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Interview with Amanda Yabes and Bethany Smith

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Interview with Amanda Yabes (Y) and Bethany Smith (B) October 25, 1998

S -- testing 1, 2, 3....testing 1,2,3,4,5 okay....This is Suzanne Nienaber, Katie Hitchcock, um we're here interviewing Bethany Smith and Amanda Yabes at Amanda's house in Mt. Vernon, on Gay St., South Gay St., 7A, and what time is it?

K -- It's around 3:30

S --It's around 3:30

B -- actually, no 2:30

S -- oh yeah, there's a time change so it's 2:30, so now if everyone could just say their names so we can like, figure those out later on

K --Kate Hitchcock

Y -- Amanda Yabes

B -- Bethany Smith

S -- cool, now...um

B -- just bring the cat over, balance it on the cat

S -- wait let's try to like, point the microphone a little bit towards you. Oh what is that? Which part do you think it is?

K -- Oh my god....

B -- good enough. I'm assuming you cannot transcribe this completely, all of it.

S -- Well actually I think we have to transcribe everything, so anyway. I think we should just start out with some basic biographical information, like where are you from, how did you end up here, that kind of stuff.

Y -- Um, want me to start?

B -- go for it, you're story's better.

Y -- Well, I am pretty much originally from Michigan. Um, and uh, came to Kenyon in fall of '91, and was a student here until i graduated in '95, and then started working for the college. And in terms of how I got involved in the Mt. Vernon community, as apart from the Gambier community, from my freshman summer on I was staying on campus every summer, and there's a lot more interaction between the locals and the Kenyon students during the summer than at any

other time, and so I ended up kind of getting involved with long running friendships with folks around here, from that point on. So at this point I've been involved in social groups that were primarily local for about the past 7 years.

B -- I got to Kenyon a couple years ago. I'm a junior, um and when I was a freshman I, I ended up regularly having, like flirtatious conversations with women despite the fact that I constantly denied that I had any interest in them whatsoever.

Y -- But also you were pretending that you weren't trying to seduce me while pretending to try to seduce me.

B -- I figure, I've stayed here all my summers too, and that is how you get to know people, yes.

S -- What did you do during the summers?

B -- Worked paint crew.

Y -- I worked paint crew my first summer and then for ICS every summer afterwards. Paint crew's an interesting, like, melting pot.

B -- It's usually a couple Kenyon students and mostly locals who are like kids of, this summer we had a couple professor's kids working with us and such so...It's always amusing.

S -- Um, what we want to talk about is, first of all, your coming out experience. Like when did it happen, who did you come out to, that kind of stuff.

Y -- Um, god I, the odd thing about me coming out is I never quite noticed that I was doing it at the time. I just kind of looked around one day and realized "oh, gee, I guess I'm out". It was kind of, the first time I acknowledged to myself in any like, particularly clear-cut way, that I was decidedly not straight, was my sophomore year, when my best friend then and I, decided to, and we were pretty definitely attracted to each other.

S -- was she a Kenyon student?

Y -- Yeah, um, she was a freshman that year. And um, I don't know. From then I just, I was in a social group that was really, pretty damn cool with just about anything anyway. Um my entire social group at Kenyon pretty much revolved around Peeps and Peep-type folks, who really weren't gonna give a shit. And so, there was never any real stress about coming out or not coming out -- it was just something that kinda came up in conversations and etc. Um, as far as like family, I don't remember exactly when I got around to mentioning it to my parents, but it was very anti-climactic. I was having a conversation with my mom and i said, you know something along the lines of, "yeah, and I'm bi." And she's like "yeah, we kind of figured." My grandmother was whole-heartedly positive about the entire thing. When she was asking me about what stuff I was involved in at Kenyon, and I said something about proaction and she was like "wait, there was this great article about Candice Gingrich in the newspaper the other day, let

me find it for you.” And she ran off and went and found me all these like, great articles and such. And she has since then, like always seals letters and things with rainbow stickers and sends little pins that say ‘love makes a family’ and stuff. And constantly asks about how my girlfriend is doing. Um, I think she’s always been like, hard-core hippy-liberal. Like involved in all kinds of protests like handcuffing herself to things and stuff like that, so, she grew up within my family, I think. And uh, the other members of my family, my dad’s dad who’s still alive and my mom’s dad who’s divorced from my grandmother and has been for close to fifty years. Um, I don’t know whether they know or not. I haven’t specifically had a any conversations with them about it, but then my family’s not real closed-mouthed, so I’m kind of assuming that they may know something. Um, and

B -- The only one in my family that I mentioned it to was Rachel.

S -- you’re sister?

B -- My baby sister. She’s not -- my baby sister. She’s almost 15. Uh, she told me I was a freak, after our conversation. But my parents would have a heart attack.

S -- So they have no idea,...

Y - My brother is very happy to have resident freak in the family to tell stories about to his college friends.

S -- how old is he?

Y -- uh, he just, he’s 19 now i guess?

B -- She guesses..

Y -- I’m pretty sure, I think so. And then my Yabesest brother is 12 and he’s really cool about it too. Uh, he’s just kinda vaguely puzzled. Um, but it doesn’t seem to puzzle anybody in family much more than anything else about my life. So.....

B -- I didn’t come out of the closet, I fell out of the closet. Um, no....randomly kind of. It comes from hanging out with her. It’s all her fault. It is. She’s a horrible influence. Um, well I don’t know if you could call it her fault, but, um there were always very odd sorts of people that I was forced to associate with as a result of her. Um, and I don’t know, it’s it’s the more that you just have something around in your life, you know like, I mean God, we’re surrounded by sex in this house just in general. Like books with porn up there, you know

Y -- Books, books, there’s about three more over there, then there’s the 5 stacks over there.

B -- But so, the more you have something around, you just get used to talking about it, hearing about it and such, and -- is there anything we don’t talk about?

Y -- no.

B -- No., Um and so, you kinda get used to the idea and it stops seeming, it stops seeming like something that you're just aware of and something that you understand. And I don't know. It kind of wasn't too much of a jump from there into like, 'hmm, that would be a good idea' to 'hmm, yes actually this really is a good idea'.....

S -- so when did the transition happen for you?

B -- Kind of over a long period of time. Um, we, she and I really messed with heads of one of my boyfriends my freshman summer because we were, we had an inflatable pool on the floor called the Nest, and she and I, we were kind of fooling around, and we made John come and get in the nest with us. And he said "you want me to come in there?" and we're like 'yeah'. "Are you gonna keep doing that?" We're like, 'yeah', and he's like "but you want me to come in there?" "Yes" "But you're still gonna keep doing that" 'yeah...that would be the point.' And we were always naked; that really disturbed our neighbors.

Y -- That continually disturbs just about everyone in our lives.

B -- It's not, I don't know. For me it's not really an issue about like, like what you are or anything, like labeling, so much as just like, what parts of the whole range of experience that you choose to enjoy. And just, I think she and I are just really comfortable with each other.

S -- apparently...

B -- The fact that we don't wear clothes.....

Y --I'm, we're both considerably more clothed than we normally are, actually.

B-- She wore pants, which is a big step.

Y -- yep.

S -- you dressed up for the occasion..

Y -- But for me, when I was at Kenyon, I was, when I was a student at Kenyon I was pretty involved in Queer Action and ALSO and things like that, and in terms of identity, um, I seemed to more strongly than a lot of bi women that I know, identify primarily with the uh, with the queer community rather than the straight community. Um, that is very definitely my, my primary most-comfortable community. Um, and I very decidedly consider myself queer. Um, and that's been a pretty large part of my life because of what I'm interested in going into in terms of what I'd like to end up studying at some point, and getting a masters in sociology or sexology and looking at sexual identity communities and how they interact and function together and stuff. So that's really a major train of thought in my life, and my academic interests and my personal involvement in it have gotten very involved in each other. Uh, so it tends to be more central for me

than it seems to be for a lot of people. Um, but that's more a matter of career interest and things like that than simply that that identity is necessarily central to anything in my life.

B -- Well I mean sex is one of the best ways to learn about yourself. No, it really is. And so the more, the broader your experience the more different sides of yourself you learn about, if that makes any sense.

Y -- Does this sound like we're trying to convert?
[laughter].....

S -- But do you guys feel like you actively convert people, or,

B -- Never intentionally, but I think being around us can force one to broaded.....

Y -- No, we never intentionally do, I don't think, or at least I never intentionally to, but I've also been in situations that many people have declared would not have happened if I weren't around, um....

B -- Well,yeah, but the same's been said of me. Even though it's a lie. I firmly maintain that this is a lie. I've never instigated anything.

Y -- No, uhhuh...

B -- Anyway, did you have another question?

S -- Yeah, yeah, I wanted to move into the Mt. Vernon scene...what are the pros and cons?

Y -- We've both got slightly different experiences with Mt. Vernon, since mine goes back a lot further.

B -- Well there was -- we both know, uh, Lisa. Who used to terrorize all the boys on paint crew.

Y -- well see I knew Lisa because I knew Natalie. Well, Lisa and I, -- Ok.

B -- There's sort of a everybody knows everybody feel to Mt. Vernon, kinda the same way how it is to Kenyon.

Y -- boy, howdy...

B -- it's kind of like, you can always trace somebody through somebody that you know.

Y -- Through somebody you know and you're related to. Like a number of people I know who are cousins of this person, or like cousins of that person, etc. It's uh,

B -- Joe and Chad are distant cousins, do you know how scary that is?

Y -- I know. Um

B -- These are two male friends. Friends, yes...

Y -- Friends....Uh, but uh, the first folks that I remember hanging out with that were locals that identified in anyways, like gay, lesbian, bi, were some of the random, like, punk kids from around here. And that was probably...I think part of that was at least the summer after my freshman year. Um, I knew two or three folks then that I was hanging out with pretty regularly, who identified at various points along that continuum. Um, and my sophomore year I had kind of this ongoing flirtation with a local girl who was very decidedly out. But I think it had also gotten her kicked out of her house.

S -- How old was she?

Y -- oh, she was 17, and i was 18 at the time.

S -- was she in high school?

Y -- um, either she was or she'd just dropped out. Um, I know she's since gone on to college, and I thought she has a daughter that she just gave birth to, well a year ago now, I guess.

B -- Yack yack yack.

Y -- Um, but uh, so that was kind of my first interaction with somebody who was very definitely like, dealing with being out in Mt. Vernon. Um, 'cause a lot of the kids who, are out to various extents, it's more of a kind of, within their group of friends, and it's not particularly a primary identity in their lives. It's just kind of one of those things that randomly happens. Um, and so it's much less of an identity issue. Whereas, at least with this person, it was much more of an identity issue. I knew it was partially because she was lesbian and not bi. Um, or at least very strongly identified that way at that time.

B -- Most of the women that I've met that are lesbian or bi in Mt. Vernon are, are pretty like, big, tough, loud girls. They, the ones that I've met tend to be fairly open and, just thoroughly ready to beat your ass if you have anything to say about it. Lisa scared all the boys on paint crew.

Y -- Oh yeah.

B -- She would, she would just tell off...

Y -- Lisa was dating Natalie, last summer I guess it was, uh, not this past summer -- the summer before last. And that was how, Lisa was working with her on paint crew and I'd known Natalie from before, and so I ended up meeting Lisa which was cool. And actually, we haven't gotten ahold of her yet -- we have her number, she's home.

B -- You never tell me anything!

Y -- I'm sorry

B -- whore.

Y -- She, she left her number at my desk. But uh,

S -- Do you feel like, um, that maybe gay women in particular here have to be particularly defensive about their sexuality?

Y -- actually, it's easier in general to be a lesbian or bi woman in Mt. Vernon than to be a gay man or a bi man. Um, my male friends that have been --I have many fewer male friends who'll publically acknowledge involvements with other men, that live around here. And the few that do have had lots of bad shit happen in their lives. One of my friends lost his best paying job that way. He was working in care for the developmentally disabled, and basically they decided they didn't like him working there because he was gay, and they went through a whole bunch of bullshit to get rid of him.

S -- really..Did he fight it at all?

Y -- Um, he just had a bunch of major shit go on his life, and didn't have the energy to.

B -- Well Tommy used to get hassled all the time walking around in that little purple skirt with dogs -- no butterflies,

Y -- butterflies. Um, my exhousemate and one of my close friends, and one of her close friends - -Tom, is, pretty frequently dresses in drag. On a very regular basis. The only time I ever had high heels in my house that fit me was when Tom was living here.

S -- Like on a daily basis, or...like when he went out?

Y -- Pretty close to, depending on his mood. Um, but uh, he got hassled a lot, and

B -- You'd get hassled a lot if you were even with him.

Y -- yeah.

B -- which was annoying.

Y -- in my experience, one of the things that was really odd -- About two years ago i guess, I was hanging out with my girlfriend's sister, and we were out at one of her friend's houses, and uh, uh boy, it was interesting, interesting and disturbing, um, but uh, we were hanging out there. And they all knew that I was Jamie's girlfriend. They had no problem with me being by, never even came up in conversation, though probably Jamie.....But I heard more horrendously racist statements in that -- (?) just really bad stuff. But I got in an argument with somebody about whether Hitler was right or not.

S -- Oh my god. That was here?

Y -- Not at my place, but I was at their place.

B -- You end up having conversations like that.

Y -- And it seems -- this is purely my own opinion on the matter -- but it seems that problems with homophobia in Mt. Vernon are going away faster than problems with race. Uh, particularly in my generation of kids, because you're going to get people who are queer in some way or another popping up in every population group. Um, and so, there's some degree in which you're kinda forced to deal with it on a daily basis. Um, whereas, you don't regularly get black babies born into white families, and so there's still much greater segregation there, and the racism is a big issue in Mt. Vernon. But I was really, always somewhere in my little liberal brain, like, not being racist was one of the steps that came before not being homophobic. I would just, I really messed with my head to see them reversed. Um, and uh, so it was, that was an odd experience. Um, it was a really uncomfortable one. But uh, you know a lot of the people that I've known locally that uh, I've talked with about my relationship with my girlfriend and stuff, basically, it's pretty easy to fall into kind of the role of town eccentric in some way or another. Where if you're a member of the community you pretty much get away with being as much of a freak as you want to. They will not accept outside freaks. No good. Um, and so, you will hear a lot of really negative statements and really harsh, um, accusations about you know, being gay is wrong, etc.etc....But when it comes down to it, in terms of family relationships and things, there frequently is a good deal of acceptance.

B -- But you'll also hear really strange comments, like, like I've heard people say, when the subject came up, "oh yeah, I have a friend who's a fag".. You know, where they're perfectly aware that it exists, but they can't seem to like, stop using negative terminology for it, even if they...It's still a very pervasive attitude of negativity.

Y --yeah, um, but it functions very differently in terms of how it's described linguistically in conversations and things like that, than it does in terms of practical issues of how people interact with other people. Um, and

B -- It's not so much any kind of political correctness, it's just being forced to deal.

Y -- Um, and there's, there's not really any shortage of people in the Mt. Vernon area who are gay or lesbian and at least out about it to some extent. Like, out about it to the point where I'm aware of that population. Um,

B -- I think you'd get a different answer though, if you asked somebody who just wasn't part of this particular bunch that we happen to know. It's a very widespread bunch, but it's still, there's kind of a, it's still kind of a....

Y -- For the most part I've hung out with all the kids who didn't fit in in the Mt. Vernon high school scene. I mean, that was a lot of the...

B -- Well that's because those are the ones that come out to Kenyon and join the Peeps and such.

Y -- Yeah. Um, so

B -- If you can't get accepted, join the Peeps.

Y -- but yeah, it really varied from social group to social group. Um, but there are outlets within this community for some level of acceptance. Um, it sometimes may involve changing your entire group of friends, though. Um,...

K -- Do you have any kind of activities, places you can go?....

B -- We go to the Lion's Den.

Y -- I don't think that counts.

S -- What do you do there?

B -- the Lion's Den is the local,

Y -- Well, not really local, it's like 30 miles away. Um..

B -- It's the closest thing to local porn and sex toys and such.

Y -- We just have fun going in there and really disturbing all the guys who just don't wanna deal with the fact that we could possibly be in there.

B -- Lots of middle-aged men, kind of giving us weird looks as we walk around like, "ooh look -- that's a pretty dildo" They get a little stressed (?).

Y -- But uh, in terms of like, no -- if you want to find a gay club or a gay bar or anything like that, you go to Columbus. Columbus has a huge scene. Columbus is incredibly, incredibly gay-friendly. Um, I think that's probably part of what keeps people around here sane. Um, is that it's not that far away and there's a lot to do. Um, and a lot of folks tend to move to Columbus, when they move away from home. Um, so... and a lot of people that I've known over the years have moved away from here. Um, a lot of them are not the ones who stuck around and did the next generation living in Mt.Vernon thing. Um, they're all over the country at this point. So, one of the guys I knew, was off at art school, ...(?)

B -- It's always kind of scary when that happens to people.

Y -- He turned hard-core fundamentalist real fast. Um, yeah, but I don't know. I've been lucky because I've been able to move back and forth between the various communities, I mean I have a social community in Columbus that I hang out with, at various points, and feel comfortable in that community. I know people there, and...

B -- I went with her once. They were really nice.

Y -- Um, and uh, so that was day that I was attacked by that strawberry.

K -- What?

Y -- We were doing an ice cream social, and i got strawberry all over.

B -- She's a very deluded person.

Y -- But uh, anyway yeah i generally..if I want to do things that are specifically gay or lesbian stuff I go to Columbus.

B -- Well, yeah, but there was that, that party that you and I were at where we created such a stir.

Y -- Yeah but that was a, that was a Kenyon party basically.

B -- There were a decent number of locals there. All Dave's, all his..

Y -- Yeah, but it was still technically a Peep party, which made it a different scene.

S -- Do you feel like the Peeps play a particular role in helping....

Y --Less so than they used to. Um, basically -

B -- that's because campus has become more hostile. Well, to locals.

Y -- Yeah, campus has generally become a lot more hostile to locals, but, particularly in terms of gay and lesbian stuff, when I first got to Kenyon, there were maybe, two or three out people on campus. Yeah, like I remember exactly who they were. And everybody knew who they were. And everybody else was really closed mouthed about it. Um, and uh, the entire community was much more closeted than it is now, like the difference is astounding. Um, and so you didn't have much going on in terms of things like Queer action and ALSO and stuff like that. They existed...I don't even know whether they existed my freshman year or not. But anyhow, I'm pretty sure they did, but they were much quieter.

B -- Nothing existed before Amanda...

Y -- They were much quieter and much less a presence in the community. Um, and shortly after that, basically, the queer community developed and as a more out community, a very tightly bound together one, very protective, centralized sort of one. And uh, kind of formed each other's social group, to a great extent. And as that's become less necessary, as protection, the members of the Kenyon community who are out in one way or another have felt less of a need it seems, find that centralized social group, and are more comfortable functioning within all sorts of social groups at Kenyon. Which is really, it's a very positive change. It's a very feared one for people

that deal with though, that went through, used to, the other way of dealing with things. And, usually that being the community. Um, and

B -- We should let them get to their questions...

S -- oh no..

K -- yeah, this is awesome...

Y -- and Kenyon, Peeps was generally the refuge for anybody who didn't feel comfortable other places at Kenyon. Um, that was, it was very much the function of the group in a lot of ways. And as such, we had a large..

B -- The refuge for the socially inept...

Y -- All of us who were really socially inept, 'hello'. And uh, there were, we had a large number of members of the group who were relatively out, or kind of playing with the idea of being out. Um, much earlier on than most other organizations did. I mean for a while we had a really surprising large proportion of our group. Um, and uh, I think at one point we realized, numerically we were queerer than ALSO. We thought that was kind of amusing. But, uh we also had a larger number of members of other communities that have since created their own communities at Kenyon. For example, we used to have a decent number of the very few black students who were at Kenyon, were part of the Peeps. Um, there was one year particularly where, and this doesn't sound like many people, but there were three, no four, three black women and one black man who was, were members of the Peeps. And at Kenyon at that point that was a pretty decent percentage of the number of people around. And since then um, other groups have come into existence by filling that need more specifically. Um and so Peeps is much less of a catch-all than it used to be, it's much more, just kind of a social group. Um, and so it's a weird change from being inside the Peeps but it's a pretty positive change in terms of campus overall.

K -- You talk about the changes on campus, um do you feel like there is kind of (?) in the Mt. Vernon community?

Y -- Much much slower, but yeah. Um..

B -- I, a lot of the people that I've met that are more my age, I think a lot of the people that you know are older. A lot of people that I've met that are my age have a much more, fairly more positive overall idea....

Y -- The media reaches Mt. Vernon too.

B -- Eventually it does get there, yeah.

Y -- I mean basically the changes in society in general in the past seven years, in term of gay and lesbian visiblity and things like that are pretty dramatic. And those changes are impacted here,

same as anywhere else.

B -- Well, I think it, it's kind of, they've kind of pushed them far enough that they've begun to accept the idea that women sleeping with women is ok, kinda cool. Guys really love that stuff. They really do. But um, the the acceptance of men i think is slower. Just because it's so ingrained. Because there's a real like, towns like Mt. Vernon you get a real like, old boy's club type thing going on a lot, you know, like where there's a, there's, there's still a very firm distinction between men and women around here, I really notice. Uh, women get treated really differently, like Friday and Saturday nights are cruising the square nights. Everybody gets in their pickups, and drives around the square. All night long. All night long. And when I walk to my friend, my friends Joe and Chad have an apartment across the square, so I walk across the square, and every single Friday and Saturday night that I'm walking over there, at least like, three pickup trucks come by and whistle. It's like that's completely appropriate in this town. And guys whistling at me is really unusual. Well, like, I'm 5'2" and have no hair and I'm always walking around with a scowl on my face 'Get away from me'. Um...

S -- Yeah, I very much agree that Mt. Vernon is much less friendly towards male homosexuality than female. I think that's pretty true around the country.

B -- Well, I think that's because people seem to think that with girls it's cute....

Y -- Yeah, because we're not really doing anything, there's not a penis involved, it's ok.

B -- Yeah, they don't have the proper equipment, they're cuddling.

Y -- It's a very ingrained idea.

B -- Well and I mean it's even much more acceptable for like, I mean I know me and my sisters, we were always like, you know, we'd like, like all pile on each other and stuff, and like and such. And that kind of thing is also acceptable for boys....

Y -- Platonic friendliness is much more acceptable with women.

B -- It is, but i mean, it's acceptable for boys when they're Yabes, but it really quickly kind of turns into that like, the rough thing where they have to like fight every time they touch each other. You know? Which is why you get that thing where they'll hug each other and then smack each other on the backs. 'I'm being friendly, but I'm still gonna smack you, just to prove that it's ok'. You notice men being

tape 1, side 2

S -- Do you think there's a difference between being bisexual here as opposed to being lesbian, because like, if you're bisexual you still have experiences with men.

Y -- I think you tend to get more acceptance if you are bi. Um, because bi still allows men access to whatever's going on.

B -- It's not nearly as threatening.

Y -- yeah, um, the perception tends to be, well a bi girlfriend just means that i might end up in bed with 2 girls. Um, that's the typical response to bi women. Stereotypical one. Um,

B -- There will always be the idea that you're just kind of, you know that this thing with women is just on the side, you know.

Y -- Yeah, and there's very definitely an assumption most of the time that bi women's primary relationships will be with men. Whether that's true or not, most people tend to expect that to be the case. And it provides much more of a comfort zone.

B -- Well yeah, because like, I mean if you're, if you're bisexual then your parents or whatever, your friends can assume that yeah, you might

Y -- Whenever I start dating a guy again my mom gets all excited.

B-- "Thank god, she's finally normal again." No I think, I think my mother will have a heart attack when I eventually mention the subject to her.

S -- How does your relationship work? Are you, I mean is this your primary relationship? Or...

B -- Um no....

Y -- Not romantically.

B -- I don't believe in primary relationships anymore.

Y -- I do currently have two primary relationships. Um, one's with my girlfriend Jamie and one is with my friend Mike. And both of those are romantic in nature.

B -- Her girlfriend flirts with me all the time.

Y -- My girlfriend can make her turn fuscia.

B -- It's been years since anyone made me blush like that. It's so funny.

Y -- Um, but our relationship is much more friendship and expression thereof, than anything else. And a very comfortable living arrangement. Um, it's I don't think what would fall into the typical classification of romantic.

B -- It just, it just kind of means that, that like her side of the bed and my side of the bed got a

little closer.

Y -- But we're still real hardcore about it. Like, Mike was over two weeks ago, and somehow it ended up that he was laying here...

B -- Mike is her boyfriend.

Y -- Yeah and I was laying over there. I was like 'no, we have to switch, I'm on the wrong side of the bed. I absolutely insist on it. This is not good. I'm on the wrong side of the bed.'

S -- So where do your boyfriend and girlfriend live?

Y -- Jamie lives in Columbus. She's still in a halfway house until December 1st, and then she's got her own place there. And she's getting a housemate, living with a girl from work. And Mike lives up in Cleveland, so they're both pretty long-distance at this point. Jamie has been long distance just about from the get-go, because she was in prison for the past year and a half. Um, it was a little bit more than a year and a half i guess. Um,

S -- Do you mind sharing what she was in prison for?

Y -- Uh, basically Mt. Vernon politics. Um, pretty much family politics can very easily get tracked into the courts here. Um...

B -- Yeah, everybody knows everybody else, doesn't always work for you.

Y -- yeah, basically it was a weird scene where her mother-in-law pretty much decided to play i can parent better than you can, and pulled in children's services. Um, and then she ended up in front of the judge who hates everyone with her last name. And, like both the prosecutory and the public defender recommended a three month suspended sentence with counseling, and she got 2-10 years um, and ended up serving the minimum which was, 8 months is basically one year in prison, so she served like, 16 months and then it took them like another 2 months to get her out of there once she'd officially been, like listed as able to be released. Um, before they found her a place in the halfway house, and that wasn't till September 2nd. So, she's only been out for a little while, she's still doing the entire, like, adjustment thing. Um,

B -- But we go visit her. It's very fun.

Y -- I'm supposed to go take her shopping tomorrow...Dreading it...

K -- Do you find that most um, homosexual or bisexual relationships are open, or are there some that are monogomous?

Y -- There are a lot that are monogomous. Um, however, and I don't think that the trend towards non-monogomy is very specifically a gay and lesbian thing. I think it's simply, it's, at this point in time pretty tied to that community because that's the same community that in terms of theory

and politics and such has been dealing with issues of sex and that's one of the ones that came up and has been discussed a lot more, so more people are kind of like "Well that's one of the options on the drawing board." And playing around with things idea-wise, and in terms of how they live their life. And so right now I think it's, you more frequently find people who identify as queer who are open to the possibility of non-monogamous relationships than you necessarily do with straight....

B -- Well I think part of that is that, successful nonmonogomy requires a whole lot of communication. And I think that if you're already queer and are used to

Y -- having to communicate about sexuality and things like that....

B -- Yeah, rather than it just being something assumed between two people. I mean you know you've got, if you've got the boy meets girl, it's pretty much assumed....

Y -- You've got all the societal defaults, and you can play by those when you're not sure what else to play with.

B -- But if you're already used to not doing that....

Y -- then you don't have the same easy kinds of roles to fall into, and it tends to require a bit more of figuring things out to come up with any successful relationship strategy, and when you're kind of starting from the ground up you look at a lot more possibilities I think. But there are a lot of people I know who are also very definitely straight and have been involved in nonmonogamous relationships of various sorts. Um, however they frequently have been influenced by people who have been thinking along lines that reflect what's going on in the queer community.

B-- Gee, kind of like what you did to me.

Y -- sorry. But uh, yeah that's very much a part of how I deal with the world is, is in terms of, I consider my orientation in regards to monogomy is about as central as my orientation in terms of gender. Um, and I consider them to be about as equally a result of environment and personality and things like that. Um, I don't necessarily consider one to have been there first. I think that the way my personality is, but with this result of, I mean, what my genetics said I was going to be, and what my environment is, I'm not real hardcore on either side of things. Um, I do believe that there's a good element of choice in just about everything we do in our lives. I don't buy the "you have to accept us because we had no choice" logic. I think that puts us in a horrible position politically. I really much prefer the, the religion argument in terms of, freedom of sexuality, which is you don't have to believe in what I believe. You can believe that I'm going to go to hell because of what I believe, but you have to let me believe it, and live by it. Which is much more how we deal with religion than anything else. Um, so I tend to fall outside of the poster girl for gay rights movement in regards to that, 'cause there's still a great deal of push to stand with that party line of 'we're born this way, and we can't help it, and therefore you have to accept it.'

B -- I don't think we're really poster girls for much of anything.

Y -- No we're not. No, and that's actually one of the things that I've run into, is difficulties with the gay and lesbian rights movement, is that I fall on kind of a fringe edge of that in terms of acceptability for political purposes.

B -- Well there's a lot of bias occasionally against women who are bisexual, because lesbians will frequently behave..

Y -- No smokers, no bis

B -- as though you are kind of like, the infiltrator. Yeah, trying to get on their side..

Y -- Have your cake and eat it too. Stradling the fence, oh yeah..

B -- Stradling the fence?

Y -- sounds kind of exciting, but uh..

B -- You have a dirty mind

Y -- Yes. Um, so, and that's all, that's kind of larger gay and lesbian and bisexual, transgendered, etc. politics issues, that don't apply specifically to Mt. vernon. Because very little of what's going on here seems to have anything to do with a lot of discussion about being queer, politics of the era, etc.

B -- No it doesn't. You don't hear people really...

Y -- You hear that in Columbus. Like you sit around in a coffee shop in Columbus, you can end up in really cool conversations about queer theory and things. You are generally not going to run into that in Mt. Vernon.

B -- No the most you usually get is "yeah I knew somebody who was gay once".

K -- Do they tend to ignore, you think...

Y -- I don't think they consider it at all relevant. Um, you, particularly I think it has a lot to do with class issues too. Because the academic lines of reasoning that are coming out of that are coming out of primarily you know, middle-class, upper middle-class college environment. And that's not what Mt. Vernon is.

B -- You don't see flamboyantly gay men walking around Mt. Vernon.

Y - No you don't. I mean Mark's about as flamboyant as they come and he's not anywhere near flamboyant compared to any other like, community.

B -- Because I think they would really run the risk of being injured.

Y -- Oh yeah.

K -- Have you heard of any?

Y -- Yeah. Nothing with first-hand friends for me, but I know that there have been...

B -- You hear a lot of like, stories where someone goes into a bar and gets hassled and dragged out.

Y -- One of my friends was pretty badly gay-bashed in Columbus at one point, coming out of a bar. But he couldn't tell his parents why he got beaten up because he wasn't out to them, so,...crimes didn't get reported to the police.

B -- There's a decent chunk of hostility, definitely still around.

Y -- yeah,

B -- There, I mean this is a town where people still, lots of people drive around with Confederate flags in the back window of their car.

Y -- It's also a town with a lot of very conservative religious beliefs. Which tends to be a big impact.

B -- Why doesn't somebody tell them that Ohio was not a Confederate state? You really think that they would have learned that.

Y -- The place, my family was living in Alabama, Coleman County fought for the Union during the war, and they seem to have forgotten this completely. Like their entire county basically fought for the union, and they have no recollection of this apparently, despite the fact that they were actually on the winning side. But uh....

B-- well that might have something to do with the fact that their neighbors were probably always coming over and beating the shit out of them..

Y -- probably

B -- 'you damn northerners -- bamn'

Y -- Uh, what were we just talking about?

K -- The religion thing.

Y -- Oh yeah, for example, I don't know how out I am at work either. And it's kind of an

interesting...because I mean I'm up on all the posters, the anti-discrimination posters with little happy faces...

B --rampaging lesbian...

Y -- unless somebody added that afterwards. But um,

B -- I did that.

Y -- Um, but uh,

B -- well didn't Jamie come in and tell them that she got you pregnant?

Y -- Well that was, I know my boss knows that I'm uh, bi, but uh....Yeah that was funny. Jamie came into work with me one of the first weeks we were together.

B -- Jamie's her girlfriend.

Y -- And uh, I was doing a wiring job in Sam Mather, and we were in one of the offices and I kind of stopped doing wiring to kind of make out with her for a little bit. And I

B -- You have such a work ethic.

Y -- Well you know..We were in that like, first like week, like topsy-turvy thing. Um, and uh, my boss came in like a minute or two after that, and I'd just found out that day that I had to move out of my apartment, and uh, I was like, 'you won't believe what I just found out today'. And Jamie pipes up 'I got her pregnant'. And Ron's response was to, 'Thought it took longer to know about those sorts of things.' And on with the conversation -- he's really cool. But um, I know that most of the people up in Olin are aware to some extent or another that I'm not entirely traditional. I don't know exactly how they define that in their brains, I really don't. Um, I think for most of them the actual reality of my life would be much stranger than anything they would guess I was doing, so I haven't bothered to clarify a whole lot. Because, and it's one thing to let them just kind of assume that I'm dating a lot of different people randomly. Like, 'I had this relationship here and this relationship there,' but to try and explain that 'ok, so there's Jamie, and there's Mike, oh yeah, and then there's my housesmate Bethany...Oh, I'm sorry, do you want a map?'

B -- Let me draw you a road map of my sex life.

Y -- yeah it's it's, so I basically kind of leave some stuff just for them to put their own realities to.

B -- Well all the people that I worked paint crew with, um, I never said anything to them, they just sort of assumed that this was the case. But that's because I always went in, like, filthy with this black bandana on, just like walked around. I always had a cigarette in my mouth and

Y -- She looked like a very very stereotypical bull-dyke. It was very cute.

B-- So they all just assumed; it didn't help that I, that that, you know with that girl who came and played tennis every day by the..

Y -- She was admiring her legs. It was pretty blatant.

B -- Yeah, well she had fantastic legs. They were a little puzzled when they were commenting on her legs and I came up like 'yeah, those are really nice legs'. They're like 'you're not supposed to be looking at other girls.' 'Why not? She's pretty. I can look at her. You can't stop me.'

S -- Do most of your relationships involve women or men, or is it kind of like, free-for-all?

Y -- I think free-for-all applies to my life. Actually, women men and others. Um, basically, um, I've had at least one involvement with somebody who was hermaphradidic, so,

B -- I haven't done that yet.

Y -- For being in Ohio, my life is

B -- well that's because you go out of your way to find weird men.

Y -- No I don't. All the places I'm happy and comfortable hanging out happen to be really kind of odd. Um,

B -- Maybe that's because you've got giant naked women tatoood on your shoulder.

Y -- yeah, nothing in my life was weird until then.

B -- Well, I'm sure that doesn't help.

Y-- Um, but uh, uh, I was just talking about something.

B -- Yes I'm sure you were.

S -- hermaphrodites?

Y -- Before that, um, that's one of those really random things to throw in. Um,

B -- Most of my involvement with women has been more theoretical. Um,...

Y -- Yeah, Jamie was my first real involvement with a woman. Um, historically, I very definitely have a longer history being involved with men. I mean that whole adolescence thing and everything. Um, most of my involvements at Kenyon were with guys, but uh, in terms of where I'm at now, I'm probably equally likely to end up involved with either, although I'm least

comfortable involved with straight guys. They kind of confuse me. Um,

B -- Well they have this, after you deal with people who have different attitudes for a long time when you start, when you try again with a guy...

Y -- When you try to deal with societal defaults again, oh my god it's weird.

B -- Yeah with a guy who's like very very like, set on the straight and narrow, it blows your mind. Because they cannot even comprehend what your life has been about.

Y -- Yeah and, a lot of, because so much of how I think about relationships and sexuality and things like that comes out of a great deal of queer theory and things like that, I tend to deal a lot better with either women who have been part of the queer community or men who have been part of the queer community. Um, a lot of guys I've been involved with to varying extents -- only one of them was a real romantic relationship -- have been queer to some extent or another. Um, and uh, I'm much more comfortable with that because it's a common language and it's a common set of experiences in terms of dealing with being outside the norm, in that particular realm of existence. Uh,

B -- I don't think it's so much, I mean, most of the the odd involvements that I've had, not so much, they haven't been so much specifically bisexual things, but they've all been non-standard. Non-traditional.

Y -- Yeah, and that that's been the case in my life too. That a lot of my involvement that would technically on paper fall into some sort of normal realm really in actuality don't. And I think that's true of more people than would say anything about it anyway.

B -- Well yeah, but most people.....

Y -- There's nothing particularly standard or normative about sexuality.

B -- Most of my more normal friends have not fallen into random orgies, or such things, true. Um,

Y -- Um, the whole catalyst thing...

B -- It was not my fault.

Y -- uh huh. Right. Um, that's been an ongoing debate for the past year and a half. Um, but uh,

K -- Do you think um, people's sexuality.....(?)

B-- Talk to her, her father's an Episcopal priest.

S -- Oh no, how does he?....

Y -- That's an odd uh, kind of topic. But in terms of too, what I was gonna say about religion in terms of my workplace and stuff. Um, there are a lot of people that I know and a couple that I work with who are conservative enough religiously and honorable enough that they believe what they believe, and they're never going to be able to accept my lifestyle as anything that could fall into that category, but they're also not either aggressive or nasty or anything about it. Um, and I have a great deal of respect for that type of existence that's living what you believe and that being that. Um, and, but it does make work kind of an odd experience because one of my coworkers, just a great guy, wonderful guy, really really sweet, very honorable, um, I know perfectly well that no conversation between us ever about the topic will ever change what he believes about it. Uh, and so it's not particularly a topic I wanna have to deal with at work real frequently. Uh, and that's part of the reason that it hasn't been a more open topic of conversation is that I don't particularly want to put him in an uncomfortable position of having to defend his beliefs and I don't too want to be in the position of having to defend mine at work, I don't think it's amazingly appropriate. Um, I think there are a decent number of situations where that has been the case in my life, where I've pretty much made the decision that as long as they're not being mean spirited about how their living their lives, I don't have a right to say particularly much about it. Uh, anymore that I want them to have a right to say too much about my life. Um, and so it's more of a live and let live thing than anything else. Um, and I'm sure he prays for my soul sometimes, and, you know, I'm sure he means it completely well when he does it too. Um, so I don't know, the religion issue is kind of a touchy one.

S -- Do you know anyone who's um, gay, bi, anything who identifies with a religion and like, goes to church and is out to their church?

Y -- I'm, I'm at least out to my priest. Um, I've started going back to Church of the Holy Spirit just in the last couple months because they finally got a new priest in there, and the reason I didn't go there for the six years previous is that um, BG (?) who was the priest before Father Steve, was very, the Episcopal church is pretty split down the middle on the gay and lesbian issue. It's been, General Convention is where they decide all the official dogma and canon etc., and it's been a major topic at General Convention for the last decade or so pretty much. Um, and um, so I'm not in a denomination that is absolutely hardcore, we've decided against....? But I am in one that's very torn by it. And that's where the issue of my dad and my godfather Tony and the priest that I'm willing to deal with coming....? Um, my mom and dad, although they deal perfectly well with my life being what it is, also they're never going to personally agree with it as being as sanctified as heterosexual matrimony. Um, they're not hardcore on the negative 'you're going to hell' side, but they're not on the 'oh, let's have a happy commitment ceremony' thing either. Um, and they deal very well with the fact that I have a girlfriend, and they know about her, and they ask about how she's doing, they put on a prayer list when things aren't going well and stuff. But there's some element of them that's really kind of hoping that things will straighten themselves out. Um, my godfather Tony's much more liberal about it, he really just doesn't care one way or the other. Um, he's really cool, he's always been great. And Father Steve, the impression that I've gotten of him so far is he's very accepting. And it's been interesting having Jerry Townsend in town as well, he's an Episcopal priest. In fact he knew Father Tony at one of the schools that they went to. Um, and uh, it's a community, the church community at Harcourt

Parish is really quite accepting. Apparently, from talking to one of the professors on campus who goes to the Episcopal church in town, which happens to be two blocks down from me, they apparently are quite accepted as well and have several gay couples in the congregation. Um, and so I think it really depends on what denomination you're dealing with. Um, the Episcopal church has a long a history of big debates about big social issues, most churches do, but the Episcopal church in particular because of the way it's set up. Um, it's very democratic in function, and so it tends to change with the times pretty much. Um, I was sitting on my babysitter's knee at general convention when I was three, when they decided women could be ordained. Um, it moves pretty fast. So...

B -- You've got the same, the same device sort of even in modern paganism. I'm wiccan, uh, practicing, not practicing very well but a practicing witch. And there are a lot of all women's traditions in uh, neo-paganism, you get a whole lot of Dianic uh, wiccans who worship the moon goddess and just abandon the male god aspect entirely. Um, but you don't see all male groups. Um, and there are actually a lot of covens who, who actually frown on homosexuality, which is odd because it is a very very accepting religion otherwise. You can believe just about anything you want. But, there are a decent number of people within that community who frown on homosexuality because they believe that all life comes from the unity of male and female principles and that that's a violation of that. And.. But the women's groups of course claim that all life comes from the female principle and the male principle is stupid.

Y -- And I think that comes up in a lot of various religious traditions even outside of Christianity. Uh, the ones that do have the idea of balancing forces, yin and yang, things like that, it that a lot of people I know who ascribe to various of those beliefs, um, find in that the, a semi-deification of the male-female union particularly. Um, that gives it primacy over other types of unions, they don't necessarily see those as negative.

B -- But they're still, they're seen as unproductive..

Y -- Yeah, yeah.

B -- And as not accomplishing anything.

Y -- Yeah, and that in some ways is kind of where my parents fall on the scale too, is that they see hetero sexual matrimonial relations as what is specifically sanctified according to the Bible. And that there isn't all that much in the Bible to say much negative about the rest of it, there's plenty of passages here and there that can be interpreted in various ways., but it is very clear that the sanctified, that men and women get together and have babies. Um, and so that's a lot of how they define where they stand. Uh,

B -- Well it seems to be one of the things that bothers people most about, particularly male homosexuality is that they see it as a direct violation of that. Rather than female homosexuality which is kind of just, fooling around.

Y -- Yeah, and we live in a society that still doesn't completely acknowledge female sexuality. I

mean, I think we're running into more and more problems with society coping with female homosexuality as they gradually start to feel better with female sexuality and realize it exists. Um, and actually a lot of the things that you hear the most statements against in terms of the gay and lesbian community are where women are not falling into that nice semi-asexual romantic pattern. I mean women who are involved in the S&M community, things like that, the queer community doesn't even know what to do with because, I mean, good god their going and screwing up our one good stereotype -- shit. You know, and uh, there's a decent amount of discomfort in the larger American gay and lesbian community, with that element of very blatant straight and forward sexuality, that can't really be confused with happy touchy-feely. Um,

B -- Yeah, because there's a lot of, the general impression that the gay movement seems to be trying to present is you know, 'we're just people, we want to get married and live...'

Y -- the traditional American lifestyle.

B -- yeah, and just happening to be with a member of the same sex.

Y -- There's a big difference between, there's the various political aspects of the gay and lesbian community. Well I personally kind of make the defining line, frequently, who identifies as queer and who identifies as gay, lesbian, or bi. Because you frequently might take on political ideologies underneath those identifications. Um, people who want that acceptance as part of the status quo, do not identify as queer, by and large. Because queer, the word itself places you outside of the status quo, doesn't work for that political movement. Um, whereas the people who are interested in kind of exploding those definitions of what is normative and what is acceptable much more frequently identify as queer. Um, that's one of the reasons, when people ask me that's I define it, that that's the political ideology that I'm most closely tied in with. Um, it's that kind of explosion of the normative, rather than assimilation into. Um, and both are really pretty necessary, in terms of getting anything accomplished. I'm not particularly bad-mouthing all the folks who want to push for the political movement to get the rights everybody else has, to at least get up to, brought up to that par.....

B -- Which is not necessarily going to happen if people are running around....

Y -- Exactly, you hear this debate every year about the gay pride marches. The 'I don't wanna march with them, they're gonna give us a bad name.' And that's because the two groups are working in completely cross purposes, but their still identified externally as the same group. Um, yeah, I mean you cannot say that the you know, Episcopal lesbian housewives marching there have the same basic political motivations as the S&M and leather folks who are, you know, throwing out random bandana to everyone, that's the same here and there. Um, it's, they're very different movements, when you really get down to it, and there's a lot of confusion within the community,.....about how to deal with that. Uh, and that's one of the reasons that I don't tend to get too involved with a lot of political stuff in terms of trying to get this passed or that passed, because I know other people who will be much better at it than I am. Quite honestly I'd just be holding them back. Um, I mean I'm not necessarily the poster girl you want sitting there getting everybody to sign this little declaration or whatever. Um, there are a lot of other people who are

better at it. Um, I am relatively good at talking about the nonstandard approaches to things and why...(?) So that's kind of why that's what's important in my life, no matter

S -- Do you guys have any...

K -- I have a question

S -- Oh, go ahead..You had talked about like, a lot of people move out of this area, they go to Columbus or other places. Um, do you think its, the rural community is too constricted on that, they can't find...

Y -- I think that's part of it. Um, I think there are a lot of other issues going on as well, I mean,seems to be going on in just about everybody's mind is 'I'm gonna get out of Mt. Vernon'. And that whole 'gonna escape the small town' thing is not solely the.....Um, it tends to be just anyone who feels other than 100% happy and comfortable, which is going to be a lot of people.

B -- There's also a big class difference in Mt. Vernon, like very very noticeable, and I think that it's sort of acknowledged that if you didn't start out in that class that has money, that if you stay here you're never going to get there. It used to be fairly commonly acknowledged that if you were born in a family that didn't have a lot of money, and you stay in Mt Vernon that you are going to live the same way.

Y -- Yeah, and I see a lot of people who are still living here who are people who had wanted to get out and just never quite managed to pull it off. Um, so I think it's, it's much broader than sexuality issues. I know people who are gay and lesbian who stay in the area and people who are straight who left, and....

S -- I was just gonna ask, where do you see yourself in the future, do you have plans to stay here, plans to get out?

Y -- Oh, plans to get the hell out of here. Um, this has been a topic of much debate. Um,

B -- we were talking about going someplace really liberal in California after I graduate.

Y -- Um, I feel like I'm doing a little service being here, and making everybody cope with me, but the thing is, I don't wanna deal with it.....And there is

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S -- Have they figured things out, I mean, you don't know

Y -- I don't know...That's the one thing that's weird about living here, is that I'm not sure whether I've got the perfect happy little life goin' on, and you know, everyone is pretty much aware as they're ever going to be and it's all fine. Or whether I somehow managed to let them

miss that and at some point they're gonna figure out and it's all gonna catch up with me. You know I really don't know, and there's no way to find out except to go up to everybody, 'excuse me, are you aware that I'm queer?' No. 'How do you feel about that?' I mean there isn't an easy way to find that out. Um, either like posting a sign is what it would take, because even rainbow flags, most people don't know what they mean around here. I mean a lot of people don't. Um I don't know that -- I've had a huge rainbow flag on my truck, before it died, and I know my coworkers saw that everyday. I still don't know whether they put two and two together, whether they were aware of the symbolism in it, things like that.

B -- If they tried to analyze all the symbolism on that truck they'd be really alarmed

Y -- yeah um, I mean there's a lot of issues around how you figure out whether you're out or not when you don't necessarily have the same set of signals and codes as the rest of the world understands. Um, I know that I'm quite out to anybody else who is aware of the queer community. It's pretty hard to miss when there is a triangle rainbow flag in my window, and a whole bunch of other stuff about my life including pins and buttons that are up here and there. And all the little semi-coded, bits of information in my life that they could prove that (?) Um, but if you're not coming out of that, it's pretty easy to miss them. Um, typically not notice them. And there are a lot of people who wear pretty big blinders. Uh..

B -- That's the way a lot of people cope.

Y -- I'm never sure who's still got their blinders on, and who when they might lose them might really freak out about it. I don't know. Uh, and that does make me nervous.

K -- Do those symbols mean a lot to you? I know, does your tattoo, on your back, representative of your....

Y -- Um, it has some issues to do with sexuality, although it's more about a more a larger issue about gender and beauty and art and things like that, as opposed to specifically sexuality. Although there is an element there that has to do with the appreciation of the female body. But, the observer is not necessarilydefined whether it is referencing heterosexual sexuality or homosexual sexuality. Um,and a lot of different things about how I interpret them.

B -- One of the good things that knowing a lot of people who are kind of nonstandard in their sexuality, is that you find that a lot of them are really comfortable with their bodies because they have to be, you know they've had to accept themselves as the way that they are. And being around people who are really comfortable with their bodies makes you more conscious of how beautiful everyone's body is. You know?

Y -- And that's a lot of what the tattoo talk about, and one of the things that's sometimes interesting about being kind of, the campus nudist for so long -- it's the only thing I've ever been written up for at Kenyon.

B -- Didn't you get written up for smoking raspberry tea leaves or something?

Y -- Oh yeah, but that was different. Uh, I don't know exactly how many times I've officially got written up for it, at least two, possibly three. But I've had people flat out say that they view their bodies differently because of hanging out with me. Because I do not have the ideal figure. Um,

B -- Not the traditionally ideal figure.

Y -- Yeah, and most people don't get much of a chance.. I mean part of it, I consider it a public service to see me naked. But most people don't see that much of the female form outside of the idealized one, and so there's a great deal of lack of being able to look at other forms and say, 'oh yeah, I'm like that or I'm not like that or whatever', and place oneself within the actual continuum of the female shape rather than placing yourself solely next to the only naked figures you normally see which are pretty damn airbrushed. Um..

B -- I guess they have trouble in the drawing classes because the only women that can get...

Y -- Oh yeah, I offered to um, pose for them but um, at that point I had already graduated and they had to give the jobs to Kenyon students first. But he was really siked about the idea of somebody who wasn't slender posing for them.

B -- Because I guess the only women who will be women who are very like, traditionally beautiful. Which is unfortunate because women who are more curvy are much more interesting to draw.

Y -- lots of shadows. Um, but yeah, and it's very definitely true that for me, body image issues and spirituality issues and sexual issues and all of that are all very tied up in each other. Um, that I can't make a distinction between where one stops and the rest begins. Um,

B -- Well anybody who tries to deny that sexuality is one of the defining factors of human existence is lying. People think about sex all the time. It defines, I mean we use sex in advertising, we use sex in the media constantly. It's it's absolutely pervasive.

Y -- I'm really actually very hooked on TV because I get fascinated watching TV and analyzing it. We sit around and like, analyze TV.

B -- Except when we're watching Xena.

Y -- And then we just sit around and watch. Big buff chick in black leather breaking shit, you can't beat it.

B -- Watching gorgeous women beat up lots of people is just the highlight of our day. We don't miss Xena.

Y -- um, but anyhow, that's probably getting off topic, so.

S-- Doesn't matter. I just had a question. Would you mind if we like, came back and took some photographs sometime, 'cause I would like to get one of your tattoo.

Y -- No not at all. It's in a very weird state of half-completion though.

S -- yeah, it's been like that for a while, hasn't it...

Y -- My rent is 275 a month. My tattoo appointments are 250 a month, so it's a matter of finances basically. Get more done when I can afford it.

S -- I think, do we have anything else?

K -- Not as of now, but is it alright if we and return and stuff?

Y -- I'll try and find out from Mark and maybe from Lisa too whether either of them would be interested in talking to you.

K -- Do you know any couples, like in Mt Vernon that are actually,...

Y -- No, I don't think I do..

S -- Do you think if we called the Episcopal church, and....well they might not give it out but they might ask personally, and call us back.

Y -- You know who you might talk to? Ellen Furlough was the friend who I was talking to who went to that church, and who I was talking to about that issue. Um, and we might ask her....

K -- she's not homosexual is she?

Y -- No.

K-- ok..

S -- we better get some clarification before we call her.

Y -- Yeah, she's very definitely straight in conversations about why boys suck...

B -- I don't know if you have Ryn Edwards on your faculty list,

K -- Yeah, she actually gave us....Is there anything else you guys wanted to add, like anything you wanted to say -- Is this ok if we write this up, I mean,

B -- Oh yeah, certainly

Y -- Oh yes. Um, who's going to be reading this.

S -- Well, um, the thing is, we're also doing, our final culmination of our project after we interview everyone is we're going to be doing an article for the Mt. Vernon news. Um, you can let us know if you don't wanna be in it, if you wanna have no names in it.

Y -- Names may be an issue because, I mean some of the people that I've talked about I don't know how out they are.

K -- If you want, you can look at the article before...you know if you want us to...

Y -- Yeah, that'd be nice, but I mean I can think of anything that we said that would be bad.

S -- Do you want your names not attached to it?

Y -- I don't know. Um, part of it, yeah part of the issue would be whether it's possible to figure out from my name who I was talking about or not. Um, 'cause you know, things like me talking about my girlfriend, a good deal of town either knows about that, or would at that point be able to put two and two together in a way that's not necessarily the ideal. Um, there's members of her family that shouldn't know. Um,

S -- We can totally change the names.

Y -- Yeah, that may be an issue.

S -- We'll try not to make them too silly.

B -- You can call her Chantelle and me Dominique.

Y -- oh god. I think not. You know Chantelle is Jamie's middle name.

B -- That's scary.

Y -- I know. Well she goes by it about half the time. I'm the only person who reliably 100% of the time calls her Jamie. Because I will not call her Chantelle.

K -- We definitely want to thank you for it, this was a great....

Y -- It's really really easy to get us started about sexuality...

S -- I'll shut off the tape now...