Industry Studies. He is the secretary for Lancaster Pand is a bird enthusiast. He has two pet parrots. That's pretty interesting.

Mickey

Yeah. So I guess I get to just go ahead and tell my coming-out story. Um, so mine was kind of unique. I never really came out as bisexual. Like, I kind of just, it was something I knew. And I didn't really bother to tell people about it. I did tell my mom, my senior year of high school. And this this is, I asked a girl out to prom because at that time, I was still presenting female. My mom was like "Oh, do you like girls?" I was like, "Yeah, okay. Yeah, sure." And she was like, "but you haven't dated any girls or you haven't kissed any girl. So therefore you can't be bisexual." And I was like, "not your decision, whatever." So like, that was never like a big deal for me. But coming out as trans was a much bigger deal. And it's kind of a continuous process. Like I find I probably never go more than a month or two without having to disclose to someone that yes, I'm transgender. But the first time I came out, I was...to my girlfriend. And it was an interesting experience. We had been dating for about three months. And I was like, Hey, I think I want to be a guy. And she went, hey, I think I want to be a girl. So it was the first time either of us came out to each other. And then we kind of we...we're still, I mean, we live together now, that was almost three years ago. And since then, it's kind of been this, like, you know, having to come out to my parents, and their different reactions. And even now, like my dad's better at using my name, but can't really use he/him pronouns for me, but my mom can call me her son, but is still a little iffy on using my name. But it's just kind of like a continual process, you know, I had to...then I had to come out to doctors, and then I had to come out to different doctors and different therapists, and then I had to come out to my school so I could get a different name on my degree. And then I was at community college and then transferred to a four-year school and then I transferred to York to finish up my four year degree because I didn't...the other school wasn't a good fit for me. But so then it was, you know, coming out to that set of teachers going, "Hey, I use he/him pronouns." And then you know, I transferred to a different school, and I have to come out to a whole different set of teachers saying, "Hey, I use he/him pronouns." And I've definitely gotten a whole gambit of reactions. Some of the teachers have been like, "okay, yeah, whatever." And some of them are like, they don't get it, or they're not very good at the pronouns. And then I think the thing I get the most is like, what was what was your real name? Like, what was your name before this, and I legally changed my name in 2018. It doesn't matter to anyone. I mean, even administration has tried to get my dead name when it doesn't like it's not the name of my birth certificate is not the name on my driver's license. Like, it doesn't matter. And I feel like that's something people don't always understand. Like, you can legally change your name. I mean, people do it. When they get married. They change their last name, all the time so and I feel like people don't always get their head wrapped around that you can legally change your first name as well. And I do, I do still have to use it for like background checks, but that's literally it. And even then if you don't disclose it, they can still figure it out because your social security number stays the same. So yeah, I guess I don't have like a super crazy coming out story is just, it's like a continuous process.

Sarah

That's very interesting. I know some of our other guests today have shared that it's more of a continuous process. I'm in the struggles with that going off of that, like what's something you would tell somebody who feels comfortable coming out, but might be a little nervous at the time?

Mickey

Come out to the people that you feel comfortable coming out to first. And I definitely wouldn't recommend first coming out on social media. I had been on hormones for almost for over six months, and I had had top surgery by the time I came out on social media and I I kind of started small. I started, you know, I started with my girlfriend, and then my friends, like, instead of just doing it, like one big band aid, my mom wanted me to come out to my entire extended family all at once. That's, you know, eight aunts and uncles, a very large extended family like 30-40 plus people. And I was just like, "Nope, I'm gonna do the family members that I know are more accepting first, and then we'll deal with the ones that I don't see as much are the ones that have said problematic things in the past." So yeah, just baby steps, and come out with those that you know, to those you'll be supported, who will support you first.

Sarah

And I know in your intro, you said about being the secretary of Lancaster Pride. Can you tell us a little bit about like Lancaster Pride, and what you guys might have coming up or...?

Mickey

Yeah, so Lancaster Pride is the nonprofit organization that puts on a yearly pride festival in Lancaster City, kind of for the whole, whole county, I am actually relatively new to the organization. I got voted on as secretary in March, so kind of right before the world shut down. And then the world shut down. And, uh, we are actually hosting a virtual event on October 24. We're running a virtual private event, we've had members of the community send us video content that we're then going to share on I think we're going to be streaming it on YouTube and Twitch, you can check out the Facebook page, links to pride in our website, links to pride can't remember if it's .com or .org as once again, I'm kind of new, but we've been putting a lot of effort of trying to still have that sense of community that a pride festival creates without being able to be together because pride normally draws a couple thousand people and we can't have anywhere near that amount right now. I would say I'm really bummed we can't have an in-person event. I actually have never been to Lancaster, Pride, I'm not from Lancaster, I'm from Frederick Maryland. I've been to pride festivals in Maryland and DC, so I'm really bummed that I don't get to experience Lancaster Pride in person. But reaching out and connecting with people virtually is different. But I still feel like it kind of counts. I like I think we'll have a successful event. And it's a way to...for there to still be community interaction while keeping people safe. And it makes it a little bit more accessible. And I'll be trying to make sure we have subtitles available and keeping it relatively family friendly. Just so we can have a strong sense of community even in a time where you know, you can't really have more than 10 people together.

Sarah

That's really cool. Hey, well, we'd like to thank you for coming on and sharing your story today. And for being a part of this. Thank you!

Ben

All right, that was a lot of really good information. And we got some awesome guests this week.

Sarah

That's definitely a very powerful message each one of them shared. As you can see, there's many different ways to come out. Each one had a very different story to share with all of us this week. Also some even if you're not part of the LGBTQ plus community some advice for allies, but especially if you are a member of this community, lots of information for on campus resources, off campus events, especially now during a pandemic where community might not feel as much of a connecting force and it might be harder to make those good strong ties and feel comfortable coming out. You can check out Lancaster Pride, you can check out Lambda on campus. All of the information for that will be in the description box. Also check out some stuff from the York Review. Beck wrote an article--um they were on earlier--for the York Review. Also the print edition came out, that poem we read at the beginning by Taylor is in the print edition. There's also some other great content from LGBTQ+ artists in here. If you're looking for a copy of this, we have very many. there's not just LGBTQ+ art on, we do feature quite a few art artists from the LGBTQ+ community we really hope that you maybe learn something new gained some information.

Ben

I think I definitely learned a lot. And I think one of the biggest takeaways for me was coming out isn't like a one and done kind of thing. It's like Mickey said, it's an ongoing process where you come out to some people and then more people who might not be as accepting of it. And you just work yourself until you're comfortable enough to come out to everyone.

Sarah

Definitely. It's something that of being cisgender and straight. It's something that I don't think of a lot because I think we take for granted as people like people just as Cherish said, assume that cisgender and straight role where people in this community, that's not the case. So I think something to take away is, if some of you are a member of the community, as many of the people today on the podcast have said, coming out to those who you feel comfortable with at first...you know, maybe you're a little nervous or something, definitely using those close friends in that community connection. And then also for advocate something being that support and standing up by your friends, even when times are difficult, or it might not be convenient for you, making sure to remember those things.

Ben

So, this week's episode was a little bit longer, but I think it's a really important episode for the listeners. I want to thank all of our guests for coming on this week. And I also want to remind all of our listeners that if you have any art or writing that you want to share, you can submit it to the York Review at yorkreview@gmail.com or head over to our website, YorkReview.org, where you can fill out a Google form and submit your work. We want to have our print episode, I think I'll list in November. That's the date that we're thinking of right now.

Sarah

We'll be accepting submissions until November.

Ben

We also like to thank the York Radio Station, WVYC for letting us use your studio to record it's really made a lot of a difference for us.

Sarah

Go give a like to this episode, our comment, or follow the York Review on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, we've got some great content coming out. Thanks, guys!

Ben

Thanks, everyone for listening. Our next episode will be in two weeks where we talk to York College's Doctor Olney about the literature and film of horror. It's a nice spooky theme for a Halloween episode. So we hope you guys enjoy that one as well. Thanks!