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## Interview with Sheri Bohannon

Sheri Bohannon

Kate Hitchcock

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LIVING TOGETHER: SEXUAL ORIENTATION

INTERVIEW WITH SHERI BOHANNON

AT MOUNDBUILDERS

NOVEMBER 12, 1998

PERFORMED BY: KATE HITCHCOCK

K -- This is Kate Hitchcock, um... interviewing Sheri Bohanon at um Moundbuilders on Black Jack Road, November 12th, around 3:00.

Alright, um... if you could just start with some basic biographical information, about how you came to the area, and such.

S -- Okay, um... I came to the Naz -- to the Mt. Vernon area to go to the Nazarian College in 1990. The fall semester, and um... went to college there for four years and then during my internship I ended up getting a job here at Moundbuilders and I've been here ever since, so... graduated in '94 so... I'm originally from Dayton, uh, born and raised in Dayton, so...

K -- Really?

S -- All my life

K -- Yeah

S -- All my life.

K -- Do like the rural area?

S -- It's okay, um.. I like living in the city better, only because that's what I'm used to, I'm used to all the noise, and uh and things are open a lot later I think, in my opinion.

K -- Mmm

S -- A lot more things to do, that kind of thing.

K -- How was, um, your coming out experience? When did you come out? Who are you out to?

S -- Um.. Actually, um I started realizing I had, uh, feelings toward the same gender when I was about twelve. Uh, I didn't come out until I was 25, actually 24, so um... that was in '94. And um... that uh when I came out to myself and then I stayed in the closet for fear of losing my degree before I graduated -- with the Nazarean College, um.. So I, after I got my degree, pretty much in May I just came out completely.

K -- How did you enter into the, I guess the society... how did you let people know?

S -- Umm, the first person I told was a co-worker here, who was also, who was also one of my

professors. And um... she let me know who was the safe people here in the agency to talk to.

K -- Right

S -- Um... the other big fear I had was living so close and still in the same town as Mt Vernon that um... that the people from school would know. And uh... then my other fear was the clients knowing and not wanting to work with me, but I found that slowly as I came out, that um... they're okay with it, you know?

K -- Yeah

S -- They don't have any issues with it -- which is a good thing. So... I told my brother, maybe nine months after that, so uh...

K -- How was your family with it?

S -- Um... I've only told two of my brothers, I have a brother and a sister I haven't told yet. I'm planning on telling them over Thanksgiving Break actually. So...

K -- Really?

S -- That's either good or bad, I don't know.

K -- Yeah..

S -- But uh, my youngest brother was okay with it, um.. My biggest fear with him was that he wouldn't let me see his daughter. But he's really okay with it, once we talked about it, he realized, yeah, he could see that as childhood that um... I was probably was gay, I mean was teased a lot by one of my other brothers a lot so... that was partly why I never came out as a youth.

K -- Um... religion-wise are you Nazarian?

S -- I was.

K -- How has that changed, or...

S -- I go to Granneville Baptist Church now, simply because um... the Nazarian Church -- I can not be who I am at the Nazarian Church. Um... their philosophy is, you can be gay you just can't practice. And that's, that's denying a huge part of who I am. So, I looked for a gay supportive church, and decided to go to Granneville Baptist. So.

K -- Have you found support, I mean is that the one you gave me the information about?

S -- Yeah. Yeah that's all that information. Yeah. Actually one of the psychiatrists here, who is a friends invited me to go, and...

K -- Oh really?

S -- And I've going ever since, it's been about 2 or 3 years now. So.

K -- What about your status? Are you single? Are you...

S -- I'm single now, I was in a, I was in a four year relationship and we broke up in January. So...

K -- Are you looking for a monogomous relationship?

S -- Yeah, right now I'm trying to establish myself in the community as a single person. You know, which is kind of hard.

K -- Uh hum.

S -- But uh, you know, if I meet somebody that's of interest to me maybe I will, otherwise I'm okay with who I am now.

K -- Where do you find that there is a gay community? Do you have to go tot he city, or do you find... through the program you do and stuff?

S -- Yeah, there's quite a few gay and lesbians here in the county, um... I know quite a few of them, I don't hang out with them personally, um, i've met a lot throught the program -- through the support group we have her and um... I think... my main support group, I mean my main friendship is from the church. And most of the people from that church are from Columbus or Lancaster. Um... you know all around, different areas... Newark so... there is where most of my support group is from.

K -- Do you want to talk about your support group a little bit? Um... through Moundbuilders?

S -- Sure.

K -- Just the part about what made you start it up.

S -- This was all part of uh, my coming out experience. I decided that um... there was umm... I was getting a lot of uh, homophobic statements or treatments from people. And I decided that, I felt that um... that people needed to be educated, and so I went through that route by talking to the associate director. And we had a training through Stone Wall. And from that point on, I asked to do a support group, um... it's for anybody who's gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or straight people who are supportive. And they do not have to be a client -- you know it could be anybody, so. I've had a lot of people that come from, not only from Knox County, but also from Newark.

K -- How do you advertise?

S -- Um... word of mouth usually.

K -- Really?

S -- Um... I made an announcement in one of the, the uh church activities that we have, and there's some posters up there, and uh, the one thing we've noticed is that a lot of people won't com, gay people won't come, gay people won't come to the church for activities because of them being shunned because of who they are, or their orientation, so finding a neutral place kind of helps. Um... and it's in the evenings so that kind of helps a lot here too. And we express a lot of confidentiality so...

K -- That's good. So you think that people have benefitted from it?

S -- Yeah, I think so.

K -- How long has this program been?

S -- It's been about a year.

K -- Really?

S -- Yeah, we kind of took a break over the summer because of a lot of activities I had going on. But um, it's about a year, it averages anywhere from 5 people up to as many as 15 at one time um.. And that's kind of slacked off now, but uh, it's mainly whoever, whoever wants to show up, you know. As long as they understand the confidentiality, because a lot of people in that group aren't out to their family or friends. So, it's just a safe place for them to meet. And to develop friendships.

K -- Do you get a good mix of gay men, lesbian women, or is it more one?

S -- Um, tryin' to think, there's probably been only 3, 3 or 4 men that have actually came, most of them have been women, um... there's also been um, you know college students that have come that aren't exactly from this area, but they go to school here. So...

K -- Right.

S -- Um and their biggest fear is if they run to the Nazarian College, is being found out, you know? It's really scary. And I encourage them to stay in the closet until they get out of there.

K -- Yeah, that's gotta be rough.

S -- Yeah, So...

K -- Kenyon is a lot more open about that stuff.

S -- Yeah.

K -- We've just found, my partner and I have found that um, the lesbian community has been more closeted to us in this, in our research. We've contacted a couple and they're just "No I don't want to be involved in this, you know, I don't want my name in the paper. We've even told them that it would be changed, but, it's more that, it seems an underground group, or so-- I don't know if you've noticed that, but..."

S -- Yeah, I think a lot of people are afraid of being outted.

K -- More so for the women than the men?

S -- Um, yeah, maybe so. Because with this being such a small community, it's easy to figure out who somebody is, unfortunately. Um, especially if you kind of know a lot of people in the area if you give out certain details, it's easy to figure it out.

K -- Due to certain stereotypes too, do you think? What stereotypes do you think would pervade this community in terms of, homosexuality?

S -- Yeah, I don't... that's a good question. Uh, I mean, based on the terms of the butch and femoral, or the soft butch role, there's a lot of people that uh, that uh, I don't want to say that they try to act straight, but they're more, maybe straight looking, than others. And I think maybe part of that is being in fear of retaliation. I mean with Mathew Shepard being murdered, um, that's a big fear, I've had some of my people from the group ask me about, you know, being so out, you know, aren't I afraid of that? If I go back in the closet than that's going to make me more depressed than where I am now.

K -- Right.

S -- And if uh, if I am attacked, you know, I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna -- the risk is higher for me to be in the closet than it is for me to be out -- in my opinion.

K -- Just mentally -- mental health speaking.

S -- Yeah, oh yeah.

K -- Have you experienced any discrimination?

S -- Um... there's some on a, on a, um, a personal level. I've had a few teenagers make some comments, and try to harrass me as I'm driving down in Mt. Vernon, but once you look at them, they kind kind of turn away and drive off, so...

K -- Right

S -- But other than that, um no.

K -- Well, you found a lot of support within your job and these things...

S -- Oh yeah, I'd say, probably 98% of the staff are very supportive, um, you know, which is a good thing for Moundbuilders, as you know.

K -- Yeah

S -- And there's that small 2%, but you know, you're going to find that everywhere so.

K -- Where did you say you were living now?

S -- I live in Mt. Vernon.

K -- You do now?

S -- Yeah.

K -- Have you found that there's an age difference in terms of those that are out and how out they are, and their attitudes? Generational gap?

S -- Yeah, I think um, the colleg-age students are more out I think than those that are older. Um, just in my groups I've even noticed that. Probably the ones you've contacted were the ones that may have been older and not really wanting to come out.

K -- Yeah, I think so.

S -- Kind of thing. And being afraid of that. And part of that may still be part of their family not wanting to accept that. So.

K -- Have you noticed the change in the acceptance of... I mean, I don't know how -- you haven't been here for too long, so... it'd be...

S -- Nah, well, yeah, it's been about 8 years I guess. Um...

K -- 'Cause I know there's been a change in the Kenyon College, um, acceptance of it. Do you feel like that's been happening in Mt. Vernon, or...

S -- I don't really hang out a whole lot in Mt. Vernon, I'm usually in Columbus.

K -- Are you really... you get out of here to socialize?

S -- I'm always in Columbus, yes, always in Columbus, so um. But with the people I've come in contact with, um, you my, my ex-partner and I had a joint checking account. And so, people sometimes would look at -- when we'd buy groceries or something -- they'd look at the check

and kinda... but most generally it was okay, there was never anything negative that was said directly to me, so... Hopefully with the Mathew Shepard incident that, you know that would change; people would be more accepting.

K -- Yeah. How do you think the um, I guess this -- you kind of touched on this a little bit, but if you could go into more detail about um, how you think Mt. Vernon views you or how you view Mt. Vernon and your place in it?

S -- Um... I... I think that -- I like Mt. Vernon in regards to um, the people here. Um... but I also -- a big part of me enjoys obviously the big city, but uh, as far as my, you know I'm a kids case manager, so as far as my kids that are concerned and the parents, I haven't heard anything negative. My big concern in regards to advertising for the support group was about putting my last name down because some parents might be worried, you know. Or might have issue with that, but I haven't found that to be so. I haven't heard anything negative. So, I guess, it's okay.

K -- Yeah. Um, do you have any personal symbols or anything that have significance for you, I know a lot of people have said the rainbow, um, symbol or...

S -- Yeah, I have two rainbow symbols on the back of my car, so I'm like very out. Um, but probably, the rainbow flag and also the black triangle. Um, which there's been some dispute, but there saying that the black triangle along with the pink triangle were used in um, Nazi Germany, during the concentration camps, that's how they identified homosexuals was with a pink triangle. And uh, some studies, some studies have shown that they've even used the black triangle for women, to identify them, just like the Jewish. So, um, that was one of -- that was a big thing as far as my coming out process was to get that branded on me, so I got a huge tattoo with that.

K -- Did you really?

S -- Yeah.

K -- Wow

S -- That was one way for me to come out, is, you can't hide that so.

K -- Yeah, that's really interesting. What, your plans for the future, you said you'd like the big city, and can't -- don't see yourself staying in a rural community.

S -- Yeah, I might -- my goal would be probably to move to Columbus. Uh, I would like to continue working at Moundbuilders, because this place is very supportive, and I believe in what they do with the clientele. Um, my alternate goal would be to even work with youth who are gay or lesbian, bisexual, or questioning their, um, identity -- their orientation. That would be the ultimate, but I haven't seen that too much here that I've been aware of. Usually if there's a client or somebody that comes here that, um, is questioning their orientation, um, that the therapist will usually introduce me to them so that they have a safe contact in the community.



K -- Do you find that there's any education in the schools about it? Or, just... in high schools?

S -- Not that I'm aware of, I speak to um, quite a few college classes in regards to homophobia and hate crimes, and coming out issues and um, gay youth suicide. Um, I would love, if given the opportunity, to go to a high school and speak about it. Um, I've been doing that for like 2 years now, so.

K -- Do you think it's different in a rural community, being gay, versus in the city?

S -- I would, yeah, I think only because there's not a whole lot of places to go and hang out. Like in Columbus there's -- they can work with Kaleidoscope. Um, and they, they have like a drop-in center, that they can go and be with other youth, but I think here, um, there's not that opportunity. So, they can't get together with people they know.

K -- There's not as much a place to find a community without making yourself to obvious.

S -- Right, right.

K -- Yeah, In terms of the social scene in Columbus, other than Kaleidoscope, what type of stuff it there -- are there just bars that are known to be...

S -- Yeah, unfortunately --

K -- High Street, is that one?

S -- Yeah, the short North area. Unfortunately, the only places to-- it seems to meet people is either coffee houses, night clubs, or even church -- if you can find a good church -- if you want to go to church. Um, so, I spend a lot of time in gay bookstores and that kind thing.

K -- Right, right, that's the social scene. I mean it's just as tough for either homosexuals or heterosexuals I guess.

S -- Yeah, except I think with -- that's a good point -- I mean some bookstores only have a small gay and lesbian section so you can't really, you know, you see maybe one or two people hanging out by that, but uh, like An Open Book, which is a gay bookstore in Columbus. They're, they're just awesome, you can go in there and probably 98% of the people that walk in there are gay or lesbian, yeah so, you're able to make some connections.

K -- Do you feel like you can identify somebody walking down the street -- do you feel like most people are -- present it in a more physical manner as well?

S -- Um, Yeah, I think it's maybe just you could see them, and it's not necessarily if they've got short hair, or if they're dressed more masculine, or the way they walk or whatever, but it's that gaydar thing, I think about 85% right, in guessing.

K -- Yeah?

S -- Which is pretty impressive, I think.

K -- Yeah, I guess so.

S -- It's like well they're either gay, or they might be questioning it, you know, I don't know, but I don't, I'm not the type of person go hey are you gay.

K -- Right.

S -- Because I would never want anybody to ask me that when I was in the closet. So I just kind of give that...

K -- It's been tough for this project, you know, approaching people and just being you know, calling up to do interviews, it's been... you kind of have to cross that barrier a little bit.

S -- yeah

K -- umm..

S -- Well I can give you some names if you want.

K -- That would actually be great... if people would want to talk with us.

S -- Yeah, um, what I need to do is talk with them first to make sure it's okay.

K -- Yeah... as soon as possible because we're getting toward the end of the semester. I'll tell ya  
In terms of... do you think its genetic or do you think it's more socially developed.

S -- I think um that, as far as I'm concerned, um, I was born gay, and, but I do think there are some people who choose to be gay or lesbian. Simply because maybe some kind of traumatic experience that happened in their life and um, that doesn't make them any different; that's just something they choose. But I think the majority of the population that is gay or lesbian are... it's genetic, you know.

K -- Do you feel that there is a different view of bisexuals, like, amongst, within the alternative sexual orientation? Do you think there is a different view of each other within that group? Like with bi's versus lesbian's view of them?

S -- I've heard some gays and lesbians make comments about bisexuals being on the fence and basically, and ways they need to make their choice and as far as I'm concerned bisexuality, I see it as a continuum. They're not, some may not be totally attracted to males or females, but it may vary, um, during each time in their life -- and that's just how I see it. My whole view is live and let live, you know. I'm not gonna judge you because I don't want to be judged, that kind of thing.

K -- Yeah. Is that the type of religion that supports that? I mean I don't really know much about that.

S -- Um... with Granneville Baptist, they were kicked out of the Baptist fellowship for being gay supportive. So, they've got people that are bisexual that go there, gays and lesbians, and also transgendered individuals. So, you know, they're accepting of everynbody. Um, and they don't only speak it, but they show it. So that's a good thing.

K -- Yeah. Um, is there anything else that you want to add -- actually, is there any more programs or anything you think would benefit the acceptance or the easing of people's acceptance of orientation? I mean, this is a start -- your out-reach program and everything.

S -- I think education mainly. Um, you know, the estimate is that 25% of the population is gay. !0% accross the nations, but it's 25% just in the United States alone is one of the estimates. And um...

K -- Are a majority of those closeted?

S -- Um, I don't know. I think there are some like um, who, men and women who get married because that's the right thing to do, and they have kids and then they realize that you know, that they're gay or lesbian, you know, then they get divorced and they have to raise the child on their own, or start from that point on. I know quite a few people that have had that happen -- that have been through that experience. Um... those are usually the older adults. So, um, but yeah, I think education is the biggest part, I think if you look maybe in your family, uh, down your family tree, you're gonna find at least one person, that are gay or lesbian. I mean, I have an uncle that's gay. Nobody ever talked about it, but I knew. You know.

K -- Yeah, I have a sister who's gay actually, and uh, my parents -- she had a union and I wasn't made aware of it because she wasn't out to me. She wasn't allowed to be out to me, when I was in, like sixth grade. I had to figure it out for myself eventually.

S -- 'Cause she might rub off on you?

K -- That's -- I don't know, my mom was really not accepting of it, at first.

S -- Oh yeah?

K -- Yeah, it was really rough. Yeah, it hurt her and it hurt me that I couldn't have that and stuff.

S -- Right.

K -- And that they tried to shield that or whatever.

S -- So then... does your mom know you're gay?

K -- Oh, I'm not.

S -- I'm sorry, you said partner.

K -- Oh, my partner for the project.

S -- I'm sorry.

K -- That's okay.

S -- See that's a common term.

K -- Yeah, yeah, I know.

S -- That's why I was like okay. I'm sorry.

K -- No, don't worry.

S -- But uh, that's why uh -- what does your mom think about this project then?

K -- She doesn't know about this particular project. She's become more accepting, I think, over time. Um, it was real -- it's real interesting how she's dealt with it. But I guess her love for her daughter has out-weighed her personal vindictions, or whatever. In terms of religion and stuff.

S -- I think that's the big thing is getting over the religious part of it.

K -- Yeah.

S -- You know.

K -- I feel like there are a lot of religious people in Mt. Vernon, perhaps.

S -- Um, yeah there's a big debate about that -- that's my concern. I'm gonna speak at the Nazarian College December 1st about homophobia and hate crimes, with the social work department. And I know they're going to talk a lot about the religion part of it.

K -- What type of things do you talk about in your presentation?

S -- Um, I talk about the symbols. Uh, the Stone Wall Rebellion, Coming Out Day, um, give some basic history, talk about teen suicide, and uh, there was -- the reason I started talking to classes and stuff was because there was a young man, by the name of Robby Kirkland, who lived in a suburb of Cleveland, who killed himself partly because he couldn't handle who he was and being gay, and uh, I decided that I wasn't gonna let another kid do that -- that I came in contact with. I wasn't gonna be the fault of it. So, and also the hate crimes, I mean, hate crimes arose almost 11% alone just in Columbus last year. Um, which is higher than the national average.

So...

K -- I've heard very positive things about it though.

S -- Well there's a BRAVO, which is the Buckeye Region Anti-Violence Organization. Um, handles statistics and stuff. In fact I'll give this to you.

K -- Oh, that'd be great.

S -- Um, from '96 and '97. But there's all kinds of stats on there, I mean, that's what I talk about, is, um, You know, we're no different, gay people are no different than anybody else. You know, it's like, I've got friends from the Nazarian Church that I came out to that, their philosophy is you can be gay, just don't practice it, you know. And it's like, why are you trying to get me to accept this, it's like, I'm trying to get you to understand where I'm coming from. And I'm no different from when they knew me 10 years ago than I am now. This is just a part of them that they -- a part of me that they finally get to see.

K -- Did their view -- did their interactions with you change?

S -- A little bit. Partly, when I started coming out I kind of avoided them because I was afraid of the rejection, so if I rejected them first then they wouldn't reject me. So, we just, I just came out to them probably within the past year and a half. So, it's different. I haven't had a -- the big thing was they didn't want, my one friend didn't want her boys to know. Um, and this is a family that I grew up with and they're kind of like my adopted family so to speak. And uh, I told, I said, Well if they ask me, I'm not going to lie to them; I won't volunteer it, but if they ask me, I'm not gonna lie. And she's okay with that, so.

K -- That's exactly how it was for my sister. My parents said, you know, don't tell anything. My sister's like, if she asks me, I'm not gonna lie.

S -- Yeah.

K -- So that's how it is...

S -- But coming out, I mean, I don't know how it was for your sister, but when you're getting ready to tell somebody, your heart is just pounding out of your chest.

K -- Yeah, I've talked to her about it.

S -- I mean, you can't even breathe, hardly. You know. And then the people you think that are gonna be okay with it have the problems and the people that are gonna have the problems with it are kind of okay with it. You know, it just depends. You get some people that are like, yeah I already knew that, you know. So...

K -- She ended up moving away actually, she doesn't -- she's afraid to come back to the town

and be out to our town and stuff.

S -- Is it a small town?

K -- It's a pretty small town -- it's near a bigger town, but the -- we had a close knit community or whatever that she knew. And I think people have figured it out or whatever and she doesn't feel comfortable telling them or whatever. How do your friends from home -- your community from home...?

S -- The majority of the people that I still have contact with are okay with it. Um, I noticed, my younger brother, he says he's okay with it, um, he did have a picture of myself and my ex-partner. We had a picture made together. He used to have on his wall and now it's in the closet -- which is okay, but um, yeah he has a lot of friends that come over that we grew up with; that they may be uncomfortable with, or he may be uncomfortable with outing me to them. Um, but as far as -- I guess they're okay with it. I mean, I found out a friend that I grew up with is gay. I didn't find that out until I came -- went home a couple of weekends ago. So, it's like okay!

K -- Yeah.

S -- But I think as long as, as I don't make a big deal out of it, then they're okay with it.

K -- Right, as long as you're comfortable with it, you kind of... force them to be comfortable with it, or something.

S -- Exactly. Now my other brother and sister -- we're the type of family that, we don't ask, like, oh so who are you dating now. So, that -- none of that stuff is talked about, so I need to kind of bring that up to them.

K -- No, my family is very teasing about who you're dating everything -- very into it.

S -- That's interesting. Yeah, so we'll see.

K -- Yeah, so you said this is going to be a big holiday for you then.

S -- Yeah, well, I haven't um, really had contact with them for awhile and um, one of my other brothers was murdered in June. So that kind brought us all back together. So. It's a little different.

K -- Wait, so your parents are -- they are still in Dayton?

S -- Actually my mom died when I was 17 and my dad died when I was 22. And I didn't come until I 24 -- So.

K -- So they never knew.

S -- No.

K -- Do you think they suspected at all?

S -- Oh yeah, my mom was really supportive and I think that she's the one that probably knew more.

K -- Did she drop hints?

S -- No, not really. My one brother who was murdered was the one who teased me a lot. And she would kind of stick up for me -- and say shut up or whatever. Because I was pretty good in sports, and so I got teased a lot, you know. You're a girl, so you shouldn't...

K -- It was similar with my sister.

S -- Yeah.

K -- Played football in the street with my brothers -- always the quarterback -- always the head of it...

S -- Exactly, yeah. Yeah I actual played football one time with some friends and they broke my wrist. He -- one of the guys fell on my wrist and broke it.

K -- Yeah.

S -- And I was like, that's enough. -- I quite.

For a long time I mean, I tried to be straight, I tried to, you know -- I dated guys and everything and it was like, this isn't working.

K -- Yeah -- was there a certain point that just pushed you over, like... Graduating.

S -- Graduating..

K -- Actually, making it through the Naz...

S -- Exactly, I think probably from the age of 13 to 17, is when I really started doing drugs and alcohol because I wanted to escape those feelings of -- that I had towards other women -- other girls. So, I was always trying to ignore it, um, because that wasn't what I was supposed to do, so.

K -- Do find that a lot of people try to escape it through those methods, or...

S -- Yeah. Yeah, and what makes it worse is when you got people who are in recovery and the only place they can really meet people is either a coffee house, or maybe a support group, or the bar. So, you know, it makes it difficult.

K -- So, what made you clean up your act?

S -- My mom died, and it scared me. Um, that's when I realized that the one person who truly accepted me for who I was, wasn't there anymore, so -- then I got into the Nazarian Church. So, I went from one extreme to the other. Sorting truth out.

K -- You went through a lot.

S -- Yeah, it's -- I wouldn't change any of it, um, maybe if anything, I'd come out at a younger age.

K -- Really?

S -- But yeah.

K -- But not at the Naz?

S -- No, I almost went to a college called God's Bible School which is in Cincinnati, which is more strict than the Nazarian College. So, I don't know where I was going -- I think, if I, I thought if I lived to be really, the lifestyle that was really strict, then that would turn me around, make me straight, but it didn't.

K -- Doesn't work that way.

S -- No, I mean I went through several months of counselling, uh, and I never even uttered the words homosexual to myself, and so, a counsellor asked me, who was a lesbian, and I was like (counsellor helped her to realize that she was -- helped her to say it out loud -- met someone -- partner at the Nazarian College...)

----- END OF SIDE ONE -----

## SIDE TWO

K -- Did you guys know about each other while you were at the Naz, or did you figure it out afterwards?

S -- Um, we both kind of discovered at the Naz. So um, yeah, which is a little different, so... She's not totally out so I don't want to...

K -- No that's fine, I'm not asking for any names of that sort at all...

S -- So, I mean we're not together now, but we're still, like best friends, so... it's been a lot of work and a lot of hard work, so...

K -- Yeah... as with any relationship.



S -- As with anyone, yeah

K -- No, I have to say this project for me has been so enlightening -- just talking to people. I mean the reason I actually why I chose this one rather than Hispanics or any other groups, is because of my sister. And just knowing -- with the tough time that she went through; I wanted to learn about other peoples', you know how they dealt with it and stuff.

S -- That's good.

K -- Yeah, I don't know, we'll see how it works out, yeah.

S -- I'm sure you've learned a lot already, right?

K -- Yeah.

S -- Yeah, the lady I told you about Deb Click, um, she was actually a minister in the um, I always forget what church she went to -- Episcopal Church, and was kicked out and basically kicked out of her position. Because they found out she was gay. And so now she's going to our church and doing this ministry -- the PRISM Ministry.

K -- Right.

S -- So.

K -- So how do I contact her though -- is she just in the book or something?

S -- It should be on that pamphlet.

K -- Just call her from that number?

S -- Yeah, just call her and let her know who you are, um and that you got her name from me, and uh, I'm sure she'll set some time up for ya.

K -- Um, is there anything else, that you want to say -- some words of wisdom?

S -- Some words of wisdom... um, probably the one thing that um, really has hit me since Mathew Shepard's death is that, you know, when you hear Mathew Shepard's mom talk about -- just go home and love your kids -- no matter who they are, you know. I think that's what everybody needs to do -- just accept people for who they are. Um, nobody's perfect, nobody's gonna change because you want 'em to or because you think they should, based on your religion. Um, that's what makes this country I think great is because there is so much diversity. Um, as far as gays and lesbians are concerned, I mean, we don't, there's a lot of talk special rights, but it's, it's in regards to getting married and being able to adopt kids and stuff -- it's just that we want the same rights that we had before you found out we were gay. You know, we want to be able to live with and have the same, um, benefits that heterosexual people can have in regards to getting married and that kind of thing. So, I mean I just went to a financial seminar that you know,

there's all these things that gays and lesbians have to do to protect their partners in regards to if, like if I die my partner -- some things I would have to do to protect my partner financially, which you don't have to do when you're married, you know, it's like a totally different strategy. So...

K -- In terms of insurance, or whatever.

S -- Yeah, you know I have a friend who, her and her partner have been together for over ten years and they -- her partner had adopted a child and my friend has to carry around these special paper from the court stating that it's okay for her to take this child to the doctor if needed. You know, and it's, you know, they've been together for ten years -- what constitutes a marriage?

K -- Right.

S -- You know, what is a -- ten years is a long time -- for people to stay together -- even in a heterosexual relationship, so...

K -- Absolutely.

S -- So, that's that.

K -- Um, in terms of contacts -- or is there any more questions you want to ask me about the project?

S -- MMM, no, you said this was coming out in February?

K -- Uh Hum -- I can show you -- a copy of it -- we -- it's actually due December 5th is when my write up is due and my whole class is going to tear apart, but uh -- stress time!

S -- And then they tear it apart and you get to redo it? Is that the...

K -- Just revise it; yeah, and I told some people that I would show it to them before we even like released it to the newspaper -- just they can give it a once over and feel more comfortable with it.. Themselves.

Any contacts, you'll call them and have them...

S -- Yeah, and if I can get your, uh, number....

----- END OF INTERVIEW -----